

unholiness

SERMON NOTES

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These notes are to be used in conjunction with *Unholiness: Overcoming the Forces That Attack Your Soul* by Christopher Bounds and Jim Lo (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2015).

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about these notes

Unholiness serves as the text for this sermon series. Follow Christopher Bounds and Jim Lo as they guide listeners to discover God's purpose in saving us from sin. There are very natural (and even supernatural) enemies against God's design, conspiring from within us and without—our own flesh, our own world, and the demonic. Commonly known as *sin*, this unholy trinity is the mother of all manner of suffering and death. Worse yet, the human struggle with sin can often be compounded by popular misconceptions about it in religion. Authors Bounds and Lo return our minds and hearts to a clear, biblical understanding of the real problem of sin, and God's simple and perfect remedy: transforming a soul into what is holy.

This sermon series will guide you on acknowledging the problem with sin-management and entering into God's design to make you holy.

week 1

from perfect to very bad to restored

GENESIS 1:27, 31; 3:1–19; 4:8; 5:1–3

introduction

It is amazing how a skilled artisan can take multiple broken pieces of pottery and restore them into their original condition. Most of us would likely simply discard the shattered pieces of a vase, but a restoration craftsman could put the pieces together in such a way that no one would know the vase had been broken. Originally, the natural world and humanity showed the beauty of God's creation, but sin damaged both to the point that only God can make everything beautiful again.

sermon outline

I. Perfect Creation

The Bible explains the origin of everything as the product of God's spoken word (Heb. 11:3). He said, "Let there be," and instantly everything came into existence.

A. The Created World Was Perfect (Gen. 1:31)

At each stage of creation, God looked upon his work and saw that it was good. Upon completing his work of creating, he "saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (v. 31). The whole created order was harmonious, peaceful, and beautiful. It was a perfect environment for our first parents.

B. Humanity Was Perfect (Gen. 2:27)

When God created Adam and Eve, he did something special. In an act of unrivaled generosity, he endowed our first parents with his own image. Therefore, they were perfect. They were moral, spiritual, rational, and sinless. They enjoyed not only a peaceful relationship with the animal world and a close relationship with each other, but also fellowship with the

Creator. Evolution claims humanity is progressing upward from the beast, but actually, humans began at their best.

II. Broken Creation

A. The Spoiler (Gen. 3:1–7)

The Devil assumed the appearance of a beautiful creature, the serpent, and duped Eve. He twisted what God had commanded, lied, and appealed to Eve's desire for superior knowledge. She fell to the Devil's temptation, ate the forbidden fruit, and then persuaded Adam to join her in disobeying God. Suddenly the two became fallen, sinful humans. The spoiler had struck a horrific blow against humanity.

B. The Consequences (Gen. 3:8–19; 4:8; 5:1–3)

The consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience were historic. They lost their innocence and their fellowship with God (3:8–10). Adam blamed Eve and indirectly God for giving the woman to him (vv. 11–12), and Eve blamed the serpent (vv. 13–14). Childbearing would be painful and conflict would arise between man and woman; nature fell under God's curse; work became hard; death became inevitable (vv. 16–19).

Sin coursed through the veins of Adam and Eve's son, Cain. In a fit of rage, he killed his brother, Abel (4:8). Genesis 5:1–3 notes that another son, Seth, was born with the image of Adam. The image of God was clouded by the image of fallen humanity. But let's not pin all the blame on Adam and Eve. Although we sinned in Adam (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22), we are sinners of our own choosing (Isa. 53:6).

III. Restored Creation and Humanity

Just as the sun rises after a dark night, so a bright promise followed the plight that befell humanity. God reached down to the human race with mercy and grace.

A. Promised (Gen. 3:15)

The gospel is contained in Genesis 3:15. God promised to crush the serpent's head by the "seed of the woman" (KJV), a clear reference to the Savior who was born of a virgin.

B. Fulfilled (2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 21:1–4)

Because of Jesus' redemptive work, believing sinners are free from the Devil's clutches. Whoever believes in Jesus is restored to God as a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Someday, God will restore even the body to an incorruptible, immortal state (1 Cor. 15:50–54). Sickness, weakness, pain, and suffering will end forever. Ultimately, God will restore nature to Eden-like conditions before sin entered the world (Rev. 21:1–4).

