

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)

“No Abuser is Hidden From His Sight”

October 10, 2010

Sermon Text: Hebrews 4:12-13

Scripture Reading: Genesis 16

Introduction-

Hebrews 4:12-13 ESV

(12) For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

(13) And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

1 Samuel 16:7 ESV

(7) But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward

appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 ESV

(9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

God is El Roi – the God who is seeing, the God who is looking, as Hagar called Him when she fled from Sarah. God looks upon the heart – upon your heart and upon mine. God is able to see and judge not only our outward actions, but the inner thoughts and intentions and motives of our minds and hearts. *God sees us and knows us better than we know ourselves!* NOTHING is hidden from Him.

“As Jonah learned, and as the Psalmist wrote (Ps 139), it is impossible to go anywhere in this universe and hide from the sight of God. If we go to Mars, He is there. If we withdraw into ourselves and cut ourselves off from all other people – God is still there. God knows our secrets. He knows the motives behind

all that we do and say. God is LIGHT, in Whom there is NO darkness – not any at all! Nothing can be hidden from Him. All of this is terrifying for the wicked, and yet for the righteous man, though it is sobering, it is great encouragement.”

How do these facts apply to this matter of the abusive man? Well, as we have seen, the very nature of sin is that it is *secretive, hidden, and deceptive. Sin operates in the realm of lies, masks, and facades. This is why so many, many years can go by without the abusive man being exposed.* And it is also why his victims remain in bondage – sometimes all of their lives. Secrecy, façade, and deception are some of the primary weapons and tactics of the abusive man.

Words for the Abusive Man

Before we continue this morning looking at a few more of the many devastating effects of abuse upon children, let's take a moment and speak directly to the abusive man (or woman). Is there any hope for you? Most abusers do not change. The outlook sounds grim.

But Christ can transform the chief of sinners – just as He laid hold of the murdering, persecuting Saul of Tarsus. What will it look like? That is to say, what will happen – what will it look

like – when an abuser is brought to genuine repentance? *It will be traumatic – like no other trauma the man has probably ever experienced.* When the bright, brilliant, penetrating and blinding light of Christ shines on him, such a man is going to suffer the trauma of realizing *that everything he has been, all that he has thought, every goal he has pursued – the very grid and mindset through which he has perceived himself, other people, his victims, and God – ALL of it has been wrong! Radically, radically, wrong. His mindset of power and control, of entitlement and of justification is going to come crashing down as Christ shows him his nothingness.* Consider again how this trauma of repentance evidenced itself in Paul –

Acts 9:1-9 ESV

- (1) But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest
- (2) and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
- (3) Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.
- (4) And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"
- (5) And he said, "Who are you,

Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

(6) But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

(7) The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

(8) Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

(9) And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Three days blind, three days without eating or drinking. Three days traumatized. Three days realizing that EVERYTHING he had been so zealous for was entirely wrong. That the God he had claimed to serve with all His being was in fact his enemy!

And THAT is how it will be for the abusive man who is brought to true repentance in Christ. This is why we can be assured that –

- The truly repentant man will cease from ALL blaming of others,
- He will cease from making excuses,
- He will be done with insisting on anything from others – including forgiveness,

- He will be entirely through with minimizing his sin
- He, who for his entire life viewed himself as a master, will now be humbled in the dust and become the slave of Christ and the servant of others.

Where these changes are absent, there is NO real repentance.

I. Further Effects of Abuse Upon Children

Listen now to Brenda Branson and Paula Silva [Violence Among Us: Ministry to Families in Crisis] –

“When the seeds of disrespect and violence are sown in the hearts of children, what harmful effects will grow and take root in their lives? How will the harvest of abuse affect their future marriages and children?”

Most people would agree that children benefit from and even need a father’s love and influence. We hear words of caution from many sources about the trauma of divorce and the challenges for children living in a single-parent home. However, the long-lasting effects of family violence are much more damaging to a child than living with just one parent. When someone says, ‘An abusive father is better than no father at all,’ that person is significantly misguided and has no

idea of what living in the chaos of an abusive home is like.

