

## MESSAGE #2

### “KILLING SIN BY KNOWING WHO WE ARE”

We talked last night about the importance of hating our sin in order to kill our sin. This morning, we want to address another hugely important topic for us to know *and know well* if we want effectively, faithfully kill our sin. But at the root of all of our sin-killing is the gospel. Paul says in Romans 1:16-17 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”<sup>1</sup>

When Paul says the gospel is the power of God for salvation, salvation includes all of what is included to get us from sinner to heaven. Part of our salvation is what we call sanctification. Sanctification is that gradual process where we are gradually made to be like Jesus. Because our sanctification—being made holy like Jesus—is part of our salvation and the gospel is the power of our salvation, that means that it’s the gospel that is the power of our sanctification. That is—we become like Jesus by the power given to us by the gospel.

Many believers wrongly believe that the gospel—the saving message of Jesus is the entry door to the Christian life. You get into Christianity by way of the gospel, but you grow and develop through the “deeper” parts of the bible. That’s wrong on so many fronts. First, the deepest teaching in the bible is that Jesus died for our sins. Nothing is deeper than that. Beyond that, Paul says ALL of our salvation from our initial saving faith to our glorification—the power for ALL of that to happen is the gospel. Do we believe that?

That means that the way we progress, the way we fight and kill sin, the way we conquer our sin and put down our sinful flesh is by the truth of the gospel. Let me give you two verses to illustrate this. Paul says in First Corinthians 5:7. “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ro 1:16–17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

sacrificed<sup>2</sup> This is a call to be holy. Paul compares us to bread that is filled with the old leaven of sin and he says, cleanse out that old leaven or sin. We all want that. But notice he says next. Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed<sup>3</sup>

Don't miss this. Paul says cleanse out the sin because your sin has been cleansed. Do you hear that? That's not theological double talk. This language is all over the New Testament. He's saying that the ground of your ability to cleanse yourself of your sin—is the fact that you have been cleansed. The leaven of sin in you that you need to cleanse yourself of—that is alien to you. It does not belong to your new nature and you should see yourself as unleavened, not as wicked and hopelessly enslaved to sin. He's saying that the ground on which we are to stand as we fight against our sins like lust is the truth that we have been cleansed.

What he is saying is that you are to be sanctified, made holy because you are holy. To put it in theological terms, you are to be more holy or sanctified because you have been justified—made holy. That's the gospel! You have to believe the truth of the gospel as it relates to your new relationship to sin. Romans 4:4-5 says, "<sup>4</sup> Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. <sup>5</sup> And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,<sup>4</sup>"

What he is saying is that our righteousness could never come from what we do because we are sinful and not righteousness. You cannot get righteousness from a sinner anymore than you can get spring water from a septic tank. No, the gospel says that, when we are converted we get an alien righteousness. This righteousness does not come from us—it comes from outside of us. This righteousness that makes us acceptable to God comes from Jesus Christ. We are righteous with HIS righteousness. His righteousness is imputed to us.

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<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Co 5:7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Co 5:7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ro 4:4–5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Just as my sin was imputed to Christ on the cross and he bore it, so also his perfect righteousness was imputed (or, copied and pasted) onto me and I share in all the benefits of Jesus because I have his righteousness. Our justification—our UNleaven-ness is the ground of our fighting our sin. Hebrews 10:14 says, “<sup>14</sup> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

SO, on the one hand, we have already been perfected for all time. Nothing changes that. Jesus did that for us and no one can steal that status from us—perfected for all time. But on the other, we sin and are in need of sanctification or being made holy. What that means is that you are practically being made holy, or perfect—and that is proof that by a single offering—of Jesus on the cross, you are already perfect.

Another example—and these are ALL OVER the New Testament, especially in Paul—is Colossians 3:3-5. “<sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Did you hear it? First, Paul tells the believers in Colossae **who they are because of what God has done for them in Jesus**. They have died to sin with Christ. They have been raised with Christ—hidden with him in their new home, heaven. Christ is their life and they will appear with him in glory.