Everything the Devil spoiled by successfully bringing about humanity's fall will be restored. God's redemptive, restorative grace will make something beautiful and lasting out of the shattered pieces that mark human history.

conclusion

A master craftsman may be able to restore a broken vase or plate, but only God can restore our broken lives. If you recognize that sin has shattered your life and destroyed the beauty God intended it to have, despair no longer. By faith, hand the broken pieces of your life to Jesus. Ask him to save you and make you whole. He will answer your call for help. Romans 10:13 promises, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

week 2

who am i?

GENESIS 1:27

introduction

It is important to know how you are, but it is more important to know who you are. Did you ever play the game “Who Am I?” In the game, each person has a sticky note attached to his or her back with the name of a famous person. Other people in the group ask questions in an attempt to identify each famous person. You may have to guess who a mystery person is, but it should not be a mystery who you are. The Bible gives the information you need.

sermon outline

I. Every Person Bears the Divine Image (Gen. 1:27)

A. Created

God created both Adam and Eve in his own image. Thus, every person is more than just a body that breathes and moves. God endowed us with the ability to reason, relate to the world around us intelligently, be moral, be spiritual, and have affections. However, because God is Spirit, human beings do not have a physical resemblance to him.

B. Marred

Sin marred the image of God in man, but it did not obliterate it. Jesus related the story of the lost coin (Luke 15:8). Although it was lost, it still bore the image of the king. Similarly, lost sinners still carry God’s imprint. However, only the Holy Spirit can restore the image to its original condition (2 Cor. 3:18; Titus 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:3–4).

II. Every Person Has a Human Nature (1 Thess. 5:23)

A. Body, Spirit, or Soul

As humans, we are complex. We are physical and spiritual. Monists, however, claim we are simply physical. We have only a body, and everything that happens in the body is merely biochemical, physical, and neurological. Dichotomists say we have two parts, body and soul. In their thinking, the words *soul* and *spirit* in the Bible refer to the same thing—the spiritual part of the human being. Trichotomists believe we have three parts: body, soul, and spirit. They point to 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12 as proof. They say the soul governs our rational, social, and emotional functions, whereas the spirit gives us our spiritual senses and connects us to God.

B. Human Nature and God's Image

Adam's fall affected our human nature. The body is in the process of dying (Heb. 9:27) and spiritual death negatively affects our soul, intellect, emotions, and will (Rom. 8:5–8; Eph. 2:1–3). Of course everyone has a distinct personality. A husband and wife are “one flesh,” but they discover quickly that each has a distinct personality.

The New Testament identifies this corruption of God's image in us as the “flesh” (Rom. 8:4–9; Gal. 5:17) and “the sinful nature” (Rom. 8:3, 5, 8), our “worldly” condition (1 Cor. 3:1), and the “law of sin” (Rom. 7:23).

Because the flesh reigns as king until Christ sets us free (Rom. 8:1–4), we do not love God and others as we should. We have an inclination to rebel, to be disobedient, and to be selfish. We do not want to do God's will (Eph. 2:1–3); nor do we see life from God's perspective or have the power to please God (Rom. 8:8).

III. Every Person Has an Eternal Destiny (Luke 16:19–23)

A. Physical Death

Death does not terminate human life; it simply changes its location and experience. Jesus told a story about two men. The first was rich; the second was a beggar. Both died, but after death the rich man, an unbeliever, suffered in the flames of Hades; whereas the beggar, experienced peace and comfort at Abraham's side (Luke 16:19–23).

The Bible teaches that when a believer dies, his or her soul enters Christ's presence (2 Cor. 5:1–8). Paul described that state as preferable to life on earth (Phil. 1:23). In Christ's presence, there is rest and blessedness (Rev. 6:9–11; 14:13). Life after death is entirely different for unbelievers. They experience judgment (Heb. 9:27).

