

“SEVEN SERIOUS SINS: SUMMARY.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for the Sermon: Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:1-14

Introduction.

I am thankful for First CRC. Can I say I am proud of you, without stirring up the sin of pride?

You have received this sermon series on serious sins well. Many have expressed appreciation or spiritual benefit. You haven't complained to the elders that the pastor talks about sin too much. Considering we live in a culture that increasingly chooses violent kinds of options when confronted with sin and evil, it's to your credit that you have endured this series without calling it hate speech or wanting to shoot me.

First Church still has prayer of confession as a part of our weekly cooperate worship. Many churches have abandoned this spiritual discipline.

Church is where we should be able to be honest about our spiritual condition, where we can all say we are sinners and learn what kind of sinners we should be, which is repentant sinners. The only people in heaven are repentant sinners, the only people who can be members of this church are repentant sinners.

Jesus didn't come into the world for the righteous but for the unrighteous, to seek and save and have fellowship with sinners.

The goal of these sermons has been to open our blind eyes to how all of us are caught in the entangling web of self-destructive sins and passions and sinful desires and to encourage us in the fight for our true joy and pleasure, which will never be found in sin.

Summary of Seven Serious Sins.

We started our series with the root sin of pride, the sin from which all the other sins flow. This was Satan's first sin, trying to be God or to be like God (Isaiah 14:12ff) and it was Adam and Eve's sin, to rebel against God and be like God.

Pride is a sinful pre-occupation with self. Self-centeredness, self-admiration, self-interest, self-importance, self-promotion, self-love. Pride says it's all about me. As the root sin, pride says we can find happiness in god-substitutes like sinful pleasure, approval from others, wealth, security, power, status, food, or doing our own thing.

Anger is selfish pride. It says something I care about is threatened. It might be my selfish desires, my time, my convenience, my comfort, my wishes, my pride, my security, my

reputation, my ego or my sense of authority. Anger is sinful self-interest directed against whatever or whoever interferes with me and what I desire. Anger reduces people to obstacles.

Envy is dissatisfaction with our life resulting from comparison with others, especially what they have. Envy is that sideways glance, that looking over the fence or across the driveway. Envy is the sin that hates to see others happier or enjoying a greater advantage than us. Along with envy comes comparison, criticizing, complaining, ingratitude, rivalry, resentment, self-pity, self-centeredness.

Gluttony is a preoccupation with food, or a disordered hunger or desires. It's using God's gifts of food and drink in a way that dulls us or distracts us from God and spiritual realities. The key term is "too much." Signs of gluttony are too soon, too eagerly, too quickly.

Greed is an inordinate or excessive love for money or for whatever money can buy. It's a craving or desire to acquire, hoard, gain and keep. It's commonly called covetousness.

Lust is any attitude and behavior that reduces others to objects or to the means of our selfish pleasure. It's looking and noticing with the intention to gratify immoral sexual desires.

Sloth is apathy or indifference especially in the spiritual life. Sloth is making poor use of God's gifts of life, energy, time, gifts and abilities.

These sins and all are sins are what Scripture say we must put to death.

Put to death sin.

I made our April memory verse Romans 8:13 in anticipation of this sermon.

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you *put to death* the deeds of the body, you will live.

Colossians 3:5 *Put to death* therefore what is earthly in you.

These verses are Scripture's license to kill and the seven serious sins are the hit list.

Do you bristle at that kind of language? Does it seem too violent in a day of too much violence?

The Bible uses very strong language when dealing with sin, hate it, flee from it, kill it, put it to death or perhaps strongest of all:

Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we struggle with harsh language we need to take a long, hard look at the cross. How dangerous is sin if this is how God had to do deal with it?

Jesus uses language like cutting off our hand and plucking out our eye. Sin is a life and death issue. If left alone sin will kill us. It requires radical surgery.

You've heard about or seen the movie about the young man, Aron Ralston, who was hiking in Utah in 2003 when a boulder fell and pinned his arm between it and the canyon wall. He was trapped like that for an agonizing five days. He finally realized the only way he would live was to cut off his arm or he would die there. So he did that gruesome deed and he is alive today.

That's the human dilemma. Either cut off and kill our sin or be killed by it. Our relationship with sin must be a constant holy violence, a constant life or death battle.

We must cultivate a Biblical understanding of sin. By that I mean we must think about sin the way the Bible talks about sin. We are never to be friendly or cozy with sin. We cannot peacefully co-exist. We must never say, "Oh well, that's just the way I am, I can't change, I've tried, but I've been like this too long." Don't play the victim. Don't become friends with sin.

You don't kill friends. You kill enemies. Your sin is your enemy. Sin killed your Lord Jesus, sin hates your Father in heaven, sin quenches and grieves the Holy Spirit. Sin is out to destroy you and everything important to you. Why would you be casual about sin?

Fight complacency with anger over your sin. Fight your sin and your sinful desires and sinful impulses the way a boxer fights his opponent. Don't stop pummeling sin.

We are commanded in Scripture to kill our sin. This is not a suggestion, it's not just advice, or one option. This is war, someone is going to die, either you or sin. Either we make sin our enemy or we make God our enemy. Which do you want?

As Christians we know that Christ was killed for our sins, He died so we don't have to die for our sins. We are justified in Christ and made righteous before God by Christ. Sin can't send us to hell if we are in Christ, but sin can still make our lives a living hell. As Christians, sin still has power in our lives even though Christ has broken the bondage or authority of sin.

This can be confusing. We are simultaneously justified and sinful at the same time (simul justus et peccator). In our justification we are at the same time righteous and yet still in our sin. You and I as Christians daily have to fight against the old sinful nature. We are a work in progress. Our justification is accomplished, but our sanctification is on-going. Our salvation is certain, but we must not be careless in our security.

