

# ***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)***

***“Bow Down, Tremble, and Pay  
Homage!”***

**August 15, 2010**

**Sermon Text:** Esther 3:5

**Scripture Reading:** Esther 1-5

## **Introduction-**

*“When we are honest, we come to the humbling realization that in each abuser is a piece of us. Jesus recognized this when he stated that anyone who was angry with his brother has committed murder in the heart (Matthew 5:22). Here Christ eradicates any subtle distinctions we might make between degrees of violence as a way of defending our own violent thoughts or actions. Jesus cuts through to the spawning ground of violence: the human heart. Thus, the fundamental issue of violence is not one of actions but one of the condition of the heart. Until this heart condition is changed, violence will continue its ‘dynamic of growth which condemns it to increase.’*

*The church’s failure to effectively confront the problem of wife abuse [and, we add – the church’s failure to confront the problem of the abusive, power-seeking, deceptive wolf among the sheep who is so often also an abuser of his wife and children] more than being just a reflection of a fundamental disregard for women or a fear of any challenge to a patriarchal system, is a reflection of the failure to recognize evil for what it is. Before Satan can be defeated, he must be identified. And, once identified, he must be fought on spiritual ground. The problem of wife abuse is not one of feminism, secular humanism, or a lack of headship in the home. It is the problem of evil – unseen and unopposed.”* [Battered Into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home, by James and Phyllis Alsdurf]

**Esther 3:5 ESV**

**(5) And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury.**

Esther 5:9 ESV

(9) And Haman went out that day joyful and glad of heart. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai.

### The Book of Esther in Redemptive History

Genesis 3:14-15 ESV

(14) The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

(15) I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

This book records the history of an attempt by Satan, working through evil men – specifically, the man Haman – to obliterate the seed of Abraham, thus eliminating any possibility of the promised Messiah being born. It also records, gloriously, how the Lord (who is never mentioned in the book!) remained faithful to His covenant with Abraham and preserved the Jewish people in the midst of the Persian Empire.

### Haman the Abuser

Haman is still another clear example of how sin craves to gain power and control. Haman was filled with furious rage against Mordecai and the Jews because Mordecai would not “bow down or pay homage” to him. Mordecai dared to not “tremble” before Haman. And for this, Haman set out to destroy Mordecai and Esther’s people. It is very reminiscent of the plots launched against Daniel during the Babylonian captivity.

Sin lusts for power and control. In your sin and in my sin, we have done this. To one degree or another, each of us have used some kind of “weapon” to force someone to bow down and pay homage to us. It is the character of sin.

But there are the Hamans of this world. The Diotrefes. The Nebuchadnezzars. Men who are actually characterized by lust for power and control. These are the abusive men we have been learning about. Men whose very mindset is that of entitlement to possess power over and control. Men who have an incredible sense of justification in everything they do to others to force them to submit, to force their victims to give them the things they are quite certain they are entitled to –

- The right to have the last word
- The right to be unquestioningly obeyed
- The right to be the center and focus of the home or even of a local church
- The right to hold a double standard which enables them to enjoy privileges while denying the same to others (and in the case of the religious-hypocrite abuser, to self-righteously condemn and judge others while they commit the very same sin themselves)
- The right to abuse verbally, psychologically, spiritually, and physically if necessary

Such a man, like Haman, who is able to work his way into a powerful office, is a horrible danger. *Haman was willing to commit genocide simply because one man would not bow down and tremble before him!* THIS is sin in action.

An abusive man or woman – the person we are using to help us more clearly understand the psychology and tactics of sin – such a man or woman is characterized then by an overwhelming craving for power and control over others – most typically a man over his wife and children – a mindset of being absolutely entitled to that power and control, and a profound sense of justification in it all – even in

being justified to effect various instruments of abuse upon his subjects to gain their submission. *And you must understand, there are FAR MORE of these kinds of people around us than you might think.* Consider, for instance, that the current statistics for Tillamook County are that 1 in 3 women is the victim of abuse. Even if there is some margin of error in that ratio, surely even 1 in 6 is incredibly high!

“Oh, surely that cannot be true!” perhaps you might be tempted to say. “If it were that common, then why don’t I see it?” Well, as we have already learned, one of the chief weapons of the abusive man is *secrecy*. And we need to learn far, far more about sin’s tactics of secrecy – as we plan to do in this series. If we accomplish nothing else, I hope that we accomplish gaining a wakeup call as to the deceptiveness and manipulations of sin, especially in respect to this sin of abuse. How else do you think that Jude could speak of these false, libertine, wicked people *as being planted right in the middle of the local church, eating the communion meal elbow to elbow with the saints, and even being shepherds!!*

<p>Jude 1:11-13 ESV (11) Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's</p>
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error and perished in Korah's rebellion.