B. The Resurrection of the Body

When Christ returns, the bodies of departed believers will be resurrected and the bodies of living believers will be transformed. Incorruptibility and immortality will characterize those new bodies. The bodies of unbelievers will be raised at the end of time, and all unbelievers will be judged at the great white throne judgment. They will be consigned to the lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:11–15).

conclusion

Where would you go if you died today? If you are not sure you would go to heaven, you need to be sure by trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior. It has been said that all roads lead to Rome, but all roads do not lead to heaven. Jesus is the truth and the life. He is also the only way to heaven. He opened the way to heaven for you by dying for your sins on the cross.

So who are you? Are you a believer on your way to heaven or an unbeliever on your way to hell? If you are an unbeliever, why not trust in Jesus as your Savior?

week 3

a big sin outside a little town

JOSHUA 6:17–19; 7

introduction

You see on the news a story about a mother who left her baby in a hot, locked car while she went into a grocery store. A policeman had to break into the car to rescue the baby. Then you see a story about a homeless man who stole food from a convenience store. When apprehended, he explained he thought he would starve to death. Would you say both crimes were sins and equally offensive to God? Are all sins equally offensive to God, or does he consider some sins more grievous than others?

On page 53 of their book, *Unholiness*, Christopher Bounds and Jim Lo insist: “The Bible repeatedly shows some sins are worse before God than others. While there is not enough space to walk through all biblical evidence in this book, here are a couple of clear examples. First, God clearly sees intentional sin as more serious than unintentional sin. In the holiness code given by God to Israel in Leviticus 1–17, God made a clear distinction between intentional sin and unintentional sin. The sacrificial system was able to atone only for unintentional sin.” They also point out how God evaluated the sins of Israel from bad to worse, beginning with sins outside the city to sins committed in the temple (Ezek. 8). They mention the unpardonable sin and the greater punishment falling on the servant who knew his master’s will but disobeyed, as opposed to the servant who was ignorant of his master’s will. Lastly, they point out that Jesus perceived Judas’s sin as greater than Pilate’s (John 19:11).

As we read Joshua 7, we learn about a sin that was particularly offensive to God and destructive to Israel. It was the sin committed by Achan, an Israelite, shortly after Israel had begun the conquest of Canaan.

sermon outline

I. Disobedience (Josh. 6:17–19; 7:10–23)

A. Achan's Disobedience

The Lord clearly commanded the Israelites not to take for themselves anything from the condemned city of Jericho (6:17–19), but Achan disobeyed the command. He coveted and took for himself a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels (7:20–21).

Achan was neither the first nor the last to disobey the Lord by yielding to the temptation to find something attractive in what the Lord had prohibited.

B. Examples of Disobedience in the Bible

- Eve's attraction to the forbidden fruit.
- Lot's attraction to Sodom.
- The Hebrews' attraction to the golden calf.
- Samson's attraction to pagan women.
- Saul's attraction to Agag's flocks and herds.
- David's attraction to another man's wife.
- Judas's attraction to thirty pieces of silver.
- Demas's attraction to the world.

II. Defeat (Josh. 7:1–13)

Achan's sin was so serious that the entire nation of Israel suffered. After conquering the well-fortified city of Jericho without a fight, the Israelites experienced defeat at the hands of the men of the little town of Ai.

III. Deceit (Josh. 7:20–21)

Achan's sin involved not only covetousness, but also deceit. He buried in his tent what he had taken from Jericho, but nothing is ever hidden from the Lord. Achan's sin was uncovered. Psalm 101:7 declares, "No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house."

How often have we learned that someone in government, business, or religion has practiced deceit but been exposed and disgraced? We need to shun disobedience and deceit.

IV. Death (Josh. 7:24–26)

Achan, his family, and all he owned were put to death. Undoubtedly the family members had been conspirators in Achan's sin. Living in the same tent, they must have seen him bury the stolen goods. This transgression had come at a key point in Israel's history. God wanted his people to be a holy nation to represent him well in pagan Canaan. The sin carried capital punishment as a means of conveying to Israel the seriousness of obeying their holy God.

conclusion

As God's people today, are we taking seriously our responsibility to be his holy representatives in an unholy world?

week 4

winning the war with the world

JOHN 15:18–20; 1 JOHN 5:4–5

introduction

War has plagued the world for centuries as nations have fought one another. Sometimes nations wage war to gain new territory. Sometimes they fight to spread their respective ideologies. A different kind of war has been raging since the fall of Adam in the garden of Eden. It is one in which the world of fallen humanity, under the rule of Satan, tries to defeat believers under the rule of Christ.

sermon outline

I. The World Opposes Believers

A. Because It Hated Jesus First (John 15:18)

When Jesus came to earth to seek and save the lost, the world rejected him because his deeds were evil (1:10; 3:19). Sinners under Satan's rule do not naturally welcome the Savior any more than a hardened criminal welcomes a police officer.

