

“In For the Kill”

Devoted to God

Romans 8:12-13

Pastor Jeff Stivason

July 21, 2017

Jeff: Well, why don't we get ready and ask Don to lead us into a time of prayer?
(Music)

Father in heaven, we are so thankful to be Your people. Lord, we know on a little bit of reflection the kingdom to which we once belonged. And every time we think about that kingdom we cringe. We remember the pain and the hurt that was involved in our membership and our citizenship in that kingdom, and the residue of it remains. And yet there is love and peace and joy and hope which belongs to the kingdom of which we are now a part, the kingdom of the Son of Your love, the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, we're so thankful to be a part of that Kingdom and to be Your children in it. We pray that You will bless us today as we think upon Your word. We pray not only that You will bless us in our minds, and please do. But we pray that You will let what we think leaven itself into our lives, into our emotions and into our doings, what we do with our hands and what we do with our feet. Father, we ask and pray that You will make us different today than we were even yesterday, or perhaps this morning.

Father, we do continue to pray for our brother Bruce Bickel. We pray and ask that You will bring healing to his body. We pray, Father, for the many ailments that he struggles with even now. But we're thankful for Your grace toward Him. We pray and give You thanks that You'll give him a good fellowship time with his old comrades from the Naval Academy. We also pray for his well-being on the ride home.

Father, we pray for Valerie and ask that You will continue to bring healing to her body. And we pray and ask that You will tend to the other concerns of our hearts not only now, but today and tomorrow and in the days to come. And we know it will be because You are God and there is no other. And we pray to You in Jesus' name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. Well, I'll have to remind myself that you don't have the audio/visual. And so if I get ahead of myself, or if I start talking and act like I know what's going on and you don't, please don't hesitate to stop me, and we'll remedy that.

I want to talk to you today about the outline. You have it and I've simplified it. It's Principle 1, Principle 2, Principle 3. And you'll notice that this particular outline matches the book closer than any other outline that we're going to work through. There's a reason for that.

If you happen to have been reading the book,--and if you haven't, that's okay,--but if you have been reading the book, you'll notice that it's in this particular chapter that Sinclair Ferguson says, "I know what I've been saying. I know that I've been saying, 'Put on' and 'Put off.' And I know that I've been talking about the renewal of the mind. I know that I've been talking about what it is that Christ has done for us and the imperatives that follow that up. But it's now time to hit the pause button.

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“I need to hit the pause button because I realize that there are some people reading this book and saying, ‘Yes, but how do you do these things?’”

And so this is the chapter where he stops and says, “Let’s think about how to do these things.” And so he takes Romans 8:12 and 13. And he begins to show us, lead us through on how it is that we think about the Scriptures and what they say to us in regard to sanctification.

Now this is important because if you know Sinclair Ferguson, and even if you don’t, and if you’ve just read him, this is one of the things that you realize about him. He values books. But he values the Scriptures more.

And what he commonly says, and what he has been saying to us in this book, is this. If you read this book, you don’t come away from it saying, “Now I’ve been taken to the Scriptures. I feel like Ferguson has unpacked the Scriptures in each of these chapters. Now I need a book to tell me how to apply what he’s exegeted from the Scriptures.”

He would say to you, “No, no, no, no, no! You don’t even need my book. What you need are the Scriptures.” So go to the Scriptures, put your head down in them, stay along with them, and let God teach you from them.

And so this is that chapter wherein he takes us by the hand back to the Scriptures and he says, “Let’s just think about this.”

So what I’ve done, thinking that this is a very important chapter in helping you to think through how to think through what the Scriptures say and then apply them, what I’ve done is I’ve just stated quotes from his particular book outline in this particular lesson. So when you see principles 1, 2 and 3 and you go to his book, or if you have already, you’ll notice that this outline comes right from the chapter. That’s not often the case, but it is in this particular case.

Participant: What chapter in the book?

Jeff: This is “In For the Kill,” and I think it’s chapter 7. Yes, “In For the Kill,” chapter 7. All right. The passage that we’re going to be looking at with this particular chapter is chapter 8 from Romans, verses 12-13. Does anyone have that in front of them? Please read it to us, and read it loudly.

Participant: *“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation, but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.”*

Jeff: All right. Well, let’s think together about the first principle. The first principle—oh man, that is a great cartoon!—*(laughter.)* All right. The first principle is that *the Spirit of God is given to us to enable us to put sin to death.* That’s the first principle. It’s pretty basic. The Spirit of God is given to us in order that we might put sin to death in our lives.

