

The Psychology and Methods of Sin ***-contrasted with-*** ***The Mindset and Fruits of the Spirit***

“The heart is deceitful above all things...who can know it?” (Jer 17:9)

“More Weapons in the Enemy’s Arsenal”

August 8, 2010

Sermon Text: Daniel 4

Scripture Reading: Daniel 4

Introduction-

Power and control. As we have been proceeding now in our study of the Psychology and Methods of Sin as contrasted with the mindset and fruits of the Spirit, we have seen that sin craves to be God. Satan announced that he would be like the Most High. His emissaries, like Diotrefes, come to the church of Christ craving power and control, looking to enslave the people of God. All this for power and control – to be worshipped.

And so it is in such a man or woman’s family and marriage. The abusive person is all about getting and maintaining power and control over a spouse primarily and also over the children. Last time we learned that

one of the most important and effective weapons in such a man’s arsenal is *secrecy*. We were warned that *we really do not know the abusive man – though we think that we do*. We think, as he intends us to think, that he is a fine man, a nice man, a model Christian. He is the go-to guy in a church many times. But this is all a façade and mask. Behind it lurks a man whose philosophy is *to be like the most high*. To enslave others to the service and glory of himself. And quite often, he is a master at his craft.

We must be on guard against him. We cannot assume. We cannot afford to be duped by his ploys because if we are, his victims remained oppressed – and we can find ourselves *aiding him in his purpose*.

“The first time Mary was beaten she was riding in the car with her husband of 15 years and their 3 children. Inadvertently she gave the wrong directions. ‘Suddenly he turned around and slapped me,’ she said. ‘It was such a shock. That night I had a hemorrhage.’ Her husband, an author, educator and well-respected Christian leader, continued to brutally beat her for 7 years. ‘You have this

terrible fear of being alone with him in a room,' she said. 'He's so unpredictable you don't know when he's going to suddenly turn on you.'

When counselors, pastors and the church blame the victim, they unwittingly become part of the problem. In shifting the focus from abuser to victim, the victim is held responsible for the abuser's violence at a time when she most needs to be empowered. This, in turn, further debilitates a woman whose self-confidence and self-esteem are already depleted. Constantly scanning her environment for clues and mistrusting her own actions, she is caught in an endless thought process of wondering just what she did to cause the violence.

Caricatures, such as the one that most battered women have verbally bludgeoned and hammered their husbands into action, can provide a convenient means for the Christian community to wash its hands of any responsibility in the matter of wife battering. These stereotypes become an embedded perspective trickling down from Christian leader to local pastor to ordinary churchgoer. It is a myth that battered women deserve to be beaten or that they cause the violence by provoking their men beyond a tolerable point, says psychologist Lenore Walker. Often people recall situations in which the

woman 'seemed to deserve what she got: she was too bossy, too insulting, too sloppy, too uppity, too angry, too obnoxious, too provocative, or too something else.' The assumption is that if the woman had changed her behavior, the batterer would have stopped his violence. But Walker found that most women 'stated that they were taken unaware by the violence demonstrated by their men' and could not have predicted that the men would have been so violent.' [Battered Into Submission, by James and Phyllis Alsdurf; Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR 1989]

The same kind of man, as we have been maintaining, can exercise his craft of abuse in the church family as well. After all, it is a perfect arena for him to put on his mask and obtain the power and control over others that he craves. Many churches are enslaved to such men.

The Abuser's Secrecy

Before we move on to take a look at more weapons in the abusive man's arsenal, let's reinforce the centrality of secrecy that the Bible warns us is characteristic of the wolf. Consider these Scriptures carefully –

Ezekiel 22:27-29 ESV

(27) Her **princes** in her midst are like **wolves** tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain.

(28) **And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them,** seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD has not spoken.

(29) The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. **They have oppressed the poor and needy,** and have extorted from the sojourner without justice.

Matthew 7:15-21 ESV (15)
"Beware of false prophets, **who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.**

(16) You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

(17) So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

(18) A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

(19) Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

(20) **Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.**

(21) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Acts 20:29-30 ESV

(29) I know that after my departure **fierce wolves** will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

(30) and **from among your own selves** will arise men speaking twisted things, **to draw away the disciples after them.**

2 Peter 2:12-15 ESV

(12) But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, (13) suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime.