The world hated Jesus. At times a spiteful crowd tried to kill him. The evil religious leaders plotted to destroy him. Eventually, an angry mob with hearts full of hate stirred up by the religious leaders called for Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus' life of love, truth, and mercy contrasted sharply with the world's wickedness.

B. Because Jesus Chose Us Out of the World (John 15:19)

Occasionally a soldier defects to another country to escape an enemy. You can be sure the enemy hates the defector and would enjoy capturing him. Jesus successfully rescued us from the world that hated him, so we can understand why the world hates us.

II. Believers Overcome the World

A. Because We Have Been Born Again (1 John 5:4)

Those who belong to the evil world system have been born once, but they will die twice. They will die physically and eternally. But believers experience two births: a natural birth into a human family and a spiritual birth into God's family (Titus 3:5; 1 John 3:1). We twice-born humans may die physically, but we will not die eternally. We will live forever in our Lord's presence.

Because we have been born again, we are overcomers. We no longer buy into the world's philosophy, nor do we adopt the world's desires, ambitions, and practices. We do not follow Satan; we follow Christ. We have stepped out of the world's parade, and now march behind our Commander-in-Chief, the Lord Jesus.

B. Through Faith in the Son of God (1 John 5:4–5)

Our faith gives us victory over the world. We trust in Jesus; we believe his Word, trust his promises, and look for his return. When the world persecutes us, our faith lays hold on the Lord. We know he will never leave us or forsake us. He is with us through every trial, and he supplies strength for every temptation.

conclusion

John Yates wrote about our victory over the world in the hymn "Faith Is the Victory":

Encamped along the hills of light, ye Christian soldiers rise,
And press the battle ere the night shall veil the glowing skies.
Against the foe in vales below let all our strength be hurled;
Faith is the victory, we know, that overcomes the world.

As God's born-again children, let's exercise faith in Christ and overcome the world today and every day!

week 5

a church impacting the culture

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1–10

introduction

Christians do not agree on everything. Some prefer to sing hymns at church, while others prefer choruses. Some want their pastor to be young and have a full head of hair; others are OK with a bald, grandfatherly pastor. Some choose a megachurch; others choose a small church. But all Christians want their church to honor and serve God. Of all the churches described in the New Testament, the young church at Thessalonica seemed to have excelled at honoring and serving God. As a matter of fact, the apostle Paul called it a model church (1 Thess. 7).

sermon outline

I. It Delighted Paul (1 Thess. 7:1–3)

Paul had visited Thessalonica for about three weeks, and during that time he had seen many Thessalonians believe in Jesus (Acts 17:1–4). He rejoiced to learn how well this infant church was progressing. He greeted the church warmly, thanked God for each believer, and remembered before God the believers' faithful work—labor motivated by love—and endurance inspired by hope in Christ (1 Thess. 7:1–3). Does our church evoke similar thoughts? Are we working faithfully, lovingly, and hopefully? Are we a more exemplary church than when we first organized?

II. It Proved Its Love for God (1 Thess. 7:4–8)

A. The Example Was Set

The church at Thessalonica left no doubt in Paul's thinking that it was a church of true believers. He knew it was "loved by God," and "chosen" (v. 4). Paul had proclaimed the

gospel to the Thessalonians with “power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction” (v. 5). He had also lived beyond reproach among them. Just as the church at Thessalonica had set an example that every church could follow, so Paul had set an example that every pastor can follow.

B. The Result of the Example

In spite of intense persecution, the Thessalonian believers had grasped God’s Word eagerly and the Holy Spirit had given them great joy (v. 6). Joy always accompanies love for God’s Word.