The beginning and end of WWII offer good illustrations of our fight with sin.

On September 30, 1938 British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned from a meeting with Hitler at which they signed agreements which Chamberlain called "peace for our time."

Less than a year later Hitler violated all of it by invading Poland and declaring war on France and England.

Chamberlain had made peace with the devil. It is like when we make peace with sin, rather than fighting it. Making peace with sin only make it get worse.

Six years later on D-Day, June 6, 1944, nearly 200k troops landed on the beaches of Normandy, France. By night fall a foothold was gained. Many would say on that day the war was won. The rest was mop up, driving out the remaining resistance. Less than a year later, May 8, 1945 Germany offered unconditional surrender.

Christ has won the war, sin's authority and dominion are defeated. We are now in the cleanup, driving out the besetting sin that continues to offer resistance until we arrive in glory.

But we should be hopeful and encouraged in the fight and not give up because the victory is in hand. We cannot ultimately fail, unless we give ourselves completely over to our sin and show that we never joined Christ's side in the first place.

Since we belong to Christ and His kingdom, it's our responsibility to follow His commands and to put off all evidences of our previous loyalties to the devil and his kingdom of darkness.

Don't make excuses. Don't get sentimental about sin. Don't make peace with sin ever. Don't let your conscience grow cold or hard or uncaring about sin. What does making peace with sin look like?

You are making peace with sin if you hate it less and not more.

You are making peace with sin if you start justifying it or wink at it or let it slide.

You are making peace with sin if you only deal with the outward behaviors or what others can see, but not striking at the root motives in your heart.

You are making peace with sin if you only focus on certain ones and leave others untouched.

You are making peace with sin if you notice the speck in their eye, rather than the log in yours.

You kill sin in much the same way you kill anything that is alive. You deprive it of whatever is giving it life and strength. Starve it out.

Romans 13:14b Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Give sin no opportunity to get a foothold and start growing. And if you have let it start growing, then starve it and kill it quickly before it gets too big. If you are wrestling with a 400 pound sin, you will be wishing you killed it back when it was only a 90 pound weakling.

It is a lot easier to blow out a match than a blazing forest fire.

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to *abstain* from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.

Abstain from sin, flee from it, resist it. Hate sin passionately, fight sin violently, and deal with sin decisively. Notice when and where temptation is the strongest and be prepared. Wake up every day ready to do battle for the sake of your soul.

Use weapons of destruction.

Psalm 119:9, 11 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. 11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

But starving and killing sin is just half the battle, if we stop there we will fail for two reasons. First, to clean the house but leave it empty is only to invite the sin back or even worse.

Luke 11:24-26 “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ 25 And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. 26 Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first.”

There is no neutrality in this matter of sin. There is no such thing as an empty house, no unoccupied soul. Our hearts are all indwelt by something/someone. Sin or a Savior. Either we are with Satan or we are with Jesus. We will be filled with something, either unholy or holy.

II Peter 2:20 If, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

Second, what we do in our own strength is too weak for fighting an enemy like Satan and indwelling sin. The flesh is not put to death by flesh, it’s only put to death by the Spirit (Romans 8:13). This is why we must also put on Christ.

Sin clings to our hearts like barnacles on a fishing boat, they don’t come off without God’s help. There is more to killing sin than just killing sin.

Put on Christ.

To this end, beginning next Sunday we will start a sermon series on putting on Christ through the nine fruit of the Holy Spirit. The only good in us come from outside of us, comes from God, and is a fruit of the Holy Spirit at work in us.

Colossians 3:1-4 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Colossians 3:12-14 ***Put on then,*** as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has

a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

That verse from Romans 13 I quoted earlier has two parts.

Romans 13:14 Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if *by the Spirit* you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

In any war you have to declare your allegiance, you have to join one side of the other. In our war with sin we must show our loyalty to God. We seek and follow Him as our Lord and master and king. In John 15 this is called abiding in Christ, as a branch to the vine.

Abiding means looking to Him, fixing our eyes and mind on Him, living Him, cultivating traits and habits that characterize Him, setting our affections on Christ.

Think about His cross and what He has done for you and at what cost.

Meditate on the pain and suffering He endured for you.

Reflect on His love and mercy. Consider the incredible cost He paid.

Think about the gift of His salvation. Think about what is yours in heaven.

Do this until it becomes truly cause for worship, until it becomes cause for thanksgiving and gratitude. Do this until your desires are more for God and His glory and grace than your own selfish pleasures. We need a new heart to replace our heart of sin.

Old desires and affections must be replaced by new desires and affections, sin must be replaced by grace. It isn't enough to weed out the garden, we must plant fruitful graces.

“Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). The Christian life is not a self-help program, or ten steps to a better you. It is a Spirit-empowered faith journey.

But that doesn't mean we can passively drift along. This journey is intentionally and actively engaged through prayer, Scripture, worship, and fellowship with saints. It is actively seeking, striving to put on Christ and cooperate with the Spirit in cultivating the Spirit's graces.

Being a disciple takes discipline. Fighting, resisting, fleeing, pursuing, seeking, striving, pressing onward and upward, increasing in faith, hope and love.

Pray with me please that the fruit of the Spirit series will be spiritually fruitful in all our lives.

Prayer: Jesus, you died to set us free from all our sin, to put to death all our sinful passions and desires, to forever change us and redeem us. Cleanse us with your blood, strengthen us with your power, uphold us with your grace, fill us with your Spirit and all His fruit, and all of this we ask for the sake of your glory, in your name, amen.