Tony grew up in a church-going family, attended a Christian school for most of his adolescence. He attended a Bible club as a youngster, was active in the youth group at church, and attended church twice on Sundays each week with his parents. Tony's dad was involved in every aspect of his life – from attending soccer games to hosting huge parties for Tony and his friends. He even introduced them to famous people, including U.S. presidents and movie stars. From outward appearances, Tony had a loving family and an idyllic childhood. [Remember: If a person or a family seems too good to be true, they probably aren't]

Behind closed doors, life was confusing and unstable, often violent and dangerous. As a young man in his mid-twenties, Tony described some of the memories and lessons he learned from his dad:

'Dad, when I was just a toddler, I listened carefully as you blamed Mom whenever you didn't get what you wanted. I learned a lot from you as I repeated your words to visitors in our home, explaining with contempt that it was Mom's fault when our house was messy. You also taught me that it is ok to lie, cheat, and steal whenever it served your purposes. Remember the

toys, balls, and sports equipment we took...you said it was ok because some irresponsible person had left them there.

You took me to church every Sunday and taught me to be religious. You encouraged me to take my Bible to church, but we didn't ever read it during the week except when you quoted some passages to put Mom 'in her place' and let her know you were the boss. You taught me to communicate with God only at mealtimes. I never heard you pray, except when you used the Lord's name in vain when you were upset or startled.

I remember when you told me that women couldn't be trusted. You warned me not to let my mother control me. I learned from you that women need to be put in their place from time to time, and if you lose your temper and hit them, it is really their fault because they provoked you. You taught me to use my voice to intimidate women by speaking loudly with a bit of sarcasm and a hint of a threat. It makes women afraid and puts you in control. It's easy to reduce a woman to tears by telling her how ugly and incompetent she is. It certainly worked on Mom!

You also taught me how to intimidate men. Remember how you threatened those men who confronted you about

how you were mistreating Mom? Whenever grown men came face to face with your piercing eyes, raised fist, intimidating voice, subtle threats to harm their family, and not-so-subtle threats to sue them more harassment, they usually backed off and left you alone.

Dad, I looked up to you and wanted to be just like you...until you began treating me just like you treated Mom. Dad, I love you, but I don't want to be like you. You have taught me many lessons that I am working hard to unlearn. Mom deserved a better life and so did I. I've made the decision to stop the cycle of abuse with me so my son won't be ashamed to call me his father and my wife won't live in fear and intimidation."

THAT is what the victim(s) of the abusive man need to tell him. That is what he needs to be told. But it rarely happens – and that, for many reasons. Not the least of which is that many people simply never really understand what has happened to them.

Children who even witness abuse are victimized. They develop serious psychological, behavioral, emotional, and spiritual problems.

“Children can be adversely affected just by overhearing arguments, even when physical violence is not

present...The worst thing that can happen to children is to grow up in an abusive home.” (Dr. Richard Gelles, as quoted by Branson & Silva)

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger.

[Please take careful note of the attached printout taken from The Family Refuge Center website, www.familyrefugecenter.com It summarizes many of the effects of abuse upon children, categorizing them by age]

Let's consider a few common things that a child in an abusive home learns:

- Keeping secrets. And they are not good secrets. There is an aura of secrecy in an abusive home where people live in fear of the consequences of the secret being exposed. Things are wrong, but fear reigns and they cannot be spoken of.
- They learn that violence can be used to solve problems and get what you want. Boys learn to relate to women in a violent manner.
- Children grow up in an abusive home learning that people cannot be trusted. Those who are supposed to love them, *hurt them*.

- They learn that abuse is normal. Girls believe that disrespect and abuse of women is normal.

Violence in the Teen-Years

As boys from abusive homes begin to date, the likelihood that they are going to repeat the violence they have seen in their father is very high. We should not be surprised then that dating violence is increasing, as children grow up and emerge from abusive homes.

“Meredith, a 14-year old in the 9th grade, talked to her controlling boyfriend on the phone 7 or 8 times each night. Her mother overheard her hysterically begging for forgiveness and pledging her love to him over and over. After a fight with her boyfriend, she tried to commit suicide, thinking that would get his attention.”