The entire region benefited from the example set by the church at Thessalonica (v. 7). Further, the church engaged in vigorous missionary activity (v. 8). Perhaps, because Thessalonica was a seaport and a city through which a military highway passed, the Christians shared the gospel with sailors and soldiers. In turn, the sailors and soldiers carried the good news wherever they went. How zealously and faithfully do we share the good news with others? How far does our influence for Christ extend?

III. It Honored God (1 Thess. 7:9–10)

A. Leaving Behind the Past

Paul didn’t have to say anything about the church at Thessalonica because its impact for Christ on the world spoke volumes. The believers at Thessalonica had left their pagan worship and lifestyle behind in order “to serve the living and true God” (v. 9).

Have we abandoned idolatry to serve God? Idols are lifeless, but God is “living and true.” The idols of popularity, material prosperity, famous people, and money do not last. But serving the living and true God leads to eternal joy and heavenly rewards. We need to choose to serve God always until he calls us home.

B. Trials

Trials befell the Thessalonian believers, and they befall us too. However, like the believers at Thessalonica, we can patiently endure trials if we wait for the risen Lord to return. We owe him our utmost thanks and loyalty, because he saved us “from the coming wrath” (v. 10).

conclusion

The evil world system under the Devil’s rule wages war against us, but we must endeavor to meet the Enemy head-on in the strength of the Lord. Instead of practicing passive resistance, we should follow the example the church at Thessalonica set by proving their love for God and honoring him. We may not change the entire culture but we can trust the Lord to change individuals in it.

week 6

the prince of darkness

GENESIS 3; ISAIAH 14:12–15; MATTHEW 25:41; 2 CORINTHIANS 4:3–4; REVELATION 20:10

introduction

Living in darkness for a long period can lead to seasonal depression. Those who experience this kind of depression use lightbox therapy. It is far worse for those who live in perpetual spiritual darkness. Those who do so belong to the kingdom of darkness that is ruled by Satan, once an angel of light but now the Prince of Darkness.

sermon outline

I. Satan Chose Darkness over Light

God created Satan, the Devil, as an angel with free will.

A. His Lofty Origin (Isa. 14:12)

Isaiah 14:12 identifies the Enemy of our souls in his original state as “morning star. Son of the dawn.” He held a position close to God’s throne, and brightness characterized him. But being pristine and close to God’s throne took a tragic turn.

B. His Stunning Fall (Isa. 14:12–15)

Exercising his free will, Satan rebelled against God and led a host of angels in the rebellion. He was not content to be near God’s throne; he wanted to occupy it (vv. 12–14). His ambition was evil, dark, and arrogant. In response, God thrust Satan down “to the depths of the pit” (v. 15). In an instant, the morning star angel fell into inky thick darkness. The prime angel of light became the Prince of Darkness.

When the US military found Saddam Hussein, they did not find him basking in the glory of his kingdom, but in a dark hole in the ground. To a far greater extent, Satan fell from his

glorious estate and landed in sinister darkness. As we shall see, he actively endeavors to draw the human race into the same condition.

II. Satan Plunged the Human Race into Darkness

A. He Darkened Paradise (Gen. 3)

In Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed the brightness of God's unspoiled creation. They lived in perfect harmony with God and nature, but Satan successfully caused them to violate God's will, and darkness of sin blanketed paradise. Adam and Eve tried to hide from God, cover their nakedness, and excuse their sin. Eve blamed the serpent, and Adam blamed Eve.

Judgment fell on Adam and Eve, on the serpent, and on nature. Everything became dark and gloomy, but God promised redemption. Darkness pervades our world today. Sin brings strife, brokenness, and hopelessness, but God offers redemption through the blood of his Lamb (John 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:18–19).

B. He Darkened Human Perception (2 Cor. 5:3–4)

Without the enlightening ministry of the Holy Spirit, the human mind cannot perceive spiritual things (v. 3). Satan has blinded the human mind in an effort to block "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (v. 4).

We are powerless in our own strength and wisdom to persuade the lost to believe in Jesus, but the Holy Spirit can open blind minds. Therefore, we must keep on praying and trusting the Holy Spirit to lift the veil of darkness from sinners' minds.