They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.

(14) They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!

(15) Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the

son of Beor, **who loved gain from wrongdoing,**

We could go on and on and on with such warnings from the Scripture. The themes are there –

- Deception/secretcy/disguise
- The craving for power and control, greed for personal gain

So we are not over-stating or exaggerating the matter. And just imagine, by the way, what it would be like to have one of these wolves as a husband or father.

Secrecy. Deception. Disguise and masks. The appearance of servants of righteousness (2 Cor 11) but in fact, servants of Satan.

Question: What do you think? Is an abusive person, a man who craves power and control over his wife, over her husband, over others, a person who feels absolutely entitled to the submission of worship “due” them, justified in using his weapons to force that submission – *is it possible for such a person to be the Christian that he/she professes to be?*

I. A King Learns a Lesson About Power and Control

This 4th chapter of Daniel is a perfect picture of power and control gone

wrong. Let’s make some comments about it before we consider more of the abusive man’s weapons.

Notice verse 17 carefully –

Dan 4:17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, **to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.'**

See it? Power and control belong ONLY to the Most High. Any creature who rules, like Nebuchadnezzar, is actually only a lowly creature to whom the Lord, for His purposes, has granted sovereignty. The king had forgotten this. He was about to be reminded.

You see the same thing again in verse 25-

Dan 4:25 that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, **till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.**

It is God alone who rules, who possesses power and authority within Himself. And so it happened –

Dan 4:29 At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon,
Dan 4:30 and the king answered and said, "**Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?**"

Dan 4:31 While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: **The kingdom has departed from you,**

Dan 4:32 and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, **until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.**"

THIS is what the abusive, power/control crazed man thinks. He looks at himself, he looks at his family or perhaps he looks at his church, and he says within himself – "*I have built this by my mighty power...for the glory of my majesty.*" And he really

believes it! Listen now and learn this word very carefully – entitlement.

"Entitlement is the abuser's belief that he has a special status and that it provides him with exclusive rights and privileges that do not apply to his partner (wife). The attitudes that drive abuse can largely be summarized by this one word. To understand entitlement, we first need to look at how rights should properly be conceived of in a couple or family.

NOTE: At this point, understand that Bancroft – to my knowledge at least – is not a Christian. This is a secular book. He does not like the biblical doctrines of headship and submission – partly because he has seen abusers so often appeal to Scripture as justification for their abuse! But let's see if we can really hear what Bancroft is saying – and you might find out that there is more truth here than you might think –

"The man's rights and the woman's rights are the same size. (He uses 3 circles, the man's circle and the woman's circle are the same size, the children's circle is smaller). They have the right to have their opinions and desires respected, to have 50% say in decision making, to live free from verbal abuse and physical harm. The children's rights are somewhat smaller but substantial nonetheless; children

cannot have an equal say in decisions because of their limited knowledge and experience, but they do have the right to live free from abuse and fear, to be treated with respect, and to have their voices heard on all issues that concern them.

However, an abuser perceives the rights of the family like this: [And here Bancroft has one giant circle for the abuser, a very small one for the abused, and an even smaller one for the children]. Not only are the rights of his partner and children diminished – with some abusers those little circles disappear altogether – but his rights are greatly inflated. My fundamental task as a counselor is to get the abusive man to expand his perception of his partner’s and children’s rights to their proper size and to shrink his view of his own rights down to where it belongs.” [Why Does He Do That? – by Lundy Bancroft]

Let’s see if we can clarify –

“Husbands, parents, church leaders, government officials – you have no inherent power, control, or authority resident in you by virtue of who you are as a person. Nebuchadnezzar haughtily thought that he did – he spoke of “my power” and “my glory.” But once the Lord removed the kingdom authority, the sovereignty to

rule, from the king, he became nothing more than an animal.

And so it is with us. Men, you have no inherent, resident right in you to exercise power and control over your wife and children. You have an arm, you have eyes, you have feet and so on, but your being does not include, by nature, power and control. It is all alien to us, and to the degree that we are called to exercise authority, that authority is only granted to us by the Lord, and we are expected to exercise it exactly as He instructs.”

