



A Passion for Holiness – Part 1
Romans 6:11-14
GCSP – 03/07/2009

Throughout the history of mankind God has manifested His presence among us. God the Father was the primary figure and focus throughout the Old Testament from the time He walked with Adam and Eve in the garden through the time of His promises in the Book of Malachi. God the Son was the primary figure and focus in the gospel accounts from His immaculate conception through His appearance to His disciples as He ascended into heaven. God the Holy Spirit was the primary figure and focus in the Book of Acts and He continues to be the primary figure and focus today whether the church realizes it or not.

In the Old Testament, God's chosen people, the nation of Israel, by and large rejected God the Father. There were several notable exceptions recorded for us but the overwhelming majority of the Hebrews rejected God the Father. In the gospel accounts, God's chosen people, the Jews, by and large rejected God the Son. Again, there were a handful of notable exceptions recorded for us but the overwhelming majority of the Jews rejected God the Son. Today, God's chosen people, the church, by and large rejects God the Holy Spirit. There are obviously some notable exceptions, but the overwhelming majority of the church has rejected and is rejecting the Holy Spirit.

Most of the church gives lip service to the Holy Spirit, but unfortunately most of the church is "**holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power**" (**2 Timothy 3:5**). The power that we by and large deny is the power of the Holy Spirit. And that power is sufficient to accomplish everything God desires for your life. That power can not only calm but eradicate every fear you face. That power can perform any miracle you need. That power can give you victory over every sin and temptation. And that power is available to you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year because that power resides within you if you are a genuine born again child of God.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Romans**.

Romans 6:11-14

Let's pray.

Tonight we begin a new series of sermons on the aspect of holiness in a believer's life. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we have the ability to be holy and thus to be victorious over sin – all sin. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we never have to sin again.

Can let that sink in a moment? Through the power of the Holy Spirit you never have to sin again. If you find that difficult to believe then to a certain extent you are denying the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. At the same time I do not want you to become guilt-ridden or discouraged because practically speaking sin is constantly at the door and we will at times open that door. The point is that now that we are saved and have the Holy Spirit within us we are no longer slaves to sin. We are no longer, "not able to not sin" but we are now indeed "able to not sin." And that ability is through the power of the

Holy Spirit. When we yield to that power sin has no effect on us; when we deny that power sin will have its way in our lives.

v. 11

The passage I just read begins by telling us to consider ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Dead people don't sin! Dead people do not commit sins of commission or sins of omission. Dead people don't sin in their hearts or minds. Dead people do not sin! And through the power of the Holy Spirit and because Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose again to new life on the third day, we have the power to crucify our flesh and remain dead to sin!

v. 12

Because of this truth that you are to consider ourselves dead to sin, and because of the power of the Holy Spirit that resides within you, you are commanded to not let sin reign in your bodies so that you obey its lusts.

Our bodies lust after many things. We lust after power; we desire control and resist authority of any kind. We want things our way at every turn. We want everyone around us to submit to our way of thinking and our methods of living. Even Christians who believe they have good intentions desire others to live the Christian life the way they do. We can't understand how anyone could possibly interpret Scripture differently than we do. If we had the power to do so we would influence and change the minds of everyone around to think just like we do. We lust for power and control over all things; which actually means we are dangerously close to wanting to replace God. It seems like an angel named Lucifer had that same problem.

We lust after pleasure and comfort. We have become addicted to entertainment to the point that we believe it is our God-given right. We mightily struggle with anyone or anything that upsets our routine or moves us out of our comfort zones. If someone intrudes on your schedule, or visits you and messes up your house, or rocks the boat of you life in any way, you are murdering that person in your mind according to Jesus (**Matthew 5:21-22**); all because your lust for pleasure and comfort has been derailed.

We lust after food and riches and cars and houses and relationships and a multitude of other things.

1 John 2:16, says, "**For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.**"

This is what we are commanded to crucify and to not let reign in our mortal bodies. We are commanded by the God of the universe, the God who loves us so much that He sacrificed His only Son to a horrendous and cruel death on the Cross of Calvary, the God who raised Him from the dead so that we could become heirs of the Father and joint-heirs with the Son of the treasures of heaven, the God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, the God who has given everything that pertains to life and godliness, the God who snatched us out of the darkness and placed us in his marvelous light; this is the God who commands us to not let sin reign in our mortal bodies.

v. 13

God goes on to command us to not present the members of our bodies to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but to instead present the members of our bodies to God as instruments of righteousness. Practically speaking, what does this mean?

Here are but a few examples:

Our Minds

Turn with me in your Bibles to the twelfth chapter of **Romans**; a very familiar passage.

