

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)

***“The Abuser as Jezebel –
Women as Abusers”***

November 21, 2010

Sermon Text: 1 Kings 21

Scripture Reading: I Kings 21

Introduction

This morning we want to at least begin a consideration of women as abusers. All through this series we have reminded ourselves that though we use “he” as the pronoun for the abuser (since in the great majority of cases the abuser is the man in the marriage), nevertheless women are sinners as well and women can be abusers. If you have lived on this earth very long at all, you have no doubt met some. Jezebel was a woman, and Jezebel was clearly an abusive, power-hungry, control-seeking abuser who had a profound sense of entitlement and justification to use whatever means necessary to obtain the power and control she believed she was entitled to.

Jezebel and her daughters are still with us today. We see that she turned up again in the New Testament church –

Revelation 2:18-23 ESV

(18) "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

(19) "'I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.

(20) But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

(21) I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.

(22) Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works,

(23) and I will strike her children dead. And all the

churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

“Our Lord and King holds all of us accountable if we tolerate a Jezebel in our church. If we permit anyone (man or woman) to be in this church who perverts Scripture so that the people of Christ are led astray (often into libertinism, a misuse of grace), the Lord ‘has it against us.’ Such Jezebels are often, if not always, abusive people set upon gaining power and control and self-glory. Those who follow Jezebel, as well as Jezebel herself, should fear! Do not think that Christ’s threatening to strike her and those who follow her with sickness and even death is something that pertained only to the early church. Do not be surprised if you see a Jezebel and her children struck down today.”

Before we turn to this topic of the woman as abuser, let me mention a few points that serve to reinforce what we have been learning in this series –

A. The Misuse of Scripture

Two weeks ago we spent some time thinking about how often Scripture is misused and misapplied, with

disastrous results in the case of abuse. Recently I received an email article from a sound Reformed Baptist pastor. But here, in my opinion, he errs. And it is a serious error, particularly if applied to an abuse situation. He writes these two principles to follow in dealing with interpersonal conflict -

- *“I will value fellowship with Christ in suffering as one of the high callings of life even if accused unjustly.”* He then cites as a proof-text Matthew 5:11-12, *Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great...* So, tell the victim of abuse to rejoice and be glad. She is suffering with Christ. Go home and be glad. **AND THE CHURCH DOES NOTHING!!!!** The church has just joined ranks with the abuser, enabling him to continue in his deception and evil.
- *“I will forgive from my heart any time I’m asked to forgive, not analyzing whether the offending person is worthy, has perfect motives, or is adequately repentant.”* As

Scripture proof – “...*how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times? Jesus said to him, ...up to 70 times 7.*” Applying Scripture in this way to the abuse victim (actually in ANY case) is terrible. Little wonder abusers are able to hide in the church. Does GOD forgive anytime He is asked? And what have we learned about the tactics of the abusive man? One of his favorites, especially if his façade is one of the great, fine Christian man, is “well, I asked you to forgive me, so you have to.” IN FACT, we have learned that such a demand is a definite mark that real repentance has NOT taken place. To grant forgiveness in such a case is to be duped by the abuser and participate further in enabling his victimization of others.

B. Boundaries are Vital

A second point of review is another that we emphasized last week – *that of boundaries*. As I have thought more about boundaries and how vital they are in all interpersonal relationships, I felt the need to emphasize this subject to you again. In dealing with an abuser,

recognizing that the victim has rights/boundaries and that no one can violate those boundaries without her permission is vital. Victims must learn how to enforce her boundaries with the abuser. This may mean that she simply leaves.

“When I use the word boundary, I am referring to the limits we have around our bodies and our minds to protect our safety, our integrity, and our privacy. Our boundaries can be thought of as fences with gates in them. At certain times we decide to open the gates and allow chosen people to pass through; at other times the way is blocked, and we have a right to have the limits respected. Certain people we prefer never to let in, and places exist within us that may be open to no one.” [Lundy Bancroft, When Dad Hurts Mom].

NOTE: Because God is all-seeing and all-knowing He searches our hearts and minds completely. There are no boundaries that He does not have authority to cross. BUT GOD IS SEEKING RIGHTEOUSNESS! HE IS PERFECT AND CAN BE TRUSTED! WE CAN AND SHOULD PRAY THAT HE SEARCH US COMPLETELY AND SEE IF THERE BE ANY HURTFUL WAY IN US. But man, and certainly not the abusive man –

is not God! No human being has complete power and sovereignty over our boundaries. Nor should they.