Those are all glorious statements about who we are. Notice in verse five, he continues the thought by saying, “Put to death, *therefore* what is earthly in your, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” The crucial word in that verse is the word “therefore” which he uses to mean “because.” That means that he’s saying that **BECAUSE** God has relocated you to heaven through the death and resurrection of Jesus which you shared in—**BECAUSE** your home is in heaven from which you will appear with Christ in glory when he returns and Christ is your life—**BECAUSE** that is who you ARE, BE that person by not living like a person who belongs to this fallen world. LIVE like a citizen of heaven because THAT is who you ARE.

If you read Romans chapter six, you see this same dynamic repeatedly. **This is why having a firm grip on our biblical identity is so important.** Because Paul roots our obedience to God in living out who we are, it is VITAL for us to know- that we know- that we know, WHO WE ARE. You can't live an unleavened life unless you BELIEVE you are unleavened. You can't live like a citizen of heaven in glory if you don't BELIEVE that is who you are. You can't possibly know what target to shoot for if you don't know who you are!

Again, don't miss the fact our holiness cannot happen unless we are operating from the truth that we are righteous by Christ and we have been perfected for all time by Christ. That means that if your fundamental attitude about yourself is one of self-hatred and self-condemnation or self-loathing, you will never grow in holiness because the only ground from which holiness springs is the ground of a justified perfected heart.

Don't listen to Satan's lies of condemnation. Don't believe that hating yourself because you have sinned so much is an expression of biblical humility. Its not. Being obsessed over how evil we are is just another form of pride because its all about ME. As we've taught before from Paul, how a person grows to spiritual maturity could be summarized in one short phrase. That phrase is "**BE who you ARE.**" Or, we could say it, "**BECOME who you are.**"

The reason this is so important is because this is THE way we must think and act and believe if we are to fight off our sin—lust and otherwise. The truth about what Jesus did for us on the cross and who it caused us to be MUST be the ground of our fight or we will lose. Someone has said, "*The whole way of life—of fighting sin and pursuing holiness is on the basis of being accepted, loved holy, righteous and secure.* That MUST be the ground from which we fight sin! If that is NOT the ground from which we fight sin, we will lose.

We must see ourselves this way—these truths MUST shape our sense of identity or, who we are if we are to battle against sin effectively. The problem is that many believers have a general or vague understanding of these truths about their identity, but very, very few really understand it well enough and take it to heart in such a way that it makes much difference in

how they live the Christian life. Most believers understand that they've been given a new identity in Christ that includes things like being a son of God and a new creation and things like that. But they really don't understand what goes underneath all of that or why it's so important.

For most of us, who we are in Christ just doesn't play much of a role in our lives on a day-to-day basis. The problem with that is—as we'll see, **the New Testament teaches that, without a deeply heartfelt, internalized belief in this truth that we are justified, you simply cannot live in any significant degree of freedom from sin.**

The New Testament teaches something far more profound than simply conceiving of ourselves differently than we used to. The New Testament teaches that we've been given a new nature. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." That's not about thinking about ourselves differently.

**As believers—we have been miraculously and eternally transformed into someone who is essentially—in our essence-- different than we were before our conversion.** When a person is born again, he become part of a new humanity—a human race rooted NOT in Adam, but in Jesus Christ, the second Adam. We have been brought from death to life, slavery to freedom, darkness to light, alienation to intimacy. We have been REBORN into *a new family* with a new Father and new older Brother, Jesus who is also our Savior, Lord and Treasure.

As believers, we are supposed to get our **sense of self-worth** on the basis of one, solitary factor. That is—**what the Lord of the universe thinks and feels and says about us because we are united with Christ.** This would include truth statements like—*"Because we are united to Christ, we are adopted sons of God, loved by him as much as he loves his one natural Son, Jesus". "Nothing can separate me from his love." "I am totally free from condemnation and because of his righteousness." "I have God's full, complete and eternal acceptance in Christ." "The Lord of the universe delights in me and is always thinking about me—I am his beloved son in whom he is well pleased."*

Those are the kinds of truths that should form our sense of identity. And again, those are not based on anything in us or what we have done. It's all based on God's action in eternity past in uniting us to Christ through his shed blood. **We take on the value and worth of Jesus Christ because we are one with him**—that is what should shape our sense of self-worth.