(12) **These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear,**

shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted;

(13) wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

Alright then, let's move in for still another look at the tactics and weapons of the abusive man – whether he be carrying out his abuse in his marriage and family, in his church, or both. Remember our original thesis –

***“We can learn about the psychology and tactics of our own sin, and in particular of the enemy’s emissaries sent to enslave and abuse Christ’s people, by studying and learning about the psychology and tactics of abusive men – specifically as they exercise their abuse in their marriages and families behind closed doors where no one else knows and no one else sees.”***

And let's be reminded of some definitions here –

*“Controlling men (and women) fall on a spectrum of behaviors...so we cannot say that an abuser, to be called an abuser, must show “X” number of traits to be so classified. Abuse itself comes in degrees.”* [Bancroft]

*“An abuser is a person who chronically makes his wife/girlfriend feel mistreated or devalued. He may employ psychological, verbal, physical, or sexual means, but all have similar effects on the victim. He will exhibit elements (on a scale) of denial, minimization, and distortion and even justification about his actions. The abuser has an abusive mentality that makes it difficult for him to even imagine being in a respectful and equal relationship with a woman.”* [Bancroft]

And so it is with Diotrephes in the church. This is sin. It is the mindset, the psychology of sin. It is the tactics of sin, all designed to make the abusive person “God.” *“I will be like the Most High.”*

### **I. Love Rejoices With those Who Rejoice – the Abuser Opposes His Victim’s Happiness**

Secrecy. Surprise attacks. These are the first two tactics we have examined which are common in the arsenal of the abusive man. The goal is *always to achieve and maintain power and*

*control over the victim. But there are many others, and here is one –*

*The Abuser opposes his victim's happiness and success. It is at the times when the victim is feeling happy, enthusiastic, or successful, that this arrow is launched against her. Listen to Ellen describe how Ernie did this –*

*“At first I couldn't tell at all what was going on. Then one day I saw that there was a pattern to the upsetting times. I realized that whenever I was happy or up Ernie said something that really hurt, or he put me down and said it was a joke. When I saw that pattern – that when I was up I somehow got hurt – I felt a deep shock. I felt disintegrated. I was trying so hard to pull myself together that I couldn't understand how that could be happening. I think I came to fear letting him know when I was happy. Then, maybe, deep down, I came to fear being happy.” [The Verbally Abusive Relationship, by Patricia Evans]*

We are only beginning to address the EFFECTS of abuse on its victims (usually women and children). I hope that as you learn more and more about these horrible effects, you will be incited to a holy anger against this wickedness. The effects of the abuser on his victim is very, very similar to the effects of the torture and

*brainwashing experienced by prisoners of war in a prison camp.*

*“A woman (a victim) can feel that she is losing her mind – to develop actual psychiatric symptoms – if the obvious realities of her life, including abuse, are denied repeatedly by the abuser. The certainty and authority in his voice, with his eyes twisted up to show how baffled he is, leave her questioning herself – ‘Did that really happen? Maybe it didn't. Maybe I do over-react to innocent things he does.’ The more serious the incidents are that he denies, the more her grip on reality can start to slip. And if outsiders start to notice her instability, the abuser can use their observations to persuade them that her revelations of abuse by him are fantasies.” [Bancroft]*

Wicked, wicked, wicked!!

Why would an abusive person oppose the happiness and success of his victim? *Because the happier and more successful she is, the less power and control he can have over her. Happiness and success bring integration and wholeness to a person. Such a person thinks more clearly about themselves and is less dependent and needy – and less fearful. The happiness and success of a wife, for example, produce a sense of freedom in her, undermining and eroding the bondage she is in.*

Now, of course – notice the ever-present deception in all of this. The abuser does not overtly state that he hates the fact that she is happy and successful. No. He works against it deceptively – obliquely (ie, not directly and openly). The verbal missiles he launches strike with power, but leave the victim wondering what has happened to her.

In contrast, consider what the love of Christ does -

Romans 12:15 ESV

(15) Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

*“No matter what I do,” victims of abuse say, “he treats me as if I were his enemy.” As Bella put it: ‘I realized that if I expressed a thought, Bert would argue against it. If I was waiting for an important message, he would forget to give it to me. If I told him I was unhappy about something, he would get mad. Underlying it all, seemed like he thought I was his enemy.’ [Evans]*

And, of course, a prisoner of war IS the prison-keeper’s enemy.

## **II. Putting Down and Disdaining the Victim’s Interests**

The fruit of the Spirit – love and kindness and patience – builds others

up and takes genuine interest in what others are interested in.