“When one of our boundaries is violated, when there is a trespasser who has intruded into our life without permission, we FEEL it. And we need to enforce that violated boundary when this happens. This means speaking the truth.”

It might look something like this –

“Ray doesn’t allow his children or his wife Annie any privacy. He listens in on phone calls, he opens letters addressed to other people, he barges into bedrooms without knocking. He is invasive. He demands to know the children’s thoughts or emotions in a way that feels strange. It seems like he doesn’t want them to be able to get away from him even inside their own minds. Ray barges into the bathroom when his wife is using it, making her feel very uncomfortable and violated. If she locks the door, he protests.”

Annie needs to enforce her right to boundaries. *“Ray, I need privacy in the bathroom. Please do not come in when I am using the bathroom.”*

If he protests and accuses and blames, as an abuser will, Annie still needs to stick to her guns and not yield her boundary. If Ray continues, he needs to know that there are going to be consequences for him.

“You cannot talk to me that way ever again. If you continue, then our relationship is going to be destroyed. The next time you speak to me in that way, I am going to leave – maybe for a few hours, maybe a few days, but eventually, forever.”

Learn more about boundaries. They are key to ALL of our relationships.

[See Setting Boundaries With Your Adult Children by Allison Botke as one example].

C. Things to Remember

Now, just a few reminders of more things we have been learning –

- An abusive person is someone who exercises a pattern of coercive control and power in a relationship, with the confident belief that he/she is entitled to that control and power. He or she sees themselves as completely justified in using abusive means to enforce that power –

physical violence, sexual assault, verbal abuse, etc.

- Entitlement means that the abuser has the belief that he/she has special rights and privileges with no accompanying responsibility. He sees himself as one who has a special status. The life of his victim(s) is to center upon him and his needs.
- Abusers believe themselves to be superior to their victims. They view their victims with contempt. As objects to be owned and possessed.
- The abuser is profoundly manipulative and deceptive. He is ingenious with his disguises and successful at duping others into believing that his victim is the real problem.
- Abusers are skilled at psychological abuse – “brain-washing” if you will. They successfully convince their victims that the blame for the abuse lies with the victim and not with the abuser. Abusers are experts at “externalizing responsibility.” That is to say, they are masters at laying blame upon others.
- Abuse is a MINDSET AND ATTITUDE, A MENTALITY. It’s cause is NOT drug or alcohol abuse, or a bad temper/anger. It is not because the victim “pushes his buttons.” It is his mindset of power and control and entitlement. Drug and alcohol rehab or anger management counseling will not be very helpful because they do not address the root mindset.
- Abusers (AND their allies, like US if we are not wise), deny and minimize the seriousness of their abuse.
- The very high percentage of abusers are NOT mentally ill. This is not an explanation for the vast majority of abuse. Neither is low self-esteem, insecurity, or childhood victimization. Nor a lack of skill in conflict resolution.

That these things do not adequately explain the abuser is evident in the fact that in the majority of cases, the abuser is very selective about his victim(s). He will function well around and be highly thought of by other people. This would not be possible if he were in fact mentally ill.

- The church has not done a good job in this area. Very often, pastors, counselors, and Christians have been and are duped by the abuser and end up enabling the abuse and even participating in the victimization of the victim.
- Finally, and yet of first importance – as Diotrophes (3 John) exercises abuse in his home, so he will exercise it in the church so often. By studying the methods and mindset of the abusive man, we can be much better equipped to be wise to his deceptions in the church, and we will also be wise regarding how to deal with him. Ignorance as to these things is not an option for any of us.

I. The Woman as Abuser

Alright then, back to Jezebel – the woman as abuser. Women are sinners too. Men are not abusers more often than women because they are more evil than women. We are all sinners. Our sin plays itself out differently and men use their generally greater strength to pursue power and control over a woman.

“Today as never before, we see women seeking power, in many cases with as much energy as men.

Like the ruthless and cynical Miranda Priestly in The Devil Wears Prada, women can certainly be power brokers and controllers. This can and has distorted the husband/wife roles ordained by God for marriage, just as the abusive man distorts these roles in his way.”