The Perceived ‘Rights’ of Entitlement

Almost as a kind of weapon, the abusive man (and remember, this is an essential quality of sin), sees himself as absolutely entitled to certain “rights.” His selfish “bill of rights” includes – [from Bancroft]

- Physical caretaking - This means that the abuser expects his wife to make dinner for him just the way he likes it, look after the children, clean the house, and perform countless other tasks. He sees his wife as basically an unpaid servant. *“I work hard all day and when I come home I expect a little peace and quiet.”* If his wife fails at these tasks, the abuser feels fully justified to rain harsh criticism down upon her.

And, of course, she rarely measures up to his expectations.

- Emotional caretaking - *“Ray swore at Mary Beth for ‘ignoring’ him for 2 days while she looked for her missing son! His problem was that he believed that nothing – not even a missing child – should interfere with Mary Beth’s duty to meet his emotional needs. She must listen to him talk endlessly about himself. She is expected to sacrifice even a little time doing something that she enjoys. She must drop everything to soothe him when he is feeling ‘down.’ And she is expected to anticipate all of his emotional needs. The abuser expects everyone to be focused on him. The thing that he is doing at the moment is expected to be regarded as the most important thing above all else, even if it is foolish or trivial.”*

An abuser can seem emotionally needy and you can get caught in a trap of catering to him, trying to fill a bottomless pit. But he is not so much needy as ENTITLED, so no matter how much you give him, it will never be enough. [Bancroft]

- Sexual caretaking - We will not spend time in this particular setting dealing with this aspect of

the abuser’s demands, but do not think it is uncommon or unimportant. Suffice it to say that in this arena as in others, it is HIS needs and HIS desires that are to be deemed as central, while HERS are unimportant.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5 ESV

(3) The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.

(4) For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

(5) Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

- Deference – *“This means that the abuser considers himself entitled to have his tastes and opinions treated as edicts. Once he has made the pronouncement, for instance, that a certain movie is shallow or that Republicans don’t know how to manage the economy, his wife is supposed to accept his view unquestioningly. It is especially important to him that she not disagree with him in*

front of other people. If she does, he may later yell at her for making him look like a fool. His unstated rule is that she is not to question his ideas.

- Freedom from Accountability - This is also another aspect of the abuser's mindset of entitlement. In his sin, he considers himself to be beyond criticism. He may even become retaliatory if anyone tries to get him to look at it. This is more than merely not wanting anyone to disagree with his opinions. This is the notion that he is entitled to do whatever he wants, no matter the damage to others, *and never be called to accounts for it.* Bancroft gives this example of an actual exchange between him and just such a man –

B – Can you explain to me why you are joining this abuser group?

Hank – Well, I slapped my girl a few weeks ago, and now she says I can't come back in the house unless I get counseling.

B – What led up to your abuse? Were you arguing?

Hank – Yes. And she accused me of having an affair! That really made me mad!

B – Well, were you having an affair?

Hank – (Pause, a little startled by my question). Well, yeah...but she had no proof! She shouldn't go saying things like that when she has no proof!

Hank reserved for himself the privilege (entitlement) of being critical of his partner, a privilege that he exercised a great deal. But complaints against him...he was quick to stifle.

The abusive man's high entitlement leads him to have unfair and unreasonable expectations, so that the relationship revolves around his demands. His attitude is, 'You owe me!' For each ounce he gives, he wants a pound in return. He wants his partner to devote herself fully to catering to him, even if it means that her own needs – or her children's – get neglected. A spouse of such a person can pour all of their energy into keeping him/her content, but if he has this mindset, he'll never be satisfied for long. And he will keep feeling that YOU are controlling HIM, because he does not believe that you should set ANY limits on his conduct or insist that he meet his responsibilities." [Bancroft]

That is what sin looks like. Power and control exercised with an absolute conviction that the abuser is entitled to that power and control. These benefits

are his rights. And he is completely justified in wielding his armada of weapons to be certain that his rights are maintained! Remember Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace for all those who refused to bow down to his image!

