

Getting Down And Dirty by Jeff Strite

1 Corinthians 9:25-10:13

OPEN: One man told about the time, when he was a boy, that a bully used to demand his lunch money every day.

He wrote: "Since I was smaller, I would give it to him. But then I decided to fight back. I started taking karate lessons, but the instructor wanted \$5 a lesson. That was a lot of money.

I found that it was cheaper to pay the bully, so I gave up karate."
(Fuzzy Memories, Jack Handey)

Last Sunday we talked about the fact that everybody sins at one point or another in their live. As Romans 3:23 says "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We all fall down and stumble... we all sin now and again. And I went on to say that we shouldn't beat ourselves up over those times when we fail, because when we do fail, God wants us getting back up off the mat.

When we sin, John writes: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9
It's by the grace of God that our sins are cleansed when we confess them.

But all through my sermon prep for that sermon I kept having this nagging thought... some people are going to say: "well if I'm going to sin anyway, why bother fighting it? I mean, God's gonna forgive me... RIGHT?"

Now Paul actually thought there would be people who might think that way so he addressed this matter in the first verse of Romans 6:

"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" Romans 6:1
I mean, if I'm going to sin anyway... why lose sleep over it. Just go ahead and sin, and go talk to God in the morning, confess your sins and plan on doing the same thing – day, after day, after day. Just not worry about fighting against your sins. Just depend on God's GRACE to cover your them.

Or as Paul said; "Shall we go on sinning so that GRACE may increase?"

It's like that young boy figuring it was cheaper to pay the bully than to fight him.

It appears that the church in Corinth had fallen into that trap.

So, Paul starts out saying: "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be DISQUALIFIED" I Corinthians 9:25-27 (ESV)

Notice what he's saying:

He disciplines his body just like any athlete would.

He exercises self-control in ALL things

WHY?

Because he doesn't want to DISQUALIFIED.

Now what does Paul mean by that – "Disqualified"?

Well, let's look at his examples.

He starts out by having the Corinthian Christians view the people in the Old Testament as being similar to themselves.

- Just like the Corinthian Christians, the Israelites were all "baptized" - in the cloud and in the sea (10:2)

- They all ate the same "spiritual food" (10:3)

- They all drank the same "spiritual drink" (10:4)

Just like we do at Communion.

Here at this table we all eat the same spiritual food and drink the same spiritual drink.

And yet those Old Testament Saints (who were "baptized" and partook of their own form of the Lord's Supper) ended up believing it was cheaper to pay the bully than fight the sin.

"We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer."

I Corinthians 10:8-10

In other words: when it comes to whether it's cheaper to pay the bully or fight the sin, FIGHT THE SIN!

It is WAY cheaper.

Paul lays out a strong warning for the Corinthian church:

"...these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come." 1 Corinthians 10:11

Paul's point?

Don't take God's grace for granted.

Don't try "playing" God for a fool.

He HAS saved you and He DOES love you, but if it looks like you're trying to mock Him by your behavior, you could be in for a rude awakening.

Don't pay the bully. Fight the sin.

Now, the question is: How do I do that?

How do I fight the sin?

Well, first I have to WANT to win.

One of the leaders here at church once made an interesting observation.

He said that "Everyone does what they WANT to do".

Whether they want to sin, or they want to win, that's what they'll do.
If they want to sin, they'll find a way to do that sin.
If they really don't want to sin, they'll find a way to stop that sin.

Paul writes: "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." 1 Corinthians 9:25

IF you're going to WIN that crown...you have to fight.
And you have to fight WANTING to win.

As I was researching "cage fighting" for this series I ran across this interesting quote:
"I had my thhird match last night. Even though I broke my arm I still won by KO. I popped my shoulder out and whn that happened I landed on it wrong and broke it, as well as two fingers. Bu that dosen'tmeen anything to me because now I am 2-1."
(<http://www.points2shop.com/topic/104852/Cage-Fighting/1>)

Now obviously this guy is not going to win a spelling bee.
But he IS going to win fights.
And you know why he's going to win fights?
Because he broke his arm, he broke 2 fingers, and popped out his shoulder.
AND he still won the match by knock out.

And you know why he won?
He won because the pain meant nothing.
Only one thought, one goal, one objective dominated his vision.
He WANTED to win the fight.

And whether it's cage-fighting or sin-fighting that's the way you win.
You have to WANT to win that fight.

2ndly, you win by training properly for the fight.
Paul said the Israelites "sat down to eat and drink and engage in pagan revelry."
That's no way for God's people to train themselves to fight sin.