Now Ferguson says, look. You might think wrongly about your experience if you try to think back to your experience upon being converted, because how did you feel? Well I don’t know about you, but I resonate with what he says. I felt an enormous sense of freedom and release. God had saved me from my sins. There was a weight lifted. A burden was indeed carried away.

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Now that doesn't last. Once you enter into the Christian life, once you move the next step, you begin to realize that that experience that you had is an experience that's indicative of one having been freed *from* sin's dominion.

Let me put it another way. That experience is an experience of having been taken from sin's dominion and having been transferred into the kingdom of God's Son. That's what it's indicative of.

But the presence of sin remains. And you know the presence of sin remains even the next day and the next weeks after that initial experience, because all of a sudden you're saying to yourself, "Wait a minute! I still struggle with sin!" And you begin to realize that that initial feeling of freedom was your emancipation. But that day-to-day struggle is not with the power, not with the shackles, but it's with the presence. Maybe we can say it like this. It's with that dead corpse, the black dog's corpse that remains in your life. So that's what we're dealing with. And Ferguson says that the problem is that some people, trying to recapture that initial feeling, begin to talk about a second work of sanctification, a second work of God's grace. And so they're reaching for something that doesn't exist, at least in the Bible.

The Bible talks about the initial emancipation, the initial freedom from sin's power. And then it talks about the ongoing nature of sin's presence and how to deal with it until we are glorified. That's the correct way to understand sin.

Now I thought about this, and I'm so sorry that this isn't working today because I thought, of all days, cartoons aside, I thought that of all days this is a day we needed the overhead. And here's why. It's because I thought that I would capitalize on the bishop's talk last week, and take us into The Westminster Confession of Faith and look at each of the three sections on sanctification.

I've got to say to you that, having listened to the bishop's talk, I want to say to you that he said something in there that as a Presbyterian just warmed the cockles of my heart. *(Laughter)* Do you know what that would have been? He said something that is not often said, that only the intelligent and the brightest and the most handsome recognize. *(Laughter)*

Participant: Please tell me. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: He said that The Westminster Confession of Faith is pastoral. I love that. Thank you.

So I'm going to read it. I'm sorry that you're going to have to just hear it. I wish you could lay eyes on it. But the reason I bring it up is because Ferguson talks about the necessity of sanctification, the necessity of putting sin to death in our lives. So let me just read these, and I want to make a couple of comments as I go. But here's the first section.

The Westminster Confession, chapter 13, section 1. *"They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them."*

Now what is he talking about? He's talking about those who are saved, right?

"Are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection by His word and Spirit dwelling in them."

Now I want you to think about this just for a minute. I'm only going to mention this, but we talked in our very first lesson about the distinction between the *historia salutis*

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and the *ordo salutis*. And here there’s something of a mixture going on. In other words, it is by virtue of Christ’s historic death and resurrection that we are set apart in Christ. But it is the application of His work to us that we read about here in those who are effectually called and regenerated and have a new heart, and so on. So there’s a bringing together of those two things.

“Through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection by His word and Spirit dwelling in them. The dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed.”

Now the Westminster Confession doesn’t tell you, “Here we’re talking about the indicatives and here we’re talking about the imperatives. And, by the way, now we’re talking about definitive sanctification and here we’re talking about progressive.” But let me just stop and say to you that here we are talking about definitive sanctification. *“The dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed.”* That’s definitive sanctification. We’ve been removed from the kingdom of sin and deposited into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love. That’s definitive.

But then he goes on to talk about the progressive aspect of sanctification. *“And the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened.”*

Now you say, “Wait a minute! I thought that the whole body of sin was dead.” It is. That’s definitive sanctification. *Progressive sanctification* is that *“the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified”*—that is, put to death—*“and they are more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces to the practice of true holiness.”*

So we can talk about it even in this way. The more and more weakening aspect is the putting off. And then the quickening and the strengthening are the putting on.

You see, I just want you again to feel the whole cake batter illustration. All of these things are mixed up in a bowl. And the best way to think about them is to think about them together, because they’re always coming at us in this way.

“Quickened and strengthened in all saving graces to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Now you say to me, “Now wait a minute! Whoa, pastor! Did you just read that?” I think I did. It says, *“to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”*

You say, “Wait a minute! Why is that there?” Well, because it’s in Hebrews. But what does that mean?

I’ll tell you what it means. It means this. When we rightly think about salvation, we can never think just about the justified man.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: When we rightly think about salvation, as the bishop said last time, we think about a justified man and a sanctified man, and the two cannot be separated.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: That’s what he was talking to us about last time in such a clear way.