Romans 14:19 ESV

(19) So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

But the abusive man is not a builder, he is a destroyer. He is a spiritual and emotional demolition expert. If he sees a brick added to his victim’s well-being, he sets out to tear it off. To do this, he often resorts to putting her down and showing disdain for her. He upsets, hurts, and confuses her. Listen to Dora –

*“If we were together, say, having dinner, and I just mentioned something I was really interested in, like a new course at the college, Dean would roll his eyes up, make a long face, give a sigh, and look at me with infinite boredom. If I said, ‘What’s the matter?’ He would say, ‘Nothing,’ then I’d say, ‘well, you looked as if you were bored or something.’ Then he’d say, ‘Will you just get off my back!’ This kind of conversation had hundreds of variations. They were very upsetting. Then I saw that he just wanted to put down my interests. I felt very bad that he would do that to me.”*

Now – do not forget what we have been pointing out all along – that such an abusive, power-hungry person *very*

*often exercises his weapons of abuse within the church! A Diotrephes cannot abide people growing in Christ, entering into a deeper understanding of the freedom and joy Christ brings. Therefore, he uses put downs and he shows disdain for anyone who begins to become excited about Christ's truth.*

### **III. No Conscience**

1 Timothy 1:5 ESV

(5) The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

The abuser does not have a good conscience, let alone love that issues from a pure heart. If he professes to be a Christian, his religion is anything but a sincere faith. It is a sham, a façade designed to gain power and control.

One of the great differences between someone whom we would classify as a “clinical abuser” and, for example, a Christian who commits acts of abuse (sin) on occasion, is that the abuser “*does not seem to seek reconciliation or even to be bothered by the incident*” [of abuse]. And this is still another weapon in his arsenal because it adds to the confusion and deception of abuse experience by the victim. Listen to Cora –

*“When I’d been really upset by Curt’s yelling or sarcasm, I’d want to talk it out with him. But, when I’d approach him he’d say that there was nothing to talk about – there was no problem and he wasn’t upset. He never approached me to reach an understanding.”*  
[Evans]

And this after Curt had been plainly yelling at Cora or using obvious, harsh and evil sarcasm toward her. The abuse was obvious, yet he denied it ever happened. *Not just that he denied guilt for it, but he denied that it really even happened or that it was by nature a real problem. Thus, the victim is left confused – torn between the reality of what she saw and experienced, and Curt’s denial of that reality. She begins to wonder if she is crazy and if she is the one who is the real problem.*

***“It is not normal in the Christian life to sin against someone, especially in an obvious, plain way (like abuse), and then be able to function without a violated conscience. To be able to go day after day without the thing weighing upon your conscience. To be able to sleep like a baby who has just thrown his oatmeal in his mother’s face. This is NOT Christ. This is NOT the Spirit of Christ. You may have grown so accustomed to abuse that you think it is normal, and if the abuser professes to be a Christian, you may believe that this***

*kind of thing is normal Christianity. You may be insistent that others accept you and the abuser ‘just as you are’ – because you have lived in the darkness so long that you do not recognize light (if you are a victim). And if you are the abuser, you believe that such evil is compatible with being a Christian. It is not.”*

1 John 4:20-21 ESV

(20) If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

(21) And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

*“An abuser almost never does anything that he himself considers morally unacceptable. He may hide what he does because he thinks other people would disagree with it, but he feels justified inside. I cannot remember a client ever having said to me: ‘There’s no way I can defend what I did. It was just totally wrong.’ He invariably has a reason that he considers good enough. In short, an abuser’s core problem is that he has a distorted sense of right and wrong.”*

*And therefore, we say it once more – the abusive person, the person characterized by a profound sense of entitlement to power and control, by*

*profound justification for the evil he uses to obtain that power and control – is not a Christian despite an ability to offer “wonderful” prayers, to expound upon accurate biblical doctrine, to be even an apparent model of Christianity. Because he fails THE ultimate test of Christ – that he love Christ and that he love others. Satan appears as an “angel” of “light.”*

Matthew 23:13-15 ESV

(13) "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.

(14) [Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses **and for a pretense you make long prayers**; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation.] (15) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte**, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

#### IV. Good Guy/Bad Guy

Proverbs 27:6 ESV

(6) Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.



Still another tactic, well-illustrated by the POW scenario, is that which we might call the “good-guy/bad-guy” tactic. It is still another aspect of the great deception the abuser relies upon.