Let's look at just one more of the abusing, sinful man's weapons before we end –

The Element of Surprise

Since sin sees itself as justified and entitled, it sees anyone who interferes with its power and control to be *the enemy*. [This can be one of the most difficult truths for the victim of an abuser to come to terms with – that this person to whom you are married, in reality, *does not and really never did have good will toward you*. This is why so many people continue to follow unquestioningly, for example, dictatorial religious leaders who abuse them. They do not want to have to admit that the whole thing has been a façade].

2 Corinthians 11:20 ESV

(20) For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face.

Now, when you are facing someone that you consider your opponent, your enemy – *the element of surprise in the attack if very useful*. And the abusive man in his sin knows this. Listen now as Patricia Evans describes the thing –

“The second pattern which the partner may recognize in verbal abuse is that the interaction which upsets, hurts, or confuses her is unexpected. The incident occurs when the partner feels that everything is fine. There are no arguments, nor are there any other indications that the relationship isn't harmonious. Here is an example –

“Cora described the following incident which brought the insight, ‘Something is really wrong,’ –

‘I began to notice that when we were together, enjoying what I thought was a pleasant time, something would happen and I'd feel sick inside. I remember the time I parked the car in a dirt lot at a country craft fair. Curt asked, ‘Are you going to leave the parking receipt on the dashboard?’ We were out of the car. I glanced around and said, ‘Oh, I guess not. Not one else seems to have.’ Curt became furious and just screamed. ‘Quit giving me all that flack!’ I was shocked. He was so unexpectedly violent. I was so stunned and felt so much pain. I couldn't even catch my breath to answer him. I was afraid. I thought, ‘Something is really wrong.’”

Think about this aspect of sin. It feeds on power and control. When things are going “well” in a relationship, the abuser’s control and power are really not very evident. There even appears to be a pleasant, co-equal relationship, *and that, the abuser cannot have!* So he launches his surprise attack, at least in part to remind his victim and himself that HE is in control. That SHE must never forget it and act with any degree of autonomy, for HE is her law. Thus the unprovoked attack.

Sin, in its very nature, is *malevolent*. We see it in Jesus’ own words –

John 8:44 ESV (44) You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. **He was a murderer from the beginning**, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, **for he is a liar and the father of lies**.

Evil is evil! Through and through! There is NO good in sin. It cannot stand to see good happening in or to others. It hates righteousness and all that is good. And therefore, without apparent provocation, simply because it wants to destroy – it attacks.

1 John 3:12-13 ESV (12) We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil

one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.

(13) Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.

Conclusion

We will plan then to continue on with our study of the abusive man as an illustration of the nature of sin. There is MUCH more for us to learn. And we MUST learn it if we are to help victims of abusers, if we are to be better equipped to be the fathers and husbands and parents and church leaders that God calls us to be, and if we are to be wiser when it comes to recognizing wolves in sheep’s clothing.

As we come to a close today, let’s just give some thought to this matter of true *power* as it is inherent in God – and be thankful for it. Listen to the London Confession of Faith, and listen in particular for the word “power” –

Of Effectual Calling

“Those whom God hath predestined unto life, He is pleased in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ;

enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone; and giving to them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by *His almighty power* determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.

This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature co-working with His Special grace, the creature being wholly passive therein, being dead [ie, without power] in sins and trespasses, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit; he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, and that *by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.*"

The power of God. All the creation declares it. And apart from it, we would still be dead in our sins – in fact, there would be no creation at all. Christ would never have been raised from the dead. All the universe would still be in total chaos, were it not for the power of God. God's promises are sure and certain – because His power is Almighty. Each one of His people will be raised with new bodies – because of His resurrection power.

Every enemy, every wicked person, all sin and evil, the devil himself, will be fully and finally done away with, all because of the power of God.

And God alone wields His power righteously. Unlimited power in the hands of wicked men is a horror. Limited power in the hands of a limited God provides no hope. But what we have, and what we should be rejoicing every day in – is a Perfect God in possession of Infinite Power, so that nothing can stand against Him. And that is precisely what Paul meant –

Romans 8:31-39 ESV
(31) What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?
(32) He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
(33) Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.
(34) Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.
(35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

(36) As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

(37) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

(38) For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

(39) nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.