The Westminster Confession of Faith 13:2. *“This sanctification is throughout the whole man, yet imperfect in this life.”*

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Let me ask you this. This is a trick question that Presbyterians often pull out for their students on their presbytery exams. They’ll stand up and they’ll say, “Let me ask you, young man. Is a saved man still a totally depraved man?”

And then the student goes, “Um, I know this.” Yes, totally depraved. Just like depravity is pervasive throughout the whole man, so sanctification is throughout the whole man.

But then, how do we think about it? There’s a lessening of degree or intensity. That’s the way we ought to think about it. And depravity gives way more and more to holiness. And that’s the progressive aspect of it. We’re catching up with who we are in Jesus Christ.

This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still more remnants of corruption in every part, whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.”

Here’s what Ferguson brings us to in this chapter. He brings us to this irreconcilable war. He brings it up to us and mentions it to us.

And this is what he says. He says, *“If it were not for definitive sanctification, you would not be able to engage in progressive sanctification.”* The war that you experience in your members is because of that tension, because you are no longer a citizen of the kingdom of darkness but are a citizen of the kingdom of light. Yet you feel as though you have the presence of sin of that kingdom in you. It’s a dead presence, but it’s still there. And thus there is an irreconcilable war, not to mention that Satan takes advantage of it, not to mention that the world takes advantage of it. But sin in you takes advantage of it.

And then chapter 13, section 3. *“In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail, yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ the regenerate part doth overcome, and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”*

One thing that I would say to you is, and one thing I would tweet if I could, if I could go back about five hundred years, is that I don’t think that there is a regenerate part that doth overcome. There is a regenerate man that overcomes. So I just make that clarification.

But this all leads to something very important, this whole idea of the necessity that we see in the Westminster Confession, this irreconcilable war. You see, brothers, I want to tell you something. Whether you realize it or not, if you are a Christian, you are in a war. You can’t get away from it. And if you are in a war, there’s a necessity for you to fight. That’s what Ferguson is saying. He’s saying that you’ve got to come to grips with that. That’s part of the renewal of the mind, coming to that particular position.

But then he says this. He says that you also have a responsibility. Now here’s what I want you to notice. In his book, in that particular chapter, and if you have Romans chapter 8, verses 12 and 13 in front of you, one of the things that you’ll notice in verse 13 is this. It says that *you* put to death the deeds of the body. That’s what verse 13 says. *“You put to death the deeds of the body.”* It doesn’t say that the Spirit puts to death the deeds of the body.

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Now you say to me, “Wait a minute! Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa! What about right before that, that little clause, that phrase?” And I would say this to you. Yes, yes, yes, you’re right. It is through or by the Spirit that we put to death the deeds of the body. But it is *you*, drawing on the resources applied to you by the Holy Spirit who puts to death the deeds of the body.

And so in this fight, in this irreconcilable war, you are an active participant. You have a responsibility. Here’s the bottom line. You cannot sit around and say, “I’m going to let go and let God in all of this.”

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: You can’t do that. You do that and you’ve already lost the battle. You already know what God has done. You need to do because He has done it. Go ahead, Bill.

Bill: Wouldn’t that be a good place to keep in mind the acronym of grace—God’s resources at Christ’s expense?

Jeff: Yup. God’s resources at Christ’s expense.

Participant: I thought it was God’s riches.

Jeff: We’re going to change it from this time, Sig. *(Laughter)* Don’t tell anybody, but I like resources for right now.

Participant: That acronym isn’t Scripture; we can change it. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Okay, all right. Bring Ephesians 2:4 into this. All right, thank you.

Participant: This is great because I think we all are struggling. And sometimes the question has been asked in discussions I’ve had afterwards, when we say that we’re going to do it through the Spirit, but what does that actually mean? I mean how do we actually experience that so that it doesn’t end up becoming the strength of the flesh?

Jeff: Right.

Participant: I guess that’s the thing I’m struggling with. And I’m looking at the Westminster Confession. “*The several lusts thereof are more and more weakened*” and put to death. So that would almost be an individual experience, would it not, because there are some people whose lusts thereof are more and more weakened more obviously, and ones that are more and more weakened less obviously, to one extent or another.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: So I guess there is no kind of standard, because my lusts are weakened to a certain level and somebody else’s are not. I guess that gives us patience with each other. I could say, “Well gee whiz, Jeff! You’re not progressing as fast as you ought to be. What’s the problem?”