III. Satan Will Spend Eternity in Outer Darkness

The Devil began his life as an angel of light in God's presence. However, he will end up far from God's presence, in darkness, in the lake of burning sulfur.

A. Prepared Darkness (Matt. 25:41)

Casting the Devil into the lake of burning sulfur is not an after-thought with God. He prepared this destination specifically for the Devil and the Devil's angels (Matt. 25:41). At the end of time, the Devil will experience the punishment he deserves for choosing darkness over light. What happens to him should serve as a clear warning to all who love darkness rather than light (John 3:19), and refuse to believe in Jesus, the Light of the World.

B. Unending Darkness (Rev. 20:10)

The Devil's sentence to the lake of burning sulfur is not simply a life sentence, it is an eternal sentence with no possibility of parole. He will suffer forever in unending darkness. The same sentence awaits all who align with the Devil and have rejected the Savior. They, too, will be cast into the lake of burning sulfur, where they will suffer in unending darkness (v. 15).

conclusion

Have you ever experienced a power outage? If you have, you know what it is like to be plunged into darkness. Fortunately, the power returned and once again you enjoyed light. Today, you may be in the dark about how to know God personally and how to go to heaven. The Devil wants to keep you in the dark, but God wants to free you from the darkness and enlighten your mind. In John 14:6, Jesus said he is the only way to God and heaven. Will you believe in him today and receive light and life?

week 7

demons flee at Jesus' command

LUKE 8:26–39

introduction

On page 117 of *Unholiness*, the authors state, “C. S. Lewis cautioned against imagining a demon behind every tree. But he also warned us about the danger of not believing Satan exists. He wrote, ‘There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe in them and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.’”¹

During his ministry, Jesus cast out many demons (Luke 1:33), but perhaps no exorcism was as dramatic as the one we read about in Luke 8:26–39. It took place in the region of the Gerasenes. Just as Jesus stepped from a boat he had ridden across the lake from Galilee, a demon-possessed man met him (vv. 26–27).

sermon outline

I. The Man's Demonic Condition

A. Uncontrollable (Luke 8:27–29)

It seems the town fathers were concerned about this demon-possessed man's bizarre and potentially aggressive behavior, so they tried unsuccessfully to restrain him by chaining him (v. 29). But they could not control him.

Individuals may try to control their sin by turning over a new leaf, but they find the underside of the leaf is no different from the topside.

B. Unclothed (Luke 8:27; Isa. 64:6)

Isaiah likened sinners' appearance in God's sight to that of being unclothed. Our righteous deeds are like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). The demon-possessed man was unclothed physically and spiritually.

C. Restless (Luke 8:27; Isa. 57:20–21)

The demon-possessed man was so restless that he could not abide in a home. Instead, he lived among the tombs. Isaiah 57:20–21 says, "The wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. 'There is no peace . . . for the wicked.'"

Where can they find peace? Isaiah 26:3 promises peace to the person who trusts in the Lord. Romans 5:1 assures us of peace through our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Man's Dramatic Cleansing

A. Concern (Luke 8:28)

Sin offends God, so we need to be concerned about our sin. The demon-possessed man showed deep concern for his polluted condition falling at his feet.

B. Cry (Luke 8:28–29)

Like the prodigal son who realized his misdeeds and cried out this admission to his father, the demon-possessed man cried out at Jesus for mercy at Jesus' feet (v. 28)

Anyone who calls out to Jesus receives salvation (Rom. 10:13).

C. Cleansing (Luke 8:30–33)

The demons knew that Jesus had the authority to consign them to the Abyss, usually thought of as the abode of the dead or a watery place. Ironically, when Jesus cleansed the demon-possessed man, he sent the demons to a watery place (v. 33).

III. The Man's Dynamic Conversion

A. Changed Disposition (Luke 8:34)

The cleansed demon-possessed man was no longer restless. He now sat at Jesus' feet. The Lord can change even the most horrific disposition and make it peaceful.

B. Clothed (Luke 8:35)

"He has clothed me with garments of salvation" (Isa. 61:10). The father clothed the repentant prodigal son. Now God sees us cleansed sinners as clothed in the righteousness of his Son (2 Cor. 5:21).

