

TOWARD LIFE OR DEATH

Why Sin Must Be Killed

I. INTRODUCTION

- a. The Bible is never casual toward sin.
- b. Left unaddressed, sin always leads to hell.
- c. Jesus exhorted His disciples to embrace the most costly sacrifices, the most radical refusals, and the most drastic measures in the fight against sin. He is calling us to a life of holy violence against sin.
- d. Jesus loves us enough to offend us with the truth. He is showing us how sin works and where it inevitably leads for all those who refuse to trust Him for eternal life . . . He is calling us to forsake our sins, no matter how dear to our hearts they are, and embrace instead His rule and reign as our true Lord and King.
- e. Sin is out to ruin us, as badly as it can, dragging us far away from God as it can, in any way that it can.
- f. We will not exert holy violence against our sins until we're convinced that they really are dangerous.
- g. Christ considers our sins cancerous, while everything in our hearts and in our culture tells us that sin is no big deal.

II. THE DANGERS OF SIN

- a. Sin is deceitful
 - i. Heb. 3:13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
 - ii. Sin portrays itself as something other than it really is. Sin is chocolate-covered poison.
 - iii. Sin deadens our hearts to the warnings of conscience, tending toward the destruction of ourselves and others.
- b. Sin is dehumanizing
 - i. Sin dismantles human relationships and corrupts the human soul.
 - ii. Sin, wherever it is present, always tends towards the deforming of the divine image within us, the dismantling of our relationships, and the distortion of our souls.
 - iii. The less we bear the image of God due to the presence of sin, the less human we really are.
 - iv. Sin divides our hearts, disintegrates our souls, and disfigures the image of God within us.
 - v. We are reluctant to reject any possible satisfaction, no matter how illusory. But choosing sin will never make us whole. Sin only makes us less human, less ourselves, less what God intended us to be.
- c. Sin is damning
 - i. Hell is a fate worse than death.
 - ii. Hell is the final destiny of those who refuse Jesus' terms of discipleship and fail to enter into eternal life in the kingdom of God.
 - iii. Hell involves both painful and eternal punishment.
 1. Externally, fire burns and consumes, disintegrates and destroys.
 2. The worm symbolizes the internal condition of the condemned person.
 - a. The damned not only will be eternally consumed by the fires of God's unmitigated judgment, they will be everlastingly devoured by the gnawing pain of their sinful cravings and the torments of their self-condemning consciences.
 - b. Vincent: "Not only will the unbeliever be in hell, but hell will be in him, too."

III. DRASTIC MEASURES REQUIRED

- a. Jesus is calling for mortification not mutilation
- b. Scripture insists that salvation involves not only forgiveness for sin but also freedom from sin.
- c. We are called to resist and renounce sin because sin is a kind of slavery, a slavery leading to death (Rom. 6:15-23)

- d. Rom. 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
- e. The call to mortify sin is framed by the reality of salvation from the condemnation of sin (in the past) and the confident expectation of resurrection life (in the future).
- f. The certainties of our past justification and our future glorification empower us for present sanctification. This is how grace empowers mortification.

IV. HOLY VIOLENCE AGAINST SIN

- a. We should be putting sin to death in all areas of our lives, not just some areas.
 - i. Sometimes we are selective in mortifying sin. We quickly settle for partial obedience.
 - ii. Ask the Spirit to examine your heart, to show you anything that grieves His heart or quenches His influence.
 - iii. Set yourself to mortify all your sins, not only the obvious or easy ones.
- b. We should give no opportunity to sin.
 - i. Rom. 13:14 Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires”
 - ii. There are some things we must not do and some places we must not go if we are to guard ourselves against sin.
 - iii. In order to apply this command, you have to study your heart and know your unique temptations.
- c. We should reject the first solicitations of sin.
 - i. Say no to temptation immediately.
 - ii. We must not pause to consider whether we will give in, for if we do our resolve will weaken.
 - iii. Which fire is harder to extinguish, the flicker of a match or the blaze of a forest fire?
 - iv. Owen: Rise mightily against the first sign of sin. Do not allow it to gain the smallest ground.
 - v. The promises of grace and salvation made to sinners in Scripture are promises made to those who believe *and* repent. God’s purpose is not only to save us from the penalty of our sins but to actually deliver us from sin’s power and pollution.
 - vi. To be sure, this deliverance is a gradual process that takes place over time, amid many failures and setbacks.
 - vii. Though grace gives peace to sinners, it does not make peace with their sins.
 - viii. Turning from sin really is a matter of life and death.
 - ix. Our only hope of turning from sin is turning to Jesus, who became sin for us.
 - x. The only reason we can wage war on sin with holy violence is because Christ himself suffered the violence of the cross for us. The only way to escape hell is to trust the One who took hell in our place.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you find Jesus’ words about dealing with sin shocking?
- Have you ever been deceived by sin before? How can we not let it continue to deceive us?
- Have you witnessed the dehumanizing effects of sin in your life and relationships?
- Is your life characterized by holy violence against sin? Has it ever been characterized by holy violence against sin? Who has been a model of this for you?
- How often do you immediately say no to temptation? How can this become more frequent?
- Are you committed to obedience in all areas of life? Where in your life are you giving sin an opportunity?