Jeff: Yes, you said a number of things there. They were all good. Let me just react to some of them because they were very good.

Number one, I think you’re absolutely right. He’s going to bring this back at the very end of the chapter. This is a group project. We’re sanctified together.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: I think the interesting thing about that is that I don’t like Dietrich Bonhoeffer very much because he’s a liberal theologian. I think Bonhoeffer has a tendency to be captured by the evangelicals because of his evangelical works. But he has neo-orthodox underpinnings. But one of the things that he says in *Life Together* that I really appreciate

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is that the person who’s looking for the perfect church needs to move on very quickly. *(Laughter)* Because the church that Christ has established is full of both mature and less mature people. And the mature aren’t going to continue in their maturity unless there are the immature. And the immature aren’t going to grow unless they’re being pulled up by the mature.

So yes. That’s what Scripture says. And I think that Bonhoeffer is really good on that point. I think we need to take that to heart. I think the other thing that we need to remember is—

Participant: I was talking about it. In fact Don and I have talked about it—the Spirit.

Jeff: Yes, the Spirit. Sorry. How does this become something where we know that the Spirit is doing it in us, and we don’t just rely on our own strength? And I think it is this. We have to say to ourselves that this is what part of the renewal of the mind is all about. We have to say this to ourselves. If the Spirit of God is in me,—and that *if* from Colossians 3 is *since*. And that’s part of the renewal of the mind. I need to remember that since the Spirit of God is at work in me, I need to “*seek the things that are above.*”

I need to understand that there’s not something that I need to do in order to make sure about the Holy Spirit. You know, you’re driving in the car and you have to throw it into four-wheel drive. Maybe not with today’s cars, but you used to actually have to put it into four-wheel drive.

Well, when you’re trying to gain traction against a particular issue in your life, you don’t throw it into Holy Spirit gear. *(Muffled laughter)* You don’t do that. You know that you’re already in the Holy Spirit.

You say, “I don’t feel like it. And I don’t feel the help.” We’re going to get to that. But right now you just need to know, as part of the renewal of the mind, that it is since the Spirit of God is in you if you’re in Christ.

Participant: Amen.

Second Participant: It’s a Biblical fact, not a personal experience.

Jeff: That’s right.

Participant: The fundamental thing here is that you’ve got to take God at His word.

Jeff: That’s right.

Participant: If you don’t want to, then you can play around with experience till you’re blue in the face.

Jeff: That’s right. That’s exactly it.

Participant: Is it wrong to ask God to have a stronger presence in your life of the Holy Spirit, where you’re just not feeling that you’re getting the guidance you really need to correct your behavior?

Jeff: It’s not wrong. But I think that what God would say to you is that maybe you need to put some of the things out of your life and to put into your life some of the things that I’ve asked you to put on. Put those on and you’ll have a greater sense of My presence in your life. I think that’s what God might say to us. Now Carl is up here.

Carl: I think you have to recognize that the battle that Ted was talking about is for each one of us to fight the battle daily, and some are at different levels than others.

Jeff: Yes.

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Carl: And then as God’s mercy and His grace works in us, as Jesus has helped us to overcome, our job is to help somebody else to come on over. And as we help them to come on over, then we all grow because all boats rise with the tide, right?

Jeff: Yes.

Carl: And so with God’s grace and His mercy, even though I’m on a different level than Ted, we’re still rising. And as I look to him in his maturity, then I’m going to grow. And as he pulls me up, iron sharpens iron.

Jeff: You know what, Carl? You know that some of the best spiritual lessons I’ve learned I’ve learned from hockey, right? I mean, when I’m struggling, when I’m contending and putting my head on the pillow at night and I know I’ve blown it, one of the things I say to myself is the same thing that Fleury says to himself after a bad game. “I’ll put this one behind me.” *(Laughter)* And doesn’t Sidney Crosby make every player better? So you find a Sidney Crosby in your life and you play hockey with him, right? Well, wait a minute. Play the Christian life with him, or engage in the Christian life with him. A good player is only going to make you better.

I’ll never forget it, Carl. That’s a great point. I’ll never forget it. I took martial arts a long time ago in my life. And one of the things that happened was that a friend of mine owned the particular building that it was being hosted in. And he said to me, “I’ve got the instructor coming over to my house once a week and I practice with him.” He said, “Would you like to come on over?”

I said, “Yeah, I’ll do that.”

I’ll tell you what. I improved tremendously just by practicing with the instructor. I want to tell you something. You get hit in the head by the instructor a few times and you’re going to watch. *(Laughter)* Even if you’re watching, you know? If you play a sport with somebody better than you, you’re only going to improve.

