

Kill It!

January 18, 2015

A few years ago my wife and I went on vacation to New Hampshire. We have friends who moved there. They asked us what we wanted to do and we talked about some sightseeing. We said we really wanted to see a moose. Our friends said, well, it isn't likely that we will see one, but the most likely place would be on the drive over the mountain to the next town.

So that's what we did. We headed over the mountain. The men were in the front seat and the women in the back. I was riding shotgun and sat intently scanning both sides of the two lane road with my camera at the ready in my lap. Unfortunately, we did not see a moose.

Other than a snipe hunt with a sack, that is the only hunting I have done. Well, I have been fishing a few times and that's the same thing. But I have never hunted an animal with a pistol, rifle, or bow. I do, regularly, kill bugs, at least those that invade my home or vehicle.

So while I would not be labeled a hunter, or much of a fisherman, I am a killer. I have killed plenty of spiders, insects, and other critters. I have hunted mice in my home, without a thought of remorse.

Many of you are like that. You would not label yourself a killer of animals or fish. But there are likely pests you would like to see disappear. These would include the dog that messes in your yard, that cat that messes in your yard, the squirrels that dig holes in your yard, the chipmunks that eat your tomatoes, the starlings which drive away the songbirds, the Japanese beetles which eat your flowers, the gypsy moths which do damage to your trees, and any critter that decides to move into your house.

This morning I want to make it clear that to follow Jesus Christ is to become a killer. I am not speaking of killing other people. I am not speaking of killing animals, fish, or bugs. But there is something you must learn to kill. In regards to this thing you must become a serial killer, a habitual killer.

I know that sounds harsh, but it is absolutely necessary. It is part of identifying yourself with Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to start the process of this killing. There is one particular thing Jesus wants you to kill. This thing is an enemy of God. And so to become a Christian is to take up the fight against this thing. To become a follower of Jesus Christ is to take up His call to kill, exterminate, get rid of it this thing.

This thing is working against us, against God's will, against the goals of spiritual growth and progress we set for ourselves.

Romans 8:13 (ESV) ... 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.

(Colossians 3:5; Galatians 5:24)

To live according to the flesh is to live like a non-Christian. Before you became a Christian you lived according to the flesh. Now, as a Christian, you must repent of that life, turn away from that life, and learn to kill the deeds of the flesh. The deeds of the flesh are sins.

Last week I encouraged you to identify the sin that is most troublesome to you, the sin that is hindering your growth in Jesus. If we are living faithfully to Jesus we should be growing and maturing as believers. Each year should see us getting better and better, kinder, more loving, more forgiving, more knowledgeable of spiritual truth, more self-controlled, less stressed, less worried, less angry, less impatient, less self-centered.

Now I know you want to be a better you. Likely you set such goals for yourself as a follower of Jesus. You can call them goals or resolutions, or choices, or determinations, or prayer requests. But every follower of Jesus wants to serve Him better this coming year than we did last year. Hopefully, you made SOME progress this past year, even if it was not as much as you had hoped.

The reason you did not grow more is sin. There is sin that has you in its control. Last week we learned that sin enslaved us before we became a Christian. Now we must work to root out those sins that have grown to control us.

Last week I encouraged you to start praying for God to reveal the sin that is working in you. If left unchecked, un-killed, this sin you have identified in you will grow stronger and lead to more sins. That is the nature of sin. Sin doesn't just want a little of you. It wants all of you. It is not content to be a part of you, it wants to control you completely. This sin in you struggles against the Holy Spirit in you and wants to totally defeat Him.

If ignored, you will grow weaker spiritually, less in love with Jesus, less caring of the will of God. You cannot limit this sin to one small area of your life. It will affect every other area. It's goal is domination.

This week I need to speak about the next step in this process. You need to kill the deeds of the flesh.

This is part of your repentance. You cannot be saved without repenting of your sinful acts. Repenting does not save you. It does not make you acceptable to God or worthy of heaven. You are only saved by Jesus' death and resurrection. You put your faith in Jesus as your Savior, and turn your life over to Him as your Lord. As your Lord, he commands you to repent of your sin. He commands you to keep repenting of your sin. And as you discover your enslavement to sin, He commands you to keep killing it. We must put to death sin in us.

Why? Why must we do this?

Think about the consequences of allowing this sin to remain in you.

It would be a good exercise in discipleship for you to make a list of the consequences for sin that are stated in the Bible. Our key verse this morning has one.

Romans 8:13 (ESV) ... if you live according to the flesh you will die...

To know what this sin in you is and do nothing about it shows that your heart is not right with God. And if your heart is not right with God, then you are not saved. Believing in Jesus is not just a mental exercise, saying, "Oh, yeah, I believe Jesus is the Son of God. I believe He died for my sins. I believe that heaven is only available through Jesus." You can believe that up here in your mind, and not submit to it down here in your heart. And if you do not, you are not a Christian. Christians grieve their sin. If you are not grieving your sinfulness, you are not a Christian.