Romans 12:1-2

It all begins with our minds. If we present our minds as instruments of unrighteousness you had better believe that the rest of our bodies will follow. What you do with your mind will to a great extent determine where you will be in your spiritual growth and Christian maturity. You don't become Christ-like if your mind is not filled with the things of Christ. You don't become Spirit-filled and Spirit-controlled if your mind is not immersed in the things of the Holy Spirit.

So how do we present our minds as instruments of unrighteousness? When you fill your minds with the products of our secular culture you will be presenting your mind as an instrument of unrighteousness. If your mind is filled with what Hollywood produces then you will be secular and sinful. If your mind is filled with the novels of the world then you will find yourself acting like the characters in those novels. It won't necessarily happen on purpose and you probably won't see that you are acting that way because in your mind this is the way to act due to the fact that your mind has been filled with these thoughts.

If we lack a Christian mind, or the mind of Christ as Paul refers to it in **Philippians 2:5**, is it any wonder that the majority of Christians are by and large indistinguishable from the world around them? Should we be surprised that the divorce rate is almost identical between Christians as it is in non-Christians? Should we be shocked when viewing pornography and committing sexual sin is just as prevalent in the church as it is outside the church? Can we rightfully blame the world for avoiding the church when the majority of its members fuss and fight and argue as much or more than people who hang out in the bars and night clubs?

If we lack a Christian mind we will lack in obedience and in acts of righteousness; it's that simple. And we will lack a Christian mind if we are filling our minds with secular information and entertainment.

One pastor recommends that for every secular book you read make sure you read a Christian book. I would have to respectfully disagree for that would only keep you even. I would recommend that for every secular book you read that you follow it up with at least two or three Christian books, and make sure you are spending more time in God's Word than you are in the Christian books. And if you are truly serious about gaining and cultivating a Christian mind then let this same practice spill over into other areas, like the radio and music you listen to and the programs you watch. Make sure you are watching and listening to more edifying and uplifting programs and music than you are of the world's programs and music. At the very least make sure you are avoiding the

programs and music that promotes messages and ideas that are against the principles of God's Word.

Notice Paul does not mention any other parts of our bodies in this passage other than our minds; because our minds will control all other parts. "**For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he**" (**Proverbs 23:7** – KJV). The mind is tremendously powerful which is why our thoughts must be guarded at all times.

Proverbs 4:23, says, "**Above all else, guard your heart**" (NIV). Above all else he says; above your "God-given" right to be entertained, above your desire to relax, above your need for intellectual stimulation, and above all else, guard your heart (and your heart and your mind are interchangeable in these verses).

When you choose to fill your mind and your heart with God's Word, with good Christian literature, with Christian music and teaching and sermons, and with messages that are in agreement with Scripture in the programs and movies you watch, your actions and your words will almost subconsciously be in obedience to the things of God.

Our Eyes and Ears

I have already alluded to this somewhat because most of what enters our minds will do so through our eyes and ears, but there is a little more to add. If we truly desire to live according to the power of the Holy Spirit and avoid presenting the members of our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness, we need to understand the power and influence of what we see and hear; but primarily what we see.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Joshua**.

Joshua 7:20-21

What was the catalyst that caused Achan to sin? When he saw the spoil he then coveted in his heart. When his eyes saw what was there for the taking, even though he was commanded not to take any of the spoil, he coveted and took the items.

I don't know if we are aware of this, but did you know that the primary purpose of television is commercials? It costs money to pay the actors, to buy the cameras and equipment to produce the shows and movies, to pay the people who run the cameras, and apply the makeup, and edit the video, and reproduce and distribute the video to the TV stations around the world, and then to pay the people at the local stations who get the images on your television screen, and on and on it goes. It can boggle your mind when you consider all the equipment that needs to be purchased and all the people who need to be paid in order for you to watch CSI every week. The commercials are what pays for the overwhelming majority of what is on TV. And what's the purpose of a commercial? - To entice you to make a purchase. And it must be working because they keep producing new TV show and new commercials.

We see the commercials and our hearts get about the business of coveting what we see. For me, it's the commercials for "Lobsterfest" or all-you-can-eat shrimp at Red Lobster. I have to turn my head away from the TV and thank God that the nearest Red Lobster is 2 hours away.

But our eyes can also cause much more serious damage to our lives than causing us to drop \$40-\$50 at Red Lobster.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Job**.

Job 31:1

Although I am sure blind people also commit adultery, outside of this miniscule percentage of the population, most other affairs begin with our eyes. We allow our eyes to linger too long on someone of the opposite sex, or we focus our eyes on parts of their bodies that set our minds to immoral images. Getting back to the TV commercials, I would guess that at least half of the commercials that are aimed at adults include images of sexual nature in some way. Pornography is rampant and becoming more mainstream and less taboo in our society. I don't know about today but several years ago it was estimated that over half of all the profits generated on the Internet were from porn.