“Joy finally broke up with her abusive boyfriend when she realized the relationship was becoming more violent. One day when she was visiting the home of her best friend, her boyfriend called and threatened to kill her and her friend’s family if she did not reconcile with him. Instead of calling the police or asking her parents for help, Joy agreed to get back together with him.” [Violence Among Us]

Well, we move on then to shine the light of truth on more tactics of the abuser. Remember, *these are all illustrations of the Psychology/Thinking of Sin.* Therefore, we should not be at all surprised to find ourselves seeing these things to one degree or another in ourselves. The abuser however is defined by these things. These are illustrations of how he sees and interprets the things he perceives. All of it being rooted in power and control and self-justification.

Remember as we look at these tactics, and perhaps we will be almost despairing as we see how cunning and effective they are – remember that the Lord sees it all! He is deceived by NONE of it.

Proverbs 5:22 ESV
(22) The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin.

Boundary Violations

We mentioned the abusive tactic of boundary violations last time and we need to develop it further so we all have a clear idea about it. It is a gross violation of Christ’s command that we love one another.

Romans 12:10 ESV

(10) Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

“Allegations of boundary violations that do not rise to the level of sexual abuse nonetheless need careful examination. Poor boundaries can be psychologically destructive in themselves, can lay groundwork for sexual abuse in the future, or can be warning signs of undisclosed sexual abuse that may already be taking place.

Questions to explore include: Does the batterer (abuser) respect his children’s right to privacy? Does he maintain proper privacy himself? Does he expose the children to pornography or allow the children access to it? Does he maintain relationships that have an inappropriate romantic quality? Does he pressure the children to give him physical affection against their wishes? Does he engage in inappropriate conversation with them? Are there indications of pressure to keep secrets?” [Bancroft, The Batterer as Parent]

Christians should be the most modest people of all, exercising propriety and conducting themselves in humility, and honoring such qualities in others. God has set many kinds of boundaries around us –

- Borders between nations
- Borders between our property and that of our neighbor
- Borders in respect to marriage – you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife
- Borders in regard to propriety and love toward others.

But the abusive man is no respecter of boundaries.

Parental Alienation

“Regrettably, a growing number of abusive men succeed in using claims of ‘parental alienation’ to win custody or unsupervised visitation, even in cases where there is extensive evidence that the man has abused not only the mother, but the children as well. “ [Bancroft, Why Does He Do That?]

The abusive man works very hard to maintain his positive image with people outside of his home. To do this, he often works in various ways to discredit and devalue his wife’s reputation with others. One of his goals in all of this may well be to keep people from believing his wife’s reports of abuse or concerns she might raise about him.

A particularly deceptive tactic is for the abuser to claim parental alienation against his wife. It is an attack on the victim by accusing her of alienating

the children from the abuser because she told the children the truth about the abuser. Remember, sin loves secrecy and darkness.

The abusive man takes great offence at being exposed. He will go to court and claim that his wife or ex-wife is alienating the children from him by telling them false things about him. But in fact, she is telling them the truth about what abuse is, what she is learning about it, and so on. While the abuser screams and shouts and threatens the victim for exposing what he is and what he has done, claiming that she is doing something harmful to the children by alienating them from their father, the truth is (Jaffe and Geffner, quoted by Bancroft in The Batterer as Parent),

“In our professional experience in over 20 years of completing custody and visitation assessments, the non-identification of domestic violence in divorce cases is the source of the real problems that occur.”

See it? The abusive man puts intense pressure on his victim(s) to keep a code of secrecy. He threatens and accuses and if he perceives that his children or anyone else is withdrawing from him because they are beginning to understand who he really is, he screams “parental alienation” – and

some courts have even fallen for his accusations.

So the thing is twisted and distorted and it needs to be set right –

“You have a right to speak about and expose the abusive man – even to your children (perhaps especially to your children). There is nothing sinful or unethical in such exposure of sin. Any guilt that a victim of abuse might feel for doing so is most certainly a false guilt that has been laid upon her by the abuser.”

True or False: *If you can't say something good about someone, then don't say anything at all.* Let's see, did Jesus ever say anything negative about anyone??? Did Jesus ever say anything negative about anyone to others?