If you identify somebody in the Christian life who is a mature godly man, and you get close to him, you’re going to become a godly man. That’s a Biblical principle. Paul pours his life into others. It just happens that way.

Okay. Well let’s go on. So Ferguson says that there’s a need for this in us. There’s a responsibility on our part to engage in this war.

But then the whole thing comes around to the ability that we have. We have an ability, and I would just simply say this to you. You need to think about this in terms of the man with the withered hand.

Do you remember when Jesus goes into the synagogue and He sees the man with the withered hand on the Lord’s Day? And he says to the man, “*Stretch out your hand.*” Now that man had no power to stretch out his hand. Before Jesus walked into that synagogue, that man could try all day long and he would not have the resources, the power, the ability to stretch out his hand.

Jesus says, “*Stretch out your hand*”, thus saying to him, “The resources are in me. Now you stretch out your hand.” The man stretches out his hand. It’s the man who stretches out his hand. But the only way he’s going to stretch out his hand is because Jesus told him to.

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I just want to remind you. That goes back again to the monergism we talked about. The monergism is Jesus saying, “*Stretch out your hand.*” The man would not have been able to stretch out his hand otherwise. But the synergism is that the man stretches out his hand. So all of these things relate.

Now here’s the deal. All of this is just part of the mindset that we’re supposed to accrue. You have the ability to be different today than you were yesterday. Not only do you have the responsibility, but you can’t say to yourself, “Well, I just don’t have the ability.” No, you do. You’ve just not made use of it. And then this. Yes?

Participant: I think there’s a verse. “*Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, because God is at work in you both to will and to do.*” He gives you both His will to do it and then the ability.

Jeff: That’s exactly it. Now that takes us to the very last thing. Oh, wait a minute, right here. Bill? Oh, sorry about that.

That takes us to the last thing that I want to share with you,. And it’s something that Ferguson says. He asks, “*Do you have the will to do it?*” And what he’s really asking is this, and he is asking this question of us. Do you really want to put sin to death in you? I mean, you need to if you’re in Christ. You have the responsibility to do so. You have the ability to do so. Do you really want to?

How many of you have read *The Great Divorce*? Some of you have read *The Great Divorce*. *The Great Divorce* is a great book. It’s an allegory. If you don’t like allegory, you may like it, you may not.

It’s a bus trip from hell. Everybody gets on the bus from hell and they go up into heaven. They come up through a blade in the grass because everybody is small in hell. And when they get into the outer reaches of glory, the bus has to enlarge. That’s why everybody is a ghost or a vapor, because they’re stretched down, they’re all thin.

But this angel walks up to this one ghost, this stretched man, this vaporized man. He has a demon on his shoulder and it’s lust. It’s a lizard. And the angel says, “Do you want me to kill it?”

And the man says, “Well of course. Well, maybe not. I mean, I don’t think so. No.”

And the angel says, “Do you want me to kill it?”

And the man says, “Well you might kill me if you kill it.”

He says, “Do you want me to kill it?”

He says, “You know, you may hurt me. You may kill me.”

The angel says, “I’m not going to kill you. Do you want me to kill it?”

“But you may hurt me.”

“I am going to hurt you. Do you want me to kill it?” You know, on and on and on. He’s just struggling.

And then he says, “Kill it.” And the angel kills the lizard and it becomes a stallion. And the man becomes a prince.

And Lewis’s point is—and it’s not a perfect allegory,—but Lewis’s point is that you only become new through death. And that’s what we’re talking about here.

But the point is do you want it? That’s the question. Do you want it? Well that’s the first principle.

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The second principle is this. The second principle is that *the gospel not only provides a new mindset, but new motives as well*. So Ferguson says that the second principle is that you have motives. And I'm going to go over these rather quickly because of time,. And also because the bishop's teaching last time dealt with two of these.

The first one is that *Christ died for our sins*. This is the point that I want to make to you. I actually took these three in Ferguson's chapter and rearranged them just a bit so that I could deal quickly with the first two.

But here's the point that I want to make to you. *Christ died for sins*. But the point is that He died for *our* sins. And if you're the one sitting there thinking about this, you need to say, "Christ died for my sins."

And so when I look at the cross, I see what sin deserves. But don't keep it in the abstract. Say, "I see what my sin deserved." And you can even say it like this. "I see what I deserved."