There is another reason that we do not hear that much about women as abusers and men as victims of abuse. And that is because *it is much less likely to be reported*. Listen to Brenda Branson and Paula Silva, Violence Among Us -

“A phone conversation we will never forget took place just as we finished a radio broadcast on family violence toward women. The voice on the phone was clearly not a woman but a young man with a distinctive accent – a student from overseas who was attending a local Bible College. With a quiet, trembling voice he admitted that he was afraid of his wife. The day before when he arrived home from class and walked into the couple’s apartment, a knife whizzed through the air, barely missing his right ear and becoming embedded in the wall behind his head. He fled the apartment and slept in his car that night. His plea was heartbreaking. Not only was he in an unfamiliar

country but also he was a Bible college student here on a scholarship. Where could he go for help? Who would believe him? How could he get help for his wife?

Research indicates that between 5 and 35 percent of family violence victims are men, but statistics do not present a realistic picture because many cases go unreported. Men are less likely to call the police, because they feel embarrassed or because they may have a difficult time convincing the police they are the victims and not the perpetrators.

Although male perpetrators are capable of doing greater harm to women through physical force, female perpetrators can terrorize their husbands with weapons (including fingernails) and words through manipulative attitudes of vengeance and emotional blackmail. Why do women do that? The core issues ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE ADDRESSED WITH MEN – FEELINGS OF ENTITLEMENT AND SUPERIORITY, NEED FOR POWER AND CONTROL.”

The effects on men are very similar to the effects of abuse on a woman victim. Listen again -

“Men who are victims...cope with it in various ways. They may develop a fight back strategy which often

lands them in jail as the perpetrator. Others quietly take whatever is hurled at them (words, weapons, emotional attacks) but develop ulcers, suffer depression or thoughts of suicide, or turn to drugs or alcohol. Some men escape by spending extra time at work, hiding away in their garage or den working on projects, or by developing relationships with other women. They stay in abusive relationships for several reasons –

- They are ashamed to admit they are being abused by a woman
- They have low self-worth and feel they don't deserve a better relationship or are not capable of finding another partner
- They compensate for her bad behavior by focusing on the good aspects of the relationship
- They are concerned about the well-being of the children and may feel better able to protect them if they stay in the home.
- There are fewer resources available to help abused men

[Violence Among Us]

Proverbs 21:9 ESV

(9) It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.

1 Kings 19:1-3 ESV

(1) Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. (2) Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow."

(3) Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

Jezebel's Weapons

Mothers, wives, young women – listen very, very closely. You would NEVER name your daughter *Jezebel*, right? Of course not. But every one of you will admit that perhaps more times than you would like to think about, you have utilized Jezebel's weapons. Some mothers – those who abuse habitually – may as well name their daughters Jezebel, because they are teaching them to be wicked, abusive, women.

What are some of the common tactics and weapons of abuse that Jezebel might use? Of course many of them are the very same ones that a male abuser would use – but probably there are others that are more common to female abusers –

"I get what I want. I married you with the expectation that you will give me what I want. I have learned all my life how to use my arsenal of weapons to ensure that you deliver, and to punish you if you do not. I was spoiled. I am spoiled. And I am teaching my daughters to do these very same things."

The abusive wife in action, you see. It is ugly.

Consider these tactics –

- Verbal abuse – demeaning and emasculating. Have you ever demeaned your husband for not being “a man”?
- Emotions and emotional blackmail
- Nagging
- Outbursts of anger
- Putting him down to or in front of others
- Physical violence
- Using the children as weapons (many ways to do this)
- Money – far more common now in our day
- Making him jealous by intentional flirting with other men
- Winning allies such as relatives or other women friends over to her side
- Sex, clothing, seduction

What is uglier than a table of women at the country club putting down their husbands to one another? [Well, maybe a group of men putting down their wives at the same club!] To any woman who is an abuser, I would offer the same challenge we have given the male abuser –

“Finding out that you are a verbal [or any other type of] abuser and controller is a bit like falling down the rabbit hole [ie, Alice in Wonderland]. Your entire reality is shaken to the core. To find out that your relationships are broken, that those around you are frightened by you, that something is horribly wrong with you and the way that you view and communicate with the world is a very scary and life changing even...Once you have accepted the truth and begun to walk down the right road to reformation, you will begin to find out that real relationships based on trust, respect, and love are so much more rewarding.” [Patricia Evans, The Verbally Abusive Relationship]

NOTE: I cannot remember where I read the statement, but in my reading on abuse I did come across an interesting and sobering statement – by a female author as I recall. She said that in all of her work with abuse situations, while

she has seen some male abusers repent and change, she has never seen a female abuser do the same. Why? I don’t know, but let this statement serve to warn us of the gravity of this sin.