Matthew 23:13 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.

Christ commands us to bring sin to light – to even tell it to the church where there is no repentance. *It is the sinner's sin that alienates, not the exposure of that sin.* Christ does not bind us to some kind of secrecy that

covers for the abuser, but quite the opposite.

Feigned Peacemaking

What do you say – if the devil were to come and invite you to sit down with him and chat in some attempt to “make peace” with him, should you do it? Would you do it?

James 4:7 ESV

(7) Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

God tells us *to resist* the devil, not to reason with him. To fight and do battle with him, not to make peace.

Well, one of the common tactics of the abusive man is that he puts himself forward as *the party who is really willing to communicate and to work things out – and many people believe him!* Listen to it –

“Our clients (abusers) are sometimes able to take advantage of the belief among professionals that the parents should communicate with each other despite a history of abuse. The operating assumption is that the more the two parents speak to each other, the better things will be for the children. However, we find that the reality in domestic violence cases can be the opposite, as the batterer may use communication to intimidate or to

verbally abuse his former spouse or pressure her for a reunion. In many cases, a battered mother who declines all contact with the abuser may be doing what is best for her own recovery and for that of her children.”

[Bancroft, The Batterer as Parent]

Another form of this feigned peacemaking can be seen in another common statement of the abuser –

“There was a lot of fighting and bad feeling in our relationship, and I can understand that she is bitter about some things, but we need to put that all behind us for the good of the children. She is so focused on getting revenge against me that she is forgetting about the children’s needs.” [Bancroft, Batterer].

When, in fact, the real scenario is that the man is an abusive man who abused his wife, and in all of this “peacemaking” talk, he is simply trying to keep the deception up about what the truth of the case really is.

Seeking Allies

Jeremiah 5:26-27 ESV

(26) For wicked men are found among my people; they lurk like fowlers lying in wait. They set a trap; they catch men.

(27) Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; therefore they have become great and rich;

Because power and control are his goals, the wicked, abusive man seeks to enhance his power by winning allies over to himself. THIS REQUIRES EACH OF US TO BE WISE AND TO TAKE CARE OR WE WILL FIND OURSELVES PARTICIPATING WITH THE ABUSER IN HIS EVIL DEEDS. That is to say, WE will become his unwitting allies.

“The list of people an abuser can potentially persuade to act as his agents is a long one:

- *friends*
- *relatives*
- *teachers*
- *psychologists*
- *clergy*
- *police and judges*
- *the victim’s relatives*
- *and, following a divorce or breakup – his NEW wife/girlfriend*

No one wants to believe that his or her own son or brother is an abusive man....Allegations of abuse by the son can draw uncomfortable attention to the dynamics of the previous generation...Family loyalty and collective denial of family problems are powerful binding agents. The abusive man can shape his relative’s opinion of his wife over a period of years...because with no idea of what he has been doing to her behind closed

doors, they can’t accurately judge her behavior...they fight fiercely for the abuser when he is their own.” [Why Does He Do That?]

It does not stop here however. Incredibly, the abuser very often dupes *the victim’s own relatives into assisting him. Her parents and siblings can actually end up taking the abuser’s side in child custody disputes, so that the abuser wins custody while the victim loses it.* How can such a thing happen?

“Every family has tensions within it, and abusers use their manipulative skills to take advantage of those rifts. In one case, for example, an abuser named Ian heard that his ex-wife Tina had fallen out with her parents because they were upset that she had stopped attending church. Ian made a point of starting to make a regular appearance at Sunday services and one day found his way to ‘coincidentally’ sit near Tina’s relatives. He engaged them in a conversation about his ‘concerns’ about her loss of faith and how bad he felt that Tina wasn’t giving their children the benefits of consistent church attendance. He also slipped in a few assertions that he knew would bring to mind the kind of person who skips services, saying, ‘Our children tell me she’s been drinking heavily and bringing a lot of different men around

the house.’ Pretty soon a minor tiff had turned into a gigantic one.” [Why Does He Do That?]