C. In His Right Mind (Isa. 26:3; 2 Tim. 1:7)

The people who left the town and countryside to see the demon-possessed man found him in his right mind. Christians have a sound mind. They no longer see things through the darkness Satan imposed on them. They have a correct view of God, the world, and themselves.

D. Changed Desire (Luke 8:38)

The cleansed man begged to accompany Jesus. Was there a time you wanted nothing to do with Jesus? Now that he has cleansed you, you want to be near him at all times. He has given you a new desire.

E. Changed Direction (Luke 8:39; 2 Cor. 5:17)

Instead of allowing the cleansed man to accompany him, Jesus commissioned him to “return home and tell how much God [had] done for [him]” (Luke 8:39). So man did not return to his former life; his life took on a new direction and a purpose. Having been saved, we turn from the old life and share the gospel with others, beginning at home.

conclusion

Although few people experience the Devil’s torment to the extent the demon-possessed man did, he controls everyone who does not believe in Jesus (Eph. 2:1–2). The good news is Jesus can set you free. Will you believe in him today?

note

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Harper Collins, 1961), ix.

week 8

victory in Jesus

EPHESIANS 6:10–18

introduction

Every good coach draws up a game plan for gaining victory over an opposing team. Of course even the best game plan doesn't guarantee victory, but without it defeat is inevitable. However, the Lord has drawn up a perfect plan that enables us to enjoy victory over our fiercest foe, the Devil. It is found in Ephesians 6:10–18.

sermon outline

I. Draw Strength from the Lord (Eph. 6:10)

A. Our Strength Is Insufficient

Samuel and Peter learned this lesson (Judg. 16:17–21; Matt. 31–35; 26:69–75).

B. The Lord's Strength Is Sufficient

Gideon and three hundred Israelites were no match for the thousands of invading, but trusting in the Lord, he and his men followed the Lord's plan, routed and killed the Midianites (Judg. 7).

According to 1 Samuel 17, the Philistine giant Goliath taunted the soldiers of Israel, and no Israelite would engage him in battle. However, along came David, the shepherd boy. He went against Goliath without armor. He took only a slingshot and five smooth stones, and told the mocking giant he had come to him in the name of the Lord Almighty. Then he hurled his slingshot, and the stone found its mark. It struck deep into Goliath's forehead, causing him to fall facedown onto the ground. David advanced, removed Goliath's sword, and cut off his head. The Philistines saw what happened and ran for their lives.

If we meet the Enemy in our own strength, we will fail, but we will experience victory if we trust in the Lord and clothe ourselves with his strength.

II. Put on the Whole Armor of God (Eph. 6:11)

A. Refuse Inadequate Attire

How would a soldier survive an armed engagement if he or she wore only sneakers, a T-shirt, and shorts?

B. Accept What God Has Provided

Ephesians 6:14–17 inventories the Christian soldier’s wardrobe. Total victory requires use of the total inventory.

III. Recognize the Enemy (Eph. 6:12)

The enemy is the Devil and his followers, not our fellow believers. A comment on page 129 of *Unholiness* emphasizes this fact: “Often, conflict tears a church apart. Members quarrel with each other. Feelings get hurt. Accusations fly. Wounds become deep. But fellow believers are not our enemy. God is the author of love (Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 13); he is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33).”

IV. Take the Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17)

It is sharper than a double-edged sword (Heb. 4:12). The better we know the Word, the more protected we are from Satan’s temptations and the brighter our path becomes (Ps. 119:11, 105). We know what places we should avoid and where we should walk.

V. Pray Consistently in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18)

Just as soldiers communicate their supply base for backup support and reinforcement, so Christians can be in constant communication with heaven through Spirit-empowered prayer. It is wrong to heed the advice: “When all else fails, try prayer.” Prayer should never be the last resort, but the first.

conclusion

Paul wrote these instructions while he was under house arrest. He was optimistic that the Devil would not—could not—defeat him. His situation was desperate but he was not, because he knew how to have victory in Jesus. Do we share his optimism? First John 4:4 assures us, “The one who is in you is greater the one who is in the world.”