These Israelites had a relationship with God.
They were God's people.
They worshiped God every week.
They offered sacrifices to Him.
And they sang praises to His name.
But then they went home and then they SAT DOWN and engaged in paganism.

They tried to live in both worlds.
They'd do their "God thing" once or twice a week.
But then the rest of the week they LIVED and THOUGHT kike pagans.

- ♣ They engaged in "Sexual immorality"
Is that a good thing?
- ♣ And they engaged in "Idolatry".
Is that a good thing?
- ♣ And then we're told they engaged in... Grumbling?
Really?

1 Corinthians 10:10 tells us

"... do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel."

Usually when we think of sins, grumbling doesn't get anywhere near the top of the list. And yet this is what God condemned Israel for. These folks complained all the time. Have you ever known anyone who complained... all... the... time? Sure you have.

Grumbling is what pagans do.
Pagans grumble because don't have hope in this world.
They grumble because they don't have anyone (God) to watch their back.
And Pagans don't have gods they feel they can really trust.
That's why they grumble.

If you don't trust God, you can not win the fight against sin.
If we fall to the mat and we don't trust God... why should we get back up. If God doesn't have my back (can't trust Him), what's the sense?
Why get back up again? You'll only get hurt again.
That is... IF God's NOT faithful.

IF you're a complainer it means you don't trust God
Grumblers do not trust God.
And if we allow ourselves to get into that mindset we will lose the fight against sin.
We'll lose because we've learned to think like a pagan.

Have you ever heard the phrase: Count your many blessings?
There are people who hear that and think it's some kind of platitude.
It's what those (snide voice) Christians do.

NO.
It's more than something we do.
It's our basic training in our fight against sin.
We train ourselves to trust God.
We focus on what He's done in our lives rather than the struggles and hurts and pains of life.
We train ourselves NOT to think like pagans.
Because we train ourselves to remember (in the midst of the fight) that our God is faithful.

When we train ourselves to focus on trusting God we learn to remember that God is in our

corner. When we fight with that thought in minds, there's no force on earth that will stop us. With God in our corner, we know we CAN win and WILL win the fight.

That's what Paul is talking about when he writes:

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And GOD IS FAITHFUL; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" 1 Corinthians 10:13

3rd—we win the fight by not letting our guard down.

In any fight, the opponent is looking for an opening.

He's searching for a place where you let your guard down.

He's looking for that vulnerable spot in your defenses that you've neglected.

Paul writes: "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" 1 Corinthians 10:12

Too often Christians get so much into the "going to church thing" and the "walking with God thing" that they get a little lax on protecting themselves from sin. And when they do that, they let their guard down.

ILLUS: Years ago, when I was a young preacher, I attended a preachers' meeting where an Elder of another church had a little talk with us. He warned the preachers there against letting their guard down. He had one basic message: NEVER be alone with a woman. The man was a Christian counselor and he explained that he'd seen several preachers who had run off with the church secretary or organist. He said that on the surface, it made no sense. The woman he left was far more attractive than the woman he ran off with... but this was the way things happened.

- The secretary would come into the preacher's office and do something nice for him.
- He'd compliment her.
- She was flattered and made sure the next time she entered his office she did something nice again for him.
- He responded by even more compliments.
- After a while the secretary began to think to herself: "If my husband only treated me like this at home..."
- And the preacher began to think: "If only my wife would be this nice to me at home..."
- And before you knew the imaginings became reality, and the preacher left town with this "better woman" and left a broken ministry, marriage and family in his wake.
- About a couple years later, he'd begin to realize, the woman he left with wasn't that much different than the one he'd left behind... but by that time it was too late.

I've seen it happen myself. I've it happen to preachers and Elders and Deacons...

They let down their guard and thought they would never be trapped in sin.

They didn't take the fight seriously.

They thought it wouldn't/couldn't happen to them.

They thought they could stand firm... and then they fell.

Don't let your guard down.

Lastly – if you’re going to win the fight with sin you’ve got to decide that YOU have to do something about your sin.

It’s YOUR job to fight the fight.

God will not fight sin for you.

ILLUS: When I first decided to read the Bible for myself, one of the first verses of Scripture that caught my attention was this:

“... the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but YOU MUST MASTER IT." Genesis 4:6-7

Sin wants to take you down.

It’s wants to damage your life.

It wants to destroy your future.

MASTER IT. FIGHT IT!

God will help you, but He’s not going to fight your fight for you.

That’s your job.

Someone once wrote: “Do not ask God to guide your footsteps if you are not willing to move your feet.”