In contrast, it is not an easy thing for the victim to go to her own relatives and tell them the truth about her husband’s abuse of her. For one thing, many times the victim blames herself and does not really understand all the dynamics of abuse. Further, she is ashamed to say anything and perhaps even afraid that she will be judged for remaining in the marriage. But silence is not necessarily ‘golden’ in such cases-

“The abuser can take advantage of how much her family doesn’t know. He is careful not to create the impression that he’s ‘bad-mouthing’ her, while all the time he is subtly planting his poisonous seeds. He might say, for example: ‘She’s telling people now that I was abusive to her, and that really hurts me. [NOTE: The abuser can be a master at presenting himself as the victim]. It’s gotten so I don’t want to show my face places because of what she’s saying. I’m not keeping any secrets: I’ll tell you right out that I did slap her one day, which I know is wrong, but she has this way of insulting my mother and that really gets to me....I know I should have handled it differently.”

And what happens after the abuser leaves –

“The victim’s parents find themselves ruminating: ‘Gee, she didn’t mention anything about insulting his mother in that incident. That makes it a little different. She can have quite a mouth on her, I’ve noticed that myself. He shouldn’t slap her, but he’s obviously feeling guilty about it now. And he’s willing to admit that it’s partly his fault, while she blames it all on him. She does that in conflicts with us sometimes.”

“But the part about the woman calling his mother names may never have even happened. “ [Bancroft]

“What her family and friends may not know is that when an abused woman refuses to ‘look at her part’ in the abuse, [ie, she begins to understand that she is not to blame], she has actually taken a powerful step out of self-blame and toward emotional recovery. She doesn’t have any responsibility for his actions. Anyone who tries to get her to share responsibility is adopting the abuser’s perspective.” [Bancroft]

Proverbs 18:17 ESV

(17) The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.

Pressuring for 'Improved Communication'

Closely related to the tactic of putting himself forward as a supposed “peacemaker,” is this matter of the abusive man pressuring the victim for mediation or dispute resolution.

We have all been taught that communication is the key to a healthy marriage, right? Myriads of Christian books have been written on this topic. And it is certainly true – *but not in the case of abuse!!* Real communication requires two people with good-will toward one another. People who really WANT to communicate. Not so the abuser. Such requests from him “to talk” are merely further ploys meant to deceive and to continue the abuse.

“Mediation in domestic violence cases generally does not serve the interests of battered women and their children...Mediators have little training in domestic violence and may make serious errors as a result.”
[Bancroft]

Are WE willing to admit our own lack of qualification in these things? We have already learned that couples counseling is NOT a proper means of dealing with abuse. It only enables and justifies the abuser and puts blame on the victim. But can't you see yourself being drawn into the abuser's

argument that he and his wife simply need someone to sit down with them and help them communicate? A mediator, in other words? And so you offer to help. You begin to “talk” with the victim and pressure her “for her own good” to agree to some kind of mediation or couples' counseling. This is WRONG in abuse cases!

“Batterers can manipulate the mediation process by beginning with an extreme set of demands and then offering compromises from those positions; this strategy can have the effect of causing the mother to appear inflexible, as she expresses reluctance to 'just meet him in the middle.' Battered mothers report to us that they sometimes make agreements in such circumstances that they believe are unfair or potentially harmful to their children, out of fear of the batterer or out of concern that the mediator will report to the judge that the batterer is being more willing to negotiate than she is. Compromises that a battered mother makes in such circumstances may then be used against her later, as in – ‘Well, if he's sooooo dangerous, then why did you give him unsupervised visitation before?’”

Finally, mediation/joint counseling sessions can be opportunities for an abuser to intimidate his victim further with hostile facial expressions, muttered threats, and degrading accusations. Lawyers representing

abusers sometimes act as arms of this intimidation, laughing derisively at statements made by the victim, ridiculing her, or threatening her with future legal actions. Batterers may re-create prior power dynamics by dominating the discussion in the session.” [Bancroft, The Batterer as Parent]

Conclusion

And these are by NO means all of the deceptive, dark tactics of abuse.

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

Who can know it? Who does know it?
The Lord knows it! Thoroughly,
completely and absolutely!

Heb 4:13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.