Another Illustration to Learn From

Once more, quoting from Violence Among Us, listen to this account of Dr. Tommy Snow, who is now an advocate for victims of domestic violence and who works with abusers in a group therapy program. As you will see, he speaks from very personal experience –

“One of the most difficult admissions for a man to make is to admit having been beaten by a woman. It is not natural...not manly. And it is also very fearful, because who knows what response the admission will provoke. Will it be support? Laughter? Jeering? No one can describe the shame that a man feels.

Snow lived that shame for 12 years until it culminated in a nervous breakdown. Because of the shame and humiliation he felt from the abuse and the subsequent nervous breakdown, he didn’t leave his mother’s house for 3 months. Fear kept him there and finally motivated him to leave. One afternoon when

his mother returned from church she reported, 'Brother Wiley said that if you do not leave this house, you will NEVER leave this house!' I believed what he said, so out of fear I left even though I was afraid.

Snow's own violent response to his wife's abuse compounded his feelings of shame. He admits, 'I was no saint either, but I was not physically violent initially. After being struck, scratched, and attacked, I retaliated with physical violence. That made my shame and guilt even worse.' He understood that his wife's violence was an expression of her internal pain – but also being spoiled. There were no consequences for her violent behavior (growing up in an adopted home). She was raised by wonderful people, but they never meted out any punishment of any type for her behavior, thus reinforcing it. He recalls an episode, and a turning point for him, that occurred after a group of young people visited them in their home. 'After they left, she began slapping and hitting me, telling me how much they loved her. This unprovoked attack did not make sense to me. I believe she was trying to say that people loved her in spite of her behavior. I left after that and stayed away for 5 months because I could not keep living in such turmoil.

Embarrassment and shame, however, prevented him from seeking help or speaking up. 'I did not want it made public that I, a man, was a victim of domestic violence. I was truly ashamed and full of pride and she knew it. I believe she capitalized on it as well. [See the tactic? The abusive woman knows he will most likely never tell anyone]

Many men probably think, like I did, that they will suffer greater humiliation if anyone finds out, so they cover it up."

Conclusion

Jezebel ranks right up there with any of the most wicked people in the entire Bible. There is no place for Jezebel in the Church. Yet over the years it has been my experience that many (most?) churches have at least one, and often several. They rule and dominate others. They are queens of their domains – tolerating no one encroaching on the power and control they see themselves entitled to.

Danielle's father was a pastor – a well-known pastor and leader in his denomination. Danielle had her life all worked out, and the life of her future husband. She would see to it that he would go to seminary, become a pastor, and she would

have the glory of being “the pastor’s wife” in the congregation.

She married John. John was a nice, Christian man who truly loved the Lord. He was soft-spoken and kind. Somehow, he ended up as Danielle’s husband. She saw to it that he went through seminary, though he was never actually called by the Lord to the pastoral ministry – as time would prove itself out to be the case.

Once seminary was over and some considerable time went by without John being called to a church, Danielle became increasingly unhappy about John’s performance. They had a number of children by now. Danielle began to alienate the children from their father. She announced that she was called by the Lord to launch out into a speaking ministry worldwide, which she did with her male assistant. John and the children stayed home.

John was an abused husband – but who would believe him? His wife had grown up in the church they attended, the daughter of the pastor. You might guess how the story ended. Danielle divorced John and moved on. And guess who ended up having to leave their church? Danielle? Hardly. John left, once he realized that the church was going to do nothing to bring justice to his case.

There is NO place for this among us. No place for Jezebel. Like the Jezebel of Thyatira, she will lead the people of Christ astray. Her God is not Christ. She serves an idol of her own creation. She expects everyone else, especially her husband, to worship her idol as well. May the Lord expose Jezebels and protect this church from her kind.