Job says he made a covenant with his eyes in order to avoid presenting the members of his body as instruments of unrighteousness. I suggest all of us do the same. Turn away when the sexy commercials come on TV, fast forward through the risqué scenes on the DVD's you watch or better yet, turn them off if its commonplace.

Our Tongues

Talk about an instrument of unrighteousness, the tongue can lash out at any moment with a string of words that destroys.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **James**.

James 3:5-6

If any of you have ever driven down Highway 67 between Pine and Woodland Park you have seen a section of the devastation caused by the Hayman Fire that raged through the forest six and half years ago. That fire was started by one match lighting an unwanted letter on fire. 133 homes were destroyed, six people, five of which were firefighters, died as a result of the fire, and 138,000 acres of forest spread over four counties was burned to the ground.

This is a small picture of the devastation James compares to what the tongue can cause. The tongue has the ability to set the course of one's life on fire and James says the kinds of words that cause this type of destruction is straight from hell.

You don't have to be Hitler, who used the power of the tongue to join and escalate WWII which at the time was a serious but localized conflict in Asia, to inflict damage with the tongue (Most estimates place the number of casualties due to that war at 50-60 million), a little gossip or slander will get the job done.

Marriages, friendships, parent-child relationships, churches, businesses, and even countries have been destroyed by the tongue. A flippant word said in anger here or a malicious word spoken there is the tiny spark from hell that inflicts unbelievable damage. Some feelings get hurt by a misunderstanding, someone else assumes they know the motives and agendas of another person, and the pits of hell are opened wider

and wider to spew its flames on the dry kindling of an instrument of unrighteousness presented for sin. The fire rages and innocent victims are swallowed up in the process.

How casual are you with the words you speak? Do you understand that when you gossip or slander or malign another person's character or motives you are an instrument of Satan; the fires of hell are actually what's coming out of your mouth? Do you truly understand the damage you are inflicting, not only on the person your venom is directed at, but on the church of Jesus Christ? I have known of Christians who have gossiped about brothers or sisters in Christ to unbelievers. How does something like that influence the unbeliever for the cause of Christ?

Our words are powerful beyond our comprehension. **Proverbs 18:21** says, "**Death and life are in the power of the tongue.**" Beloved, that's not allegory or hyperbole or exaggeration for effect, Solomon is giving us fact. The words we speak have the potential to bring life or death. Solomon doesn't stop there; he goes on to say, "**And those who love it will eat its fruit.**"

You have a choice. The meaning of this Proverb is that your words will come back to you. If you make a habit of speaking words of death, words that come from hell as James says, then death and hell will come back to you. If you make it your habit to speak words of life then life will come back to you.

Another application for us is when you are on the receiving end of malicious gossip, be careful to not respond in like manner. The offending party will receive his or her just due in time.

But our tongues can also be presented as an instrument of righteousness. **Ephesians 4:29** says, "**Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.**" If someone were to describe the words that come out of your mouth on any given day, could they rightfully say words of grace come from their mouth?

Your tongue can be used to speak words of life to unbelievers, words of encouragement to your brothers and sisters in Christ, words of prayer and worship to the Lord, and words of love to those around you. Our tongues can literally be a tool in the hands of God to accomplish His kingdom purposes instead of a tool in the hands of Satan to steal, kill, and destroy.

Our Hands and Feet

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **1 Thessalonians**.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

One way we present the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness is to work with our hands in such a way as to provide for ourselves so we are not dependant upon others to live.

Ephesians 4:28 says, "He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need."

Colossians 3:23-24 adds to the attitude we must display when working with our hands: "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance, It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."

The quality and quantity of our work should reflect the Lord. Showing up late, leaving early, wasting your time on the Internet, taking longer lunch breaks, using company time on personal things, and just generally taking advantage of the situation you are in is a sin. If you had to answer to the Lord for the use of your time and the attitude you display on the job would anything change compared to how you conduct yourself right now? If the answer is yes, then get busy changing.

Where do your feet take you? **Romans 10:15** says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."

Where do you go? Are your feet taking you to places that are conducive to presenting the members of your body to unrighteousness or to righteousness? Do your feet take you places where Christ is exalted or where He is denied and blasphemed?

If you have to attend secular functions then do so with the attitude of representing Jesus Christ to those around you, not to join in on the world's festivities.

In the introduction I quoted **2 Timothy 3:5** when referring to how most Christians are "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power." The end of the verse says, "Avoid such men as these" - meaning those who are denying the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, including the power to be victorious over sin, are to be avoided.

That's a whole different sermon, but I close with this question: Is your life such that other Christians should emulate you or avoid you?

Let's pray.