

St Martins C3 – April 2, 2023

The Victor – The Victor Over Sin.

Sermon Summary:

Our spiritual growth is dependent on us identifying which sin is destroying us and removing it from our lives. So, today we are exploring the question of how to remove sin in our lives, so that we can live in the fullness of the life that God has for us.

Read: Romans 6:12-23

What God has revealed in this passage about sin is very clear. Sin is our biggest problem. Sin is never good for us. Sin leads to destructive consequences in this present life and separation from God in our life after death. Not only that, if we don't gain control over sin, sin will end up controlling us. So, let us never underestimate the power of sin in our lives and the devastating results it produces.

We may be reasonably convinced of how destructive sin can be in our lives and want to live a holy life, so, why is it so hard to stop sinning? If Jesus has won the victory over sin and the devil on our behalf, then shouldn't it be easy to live a holy life?

The problem is, when we choose to sin, we are not only choosing to do something wrong, we are choosing to give a measure of control of our lives to Satan.

This is the point Paul is making in this passage. We become slaves of the one we choose to obey. We are either fuelling an addiction that leads to sin and bondage, or we are fuelling an addiction to

Christ, which leads to righteousness and life. Therefore, sin is any moral thought or choice that isn't under God's control.

How influential the spiritual world is on our lives, is very dependent on permission. That which we permit in our lives, controls our lives. It is hard for us to stop sinning because we have given too much permission in various areas of our lives, to our enemy.

So, how do we get out of the trap of sin? **The good news is that Christ not only forgives us of our sins, he breaks the power of sin over our lives.** (Col 2:13-14)

Christ's victory over sin on the cross would not have allowed us to walk victory, if He hadn't at the same time broken the power of sin over our lives in His resurrection. The power of sin has to be broken for our heart desires to change.

Christ empowers us to take back the permission we once gave Satan and give that permission back to Christ. There is no sin that needs to ever control us again.

Surrendering every area of our lives to Christ is really important, because in that act of SURRENDER we are WITHDRAWING permission we have previously given to Satan and giving it to Christ. This allows Christ to forgive us, as well as break the power of sin off our lives.

Suggested questions for Connect Group discussion:

What is sin?

What is so bad about sin?

Why is it hard for us to stop sinning?

What are the 2 important things Jesus achieved for us in His death and resurrection that overcomes sin in our lives?

Without naming the sin or the issue, what have you found helpful in overcoming sin in your life?

What have you learnt this week that helps you help others overcome sin in their lives?

Monday's Devotion – Stop sinning

1 Corinthians 15:34

“Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning.”

This week we are going to explore some things that we do which permit Satan to have a measure of control in our lives. These devotions are building on what we covered in Sunday's sermon, so if you haven't listened to that or read the notes, maybe do that first.

One of the most obvious ways we permit the enemy's influence in our lives is through our sinful thoughts and actions. Whenever we sin we are turning away from God's way and we are agreeing with Satan and his way. As we saw on Sunday, this doesn't just get us offside with God, it puts us onside with Satan. It is like we are opening the gate and letting the enemy in.

As we mature as Christians, we usually address all the obvious sin areas of our lives. However, sometimes we don't address the sin areas of our lives that we think we can keep hidden. In these secret places of our minds and lives we keep sinning. This is very dangerous territory. It is like a walled city that is mostly protected, but there is a quiet dark corner where evil is lurking. It is where the enemy is building up resources and preparing to attack from within. It is also an area of our lives, which we have kept God out of.

So, what is the solution? Do whatever you have to do to stop sinning. Shine a light on the dark corner and own up to what is really going on. Give control back to Christ.

Tuesday's Devotion – Deal with your desires

James 4:1-4

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God?

The next area where we give ground to the enemy is in the area of our desires. Desires are what our heart really wants. What James is saying in this passage is that our sinful actions come from unsundered motivations and desires within us. That is why we not only need to deal with the guilt of our sin, we need to deal with our desire to sin. If we keep coming back to the same sin again and again, it is because we have created a desire for it in our lives and we haven't fully surrendered that desire to Christ.

The desire that you have may "feel" right, so you try and justify it to yourself, but when compared to God and His ways, it is still wrong. You are still in enemy territory. So, what do we do with these sinful desires that lurk within us? James goes on to say, humble yourself before God and the devil will flee from you. (4:6-8) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. God knows our struggles and wants to bring us into freedom, but we have to humbly submit all our desires to him so that the enemy doesn't gain a foothold in our lives.

Wednesday's Devotion – Don't believe his lies

John 8:44

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The truth is God's native language and lies are Satan's native language. When we believe lies, we are in Satan's territory.

You may be thinking that you would recognise a lie and would know not to believe it, but you may be surprised at how easy it is. The two areas of people's lives they believe Satan's lies in is justifying a sin and believing something about who they are which is not true. Let's look at examples of each of these.

Lies where we justify sin is saying things to yourself like: "It will be ok just for this time." Or, "no one will find out." Or, "I am righteous in every other area of my life, I am sure God will overlook this one." So, let's be honest, are these thoughts true or are the lies? If they are lies, we are allowing Satan to influence us.

The other area is believing lies about who we are. Lies like, "you will never conquer this." Or, "You are no one special." Or, "God doesn't love someone like you." Again these are all lies and need to be treated as tools of Satan that lead us into bondage, not truth from God that sets us free.

These lies need to be renounced and rejected from our lives, so that we are free to embrace the truth of who Christ says we are.

Thursday's Devotion – Unforgiveness

Ephesians 4:26-27

“In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”

You may be wondering why I have used a scripture on anger if we are going to talk about unforgiveness. When we stop and think about unforgiveness we will realise that we are basically choosing to stay angry with the person who offended us. Let me be clear here, you may still need to seek justice, but you can choose to let go of your anger. After all, what is you staying angry about this really achieving anyway?

So, let's add this all up:

- 1) Not forgiving someone is a sin.
- 2) Unforgiveness is holding on to our anger towards someone.
- 3) Staying angry gives the devil access to our lives.

Therefore, not forgiving someone permits Satan to influence our lives. Which basically means that we are allowing our enemy to work in that area of our lives and shutting Christ out.

There could have been other sin areas we could have explored today, but I chose to focus on unforgiveness, because it is something we all have to face. We all have relationships around our lives and in those relationships we all get offended at times. Paul urges us here, don't let the devil get a foothold. How we prevent that from happening is identify quickly when an offence has occurred and in your heart and mind let go of the anger in that situation as soon as you can. Don't believe the lie that staying angry will resolve the situation.

Friday's Devotion – Self-sufficiency

1 Corinthians 1:20-21

Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Self-sufficiency when it comes to our relationship with God is not a good thing. We are called to partner with Christ and depend on Him, not depend on ourselves. Whenever we depend on ourselves and leave Christ out of an area of our lives, we are permitting Satan to gain influence. Our pride is creating a stronghold with the enemy and against God.

It is sometimes hard to identify self-sufficiency in our lives, because it is so natural to our old sinful nature. There are several examples of this in scripture. Here in Corinthians Paul is identifying one of those pride areas. We are so proud that we have worked all of life out ourselves and don't need God. Sometimes we can be religious and still be full of pride. We put our confidence in our knowledge of God, but our heart is still not surrendered to Him. Mostly however, it is simply people wanting to go their own way in life and leave God out of the picture.

Are there any areas of your life where you are tempted to go it alone without God? It is like you are saying to God, "I've got this." Don't let your over-confidence give room for the devil. Stay humble and dependent on the One who brings freedom and life.