Human beings crave relationship. That is one reason solitary confinement is such a powerful weapon. This means then, that a prison-guard, for instance, can administer a beating or a session of torture upon a prisoner, throw them back into their cell, and some time later come back with an apparently changed demeanor. Offer them some gift. An encouraging word of some time. *And the victim goes for it.*

In the arena of abuse, abused people would rather have a relationship with an abuser than to have no relationship at all. [Incidentally then, we see how Christ can set the prisoner free here – HE comes to us in intimate relationship! And NO ONE can take that from us]

Alright then, see it played out in the domestic scene –

*“The victim may recognize, as still another weapon of abuse, the pattern that between the interactions that upset, hurt, and confuse her, the relationship seems to be functional. Many victims said that, as couples, they and their abusers could entertain*

*or shop or complete some household tasks without abuse. Consequently, they would forget what had happened, even as recently as the previous day! Some imagined that their relationship was really better than it was, especially if their mate’s occupations took them away from home a great deal.” [Evans]*

But it is not better. Nothing – has changed.

*“With partner abuse, the periods when the abuser is being ‘good’ – or at least not at his worst – are NOT really outside of his pattern. They are generally an integrated aspect of his abusiveness, woven into the fabric of his thinking and behavior. What functions, then, do the ‘good’ periods play [as actual parts of his abuse!] –*

- *His spurts of kindness and generosity help him to feel good about himself. He can persuade himself that YOU are the one who is messed up, ‘because, look at me, I’m a great guy.’*
- *You (the victim) gradually feel warmer and more trusting toward him. The good periods are critical to hooking you back into the relationship, especially if he doesn’t have another way to keep you from leaving, such as*

*financial control or the threat of taking the children.*

- *While you are feeling more trusting, you expose more of your true feelings about different issues in your life and you show him more caring, which creates vulnerability that he can use later to control you. During one of Jesse's bad periods, for example, Bea would probably protect herself by telling him that she was taking a journalism class 'just to get the English credits toward my college degree.' But during a more intimate period, she might open up about her dream of pursuing a career in journalism, and he would say it was a great idea. And still later, when he was back in abuse mode, he would be armed with knowledge about her inner life with which to hurt her.*
- *He uses the good periods to shape his public image, making it harder for you to get people to believe that he's abusive.*

*Now, once more, imagine such a person functioning this way in a local, Christian church! It is a massive propaganda scheme designed to dupe the entire church, and subject the church to the abuser's control.*

## **V. Solitary Confinement**

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 ESV (12) For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. (13) For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

We know that one of the favorite tactics of an enemy, used in wartime to brainwash and punish a prisoner of war, is solitary confinement. Isolation from human contact.

Well, we should not be surprised then to learn that this same tactic is also one of the favorite weapons of the abuser. By isolating his victim from others, by controlling the victim's relationships, the abuser is able to exert even more power and control over her.

*"Many partners experience a growing sense of isolation, especially from their own families or from like-minded friends." [Evans]*

*In other words abuse is a prison. The prisoner is the victim and the jail keeper is the abuser. Christ's truth is the KEY that sets the prisoner free!*

*“An equally important reason for the extreme jealousy exhibited by so many abusive men is the desire to isolate their partners. An abusive man who isolates his partner does so primarily for two reasons: 1) He wants her life to be focused entirely on his needs. He feels that other social contacts will allow her less time for him, and he doesn’t accept that she has that right. 2) He doesn’t want her to develop sources of strength that could contribute to her independence. Although it is often largely unconscious, abusive men are aware on some level that a woman’s social contacts can bring her strength and support that could ultimately enable her to escape his control. An abusive man commonly attempts to keep his partner completely dependent on him to increase his power. Because of this mind-set, an abusive man tends to perceive any relationships that his partner develops, whether with males or females, as threats to him.”*  
[Bancroft]

And therefore, his “jealousy” is not some noble love for his cherished wife, but is in fact his fear that he will lose power and control over her.

### **Conclusion**

What a horrible arsenal!

- Secrecy and deception

- Surprise Attack
- Opposing the Victim’s Happiness and Success
- Viewing the Victim as the Enemy
- Disdain for the Victim’s Interests
- Distortion of Reality by Denial and a lack of a conscience
- Apparent Reprieves from Abuse
- Solitary Confinement

*To the victims of abuse, then, we say there is freedom from it in Christ. His truth will set you free. As a church, as we are doing in this series, we can shine the light of Christ’s Word right down upon the secret deceptions of the wicked, abusive man who seeks to make himself out to be God and to enslave Christ’s people.*

And to the abuser, Christ says this – if you persist, if you pursue your abusive, self-exalting schemes, you will end hanging on the very gallows that you built for your victims.

#### **Esther 7:1-10 ESV**

(1) So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther.

(2) And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, "What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled."

(3) Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request.

(4) For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king."

(5) Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?"

(6) And Esther said, "A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

(7) And the king arose in his wrath from the wine-drinking and went into the palace garden, but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm was determined against him by the king.

(8) And the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. And the king said, "Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?" As the word left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face.

(9) Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high."

(10) And the king said, "Hang him on that." So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the wrath of the king abated.