So, how do we, by God's grace, reformulate our sense of identity to conform to what God thinks and feels and says about us? The answer is—**by reinforcing the truth about what God thinks and feels and says about us so as to build faith so we can truly believe it.** How do we do that—what does that look like? First, and foremost, it means **preaching the gospel to ourselves several times a day.**

Paul says that God's greatest demonstration of his love for us—what he did to most powerfully bring us his love and acceptance and affirmation—is the cross of Christ. If the gospel of Jesus Christ has by God's grace thoroughly penetrated a person's heart, their sense of self-worth is not going to be an issue for them.

Beyond preaching the gospel to yourself, **claim God's promises**—I gave you some examples earlier about who you are in Christ—a Son of God, his workmanship... **Memorize key scriptures** that address your specific doubts about yourself and God's love for you. If you doubt God's love and acceptance of you, think about Luke 3:22 where Jesus has been baptized and the voice from heaven thunders, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Meditate on the truth that, because you have been united with Jesus, that is precisely what God thinks and feels and says about YOU.

A second reason having a biblically accurate sense of our identity is so important is because **we don't live in a spiritual vacuum where our sense of self and self-worth are free to develop and grow without opposition.** The truth is—one of Satan's main weapons-- many would say his MAIN weapon against believers—is his assault against believers as "the accuser of the brethren." Satan knows how and why our identity in Christ is important and that's why he works incessantly to replace the truth about us with his lies. He condemns, he accuses, he maligns, he insults, he mocks, he scorns. He brings up our sins and uses them as evidence to condemn us as losers and saps.

He regularly recites to us our massive failures to try to keep us down. He fills our heads and hearts with his very convincing lies about us. The second reason our identity in Christ is so important is because: **It is a major battlefield in our spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness.** If we're not equipped with the truth here, we are easy prey for Satan's lies and we'll spend most of our lives in discouragement, paralyzed by a lack of self-worth.

Here's one of our challenges in living this out, brothers. We are conditioned to look in the bible for things TO DO and take them to heart and obey them. That is good. But so often, **we completely divorce what the bible tells us we are supposed to do from what the bible tells us about who we are,** But, as we've seen--we can't DO what we are supposed to do unless BELIEVE who we are! If you are hearing a brother or sister pour out their heart to you about a sin or sins they have committed and are miserable in their guilt—ONE thing you should say to them is to look them in the eye, call them by name and say, *"That is NOT who you are."*

Let me illustrate from a text we just looked at. You're having your quiet time and you read Colossians 3:3-5. "<sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Because most of us tend to read the Bible wrongly --like a manual for holy living, we look at passages like this and our main and very sincere response is to pray something like, *"God, you know I struggle with lust and impurity. God, please help me do what you say here—put it to death—cause me to put it to death, Father."* Almost ALL of our focus in these kinds of passages is—what is God calling me to DO—how should I change my behavior or attitudes? And so, that's how we pray—that God would help us to obey his word.

The problem with that of course is—we aren't spending anytime meditating, much less celebrating the truth of **who God says WE ARE** and what we DO is completely rooted in who God says we ARE. If you read the bible like that—passing over all these texts about what God says about your identity in Christ and what he has done for you in Christ, focusing only on what God is calling you to do, **you are doomed to failure.** How can you BECOME

who you ARE if you are not sure **WHO** YOU ARE? Do you get this, brothers?

Brothers, train yourself –when you see a command in Scripture to ALWAYS look for the ground or basis in which it is rooted. regularly preach the gospel to yourselves. Spend solid time in praise and worship celebrating the truth of what God has done for you in Jesus Christ in making you a new creature with a new nature and a new destiny. Learn key passages that powerfully speak to your new identity and ask God to drill them down in your heart. We must not only mentally KNOW who we are, we must by faith BELIEVE it and faith comes by hearing the Word of God about who we are. And then, use those truths about who you are as a springboard to propel you to DO who you are supposed to DO for his glory and our joy.

Let's pray.