But if you are a Christian, reading the consequences of sin will scare you, move you, incite you to kill sin in you. Read what the Bible says. Realize your danger, and then "make every effort" to kill sin in you. For if you do not, you will be ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of Jesus Christ. In-other-words, knowing the Gospel doesn't do you any good if you don't submit to it and repent of your sin.

You are in danger. Don't shrug it off as nothing. Humble yourself before the Lord. Cry out to Him to forgive you this horrible thing you are doing. Throw yourself on His mercy, the mercy offered to you in Jesus Christ on the cross. He died for this sin of wanting to sin in you. Turn to Jesus once more in godly sorrow.

How do we kill sin?

1) Deal with all objections or excuses raised by the sin in you.

These excuses may include the following:

- It's not that bad a sin. Answer: All sin is wrong.
- It isn't hurting anyone. Answer: It hurts you.
- Everyone does it. Answer: Jesus did not.
- It's just a little sin. Answer: All sin brings death.
- It is part of who God made me. I was born this way. Answer: No. You inherited a sinful nature from Adam. God is in the process of remaking believers.

2) Believe the Spirit can and will help you kill it.

The Spirit is God. And there nothing, no thing, that God cannot do. God can help you, empower you, strengthen you to kill this sin.

Romans 8:13 (ESV) ... 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.

3) Pray for the Spirit's help.

Make this a matter of daily prayer. This sin in you is alive and you need daily help from the Holy Spirit to kill it. So be praying every day for that help. Yield yourself to be filled by the Holy Spirit.

4) Work to kill it when temptation occurs.

Some deeds of the flesh you can kill quickly.

You can step on a bug, and that's the end of that problem. Is there something associated with this sin, some object that you can affect in some way to prevent this sin from occurring? Jesus speaks about this.

Matthew 5:29-30 (NIV) If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Now before you start pulling your eyeballs out, let me say that Jesus is speaking metaphorically. He is speaking figuratively. He knows it is not really your eyeball that is causing you to sin.

But maybe there are THINGS that contribute to you sinning. And you can do something about those things.

If your sin is caused by having an object, get rid of that object. Destroy it. If the internet is the cause of sin, disconnect from the internet. Give someone else control over your computer to lock you out of certain sites, or to keep a record of where you go and checkup on you later. Give them permission to hold you accountable.

If an object is the cause of your sin, sell it, give it away, destroy it, throw it away. Some families choose not to listen to secular music. Or they choose not to own a TV. Or they choose to share an email address.

If the thing that causes you to sin is a person, avoid that person. I have un-friended people on Facebook who habitually put nasty stuff on their page. It drags me down.

Right now, step on it, stab it, cut off its head, shoot it, or whatever else you can do to it. Throw it out the window, but not on someone's head or car.

Some deeds of the flesh take longer to kill.

If the thing that causes you to sin is not an object that you can get rid of or a person to avoid, then what do you do?

You can usually kill something by cutting off its food, its air, or what it needs to survive.

In my yard used to be a Rose of Sharon bush. It was constantly sending out seeds, which easily took root and started new plants in my yard. I also have a huge Red Oak tree that drops acorns all over the yard. These take root and start new trees. A new Rose of Sharon, one foot tall, is shallow rooted. I can grab it with one hand and pull it up. A Red Oak, one foot tall, is very difficult, with one hand, to pull out of the ground. It very quickly sends its roots deep.

Sins that take root in your heart send roots down deep and take a while to get out. Even deep rooted plants, if you cut off their leaves so they don't get any sunlight, will eventually die.

Ask yourself this question: What is this sin feeding on?

James 1:14 (ESV) But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

What desire in you is the cause of this sin? Have you done something stupid or wrong or both and said to yourself, "Why did I do that? Why did I say that?" Chances are it was because of some desire in you.

Years ago I got angry at someone. I got sinfully angry. That got my attention. I did not know why I was so angry. It was only then, that I started asking myself why I was so angry. I had to start searching my own heart to see what desire or expectation I had that caused me to sin in my anger. When God showed me what it was, I was able to modify my expectations.

I now understand what James meant when he wrote these words. "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire."

That sin you have been praying about this week. There is a desire in you that causes that sin. You now need to discover what that desire is. You will never be able to kill this sin without that knowledge.

God knows the answer to that question. He has been waiting for you to want the answer and be ready to deal with the consequences of that answer before revealing it to you.

So now, this week, if you do not yet know what the sin is that is controlling you the most, keep praying. And begin praying to know what this evil desire in you is that contributes to this sin. It will maybe be a slow process of learning what it is, how it works in you, and digging it out of your heart, replacing it with godly desires.

Let me close with a quote from a man who wrote a whole book on killing sin, or as he called it, mortification.

"... believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin."

*-- John Owen, Overcoming Sin and Temptation
(1616 – 24 August 1683)*

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Invitation

Are you believing in your head that Jesus died for you, but in your heart you have never submitted to Him? Then you are not saved. Make the choice to submit your life to Jesus today. Repent of your sin and be saved. Genuine believers grieve their sin against God.