I once spoke with a man sometime back who was struggling with sin. He told me he was frustrated because he’d fasted and prayed... but the sin was still there. The more I asked him about his problem, the more it became obvious, that’s ALL he had done.

He’d fasted and prayed.

And that’s what Christians ought to do.

As one person said “Christian soldiers fight best on their knees.”

But this was ALL this man had done.

He expected just to pray... and then God would fix his problem for him.

It doesn’t work that way.

You have got to decide YOU are going to have to fight the fight.

But how do you do that?

Well, you do what you gotta do.

There’s an old joke about the guy that said he’d broke his arm in 4 places.

And his friend says “Well... stay out of them places.”

ILLUS: When I was a teenager I’d go down to the bookstore in town and buy comic books. It was the highlight of my week to go there and buy an Archie Comic book. And there was this whole section just dedicated to that and other comics.

Of course I had to skim through the comics to see which one I wanted... but just off to my right and down close to the floor was another section - right next to the comics - that had

all the porn magazines.

Remember, I'm a teenage boy.

And I found myself doing this (pretend to look through a comic while casting glances down toward the "porn" section... several times).

I began to realize I was losing the fight against my temptation and I had to make a decision.

My decision?

I left the book store and I never went back.

I had to stay out of that place.

Now we're all adults here so I can be honest with you.

For men, sexual temptation is a real problem.

Men are visually tempted by naked or suggestively dressed women.

And that kind of temptation is all over the place.

You find it on TV and in the movies.

In magazines, on the computer and even on smart phones.

I will never subscribe to premium TV channels like Stars or HBO because they have shows on their I know I shouldn't watch. But I would, if I had those channels. And there are certain magazines I will never subscribe to, like Sports Illustrated, because there are certain issues that focus on scantily clad women.

My computer is in a main room where the screen can be seen by anyone in the house.

And my cell phone... I have a program I pay for that allows Scott (our Associate Minister) to see every internet site I visit on my smart phone.

He's my "accountability" partner.

If you have a problem with sin, find someone who will be an accountability partner for you. Someone who can hold you "accountable" for what you do or see. And if you're not sure you can find someone who you can trust for an accountability partner... talk to me. That's what you pay me for, is to be there for you.

In Romans 6:1-7 "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase?

By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because ANYONE WHO HAS DIED HAS BEEN FREED FROM SIN."

Baptism is God's way of driving home that – not only has your past been buried and your sins killed off by the blood of Jesus – it also drives home the fact that once you became a

Christian you died to your sin... your sin is buried.
God tells us at that point we shouldn't LIVE IN SIN any longer.
We've got to be as dead to sin as a corpse in a casket would be.

ILLUS: I want you to put on your sanctified imaginator for a minute.
I want you to imagine that the local funeral parlor has loaned me a casket and its sitting right here on stage with me (go point to the place the "casket" would be).
In fact, the funeral home even loaned me a dead body to go with it.
And here he is – the corpse in the casket.

Now, let's say we bring out a scantily clad woman and she dances suggestively in front of him.
Is he tempted by her?
No? Why not?
Because he's DEAD!!!
She no longer holds any allure for him.

Let's say that our dead man was tempted by alcohol or drugs before he died.
We go over to him and offer him a 1/5 of whiskey or some marijuana or cocaine.
Does it tempt him?
No? Why not?
Because he's DEAD!!!
He's dead to everything... including sin.

It doesn't matter what you try to tempt him with, he's dead to it.
Bitterness, hatred, greed, selfishness... it doesn't attract him in the least.
He's died to all that.

As Paul wrote: "anyone who has died has been freed from sin."

Now God knows you and I will struggle with sin.
Once in a while we'll lose to sin.
Once in a while we'll stumble and need to confess our sins to Him.
But we must never accept defeat.

God calls us to fight the fight against the temptations that are all around us.
And we must fight with the intention of winning the battle.

CLOSE: One of the most powerful Christian hymns of all times is called "Amazing Grace."
It's more popular than just about any other song ever written. Does anyone know who wrote "Amazing Grace?"
John Newton

It's such a beautiful song, you'd hardly realize that the man who wrote it had once been one of the worst of sinners. He'd bought and sold slaves, spent time in the bars getting wasted. Spent time with the prostitutes. And engaged in just about every form of sin you can

imagine.

But then one day, he died.

He died to sin.

He gave his life to Christ.

And this is one of the observations he made about his life after he'd made that decision:

"I am not what I ought to be.

I am not what I want to be.

I am not what I hope to be.

But still, I am not what I used to be.

And by the grace of God, I am what I am." — John Newton