And then the next motivation is this: *the Spirit of God*. The Spirit of God applies the work of Christ to us, leads us. But here's the thing that we need to keep in mind. He leads us. And I think that we need to remember that.

Then the last thing, the third point that comes here under the motivation, is this. If we had a minute, we might do an exercise just to let this sink deeply into our minds. But I want you to write it down and think about this throughout the day. It's a simple principle. It's one you know well in Scripture. *In the Christian life we always reap what we sow*. We reap what we sow in the Christian life And Ferguson says that's a motivating principle.

So it's not simply Christ who is a motivating principle. It's not just the Spirit of God in you who is a motivating principle. But a motivating principle is that you reap what you sow. Let me put it this way. What you put into your Christian life is what you're going to get out of it.

You know, there are people out there who will say things just like this. "You know, I just want to get into heaven. That's all I want to do, just as long as I'm there." You know what? That's not Biblical. The Bible doesn't say anything about that.

The Bible says that there are people out there who strive, who reach for what they already possess in Christ. Not everybody is going to be on the same level. That's what we've talked about earlier. Ted mentioned that. We shouldn't expect everybody to be on the same level. But here is one thing that we should expect from everybody in this room. Everybody in this room ought to know about every other person in this room that this person is reaching hard. Today, when we go out into the world, we ought to know that each one of us is reaching hard for the crown. Knowing that we already possess it in Christ, we're becoming what we are, and we're reaching for it. That's the idea.

So that's a motive, because here's the deal. If you're not reaching for it, if it's lackluster, you're going to reap what you sow. It's as simple as that.

Participant: Jeff?

Jeff: Please.

Participant: We're reaching hard for the crown if we want to reach hard for the crown.

Jeff: That's right.

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Participant: And you said that, but didn’t get into what causes the wanting and the desiring. To me, that’s the critical crux. Thank you very much.

Jeff: That’s appropriate. Here’s the principle, principle 3. *Paul weaves in practical directives for dealing with sin.* So here is what he would say in answer to that, Ted. He would say this. He would say that when we deal with sin, if you want to be close to God, if you want to have a sense of His presence, however you want to put it, you need to deal with all of sin—not just a part of it or a portion of it, but all of it.

In other words, look, brothers. Here’s the deal. It’s not just true of us as brothers. It’s true of our sisters as well. We will hide things, keep things back, have pet sins. We will. We will do things and hide them from others. You will not tell your best friend, even your accountability partner, some of your innermost struggles. And that’s wrong, especially if you’re supposed to.

But the Scriptures call us to mortify all sin in us, not just particular sins in us.

See, what we have a tendency to do is to divert. We have a tendency to divert our sins instead of mortifying them. What do I mean by that? Well, just because of time let’s not talk about that so much as talking about rooting out the sin involved. And let me say this.

I hate this show. But I have watched it a couple of times. It’s fascinating in a morbid sort of way—“Hoarding.” If you’ve ever watched “Hoarding”, one of the things that you discover is this. The problem is never about collecting stuff or things. It’s not just about the collection of stuff. If you really want to uproot the problem, you don’t just clean out the house. You get to the root of the problem.

And the root of the problem is usually something like this. “I lost my husband when we were first married and I started clinging to everything. Why? Because I didn’t want to lose anything anymore.” You know, that kind of thing.

If you want to deal with the problem, you’ve got to do more than clean out the house. And that’s the same with us. If you want to deal with the problem, you’ve got to get to the root of it. And that means dealing with all of sin.

Now here it gets to what we were talking about with Ted. The idea then is that we need to remember that we need to protect our minds. We need to guard what comes into our thinking. By now, in lesson 7, hopefully you’re starting to realize that *renewal of the mind is central to everything in the Christian life, especially living it.* You need to protect your mind.

You know, I was standing and talking to a guy one day, and he kept looking over my shoulder. And we were outside, in his neighborhood. He kept looking over my shoulder and I didn’t know what he was looking at. And we were talking, and every time I’d look at him his eyes were over my shoulder. I thought, “I wonder what he’s looking at.”

And then we parted ways and I went to leave, and there was his female neighbor bent over, with her rear end pointed toward us. And that’s what he was looking at.

Now he knew I was a Christian brother. I knew he was a Christian brother. One of the things that he could have done is that he could have said, “Brother, I have a view that I can’t handle. Let’s just tilt slightly, “ right? (*Laughter*) You have got to guard what goes into your head, because if you don’t guard what goes into your head, you’re going to put things into your head that are going to reap a harvest.

“In For the Kill”

But not only do you have to guard what goes into your head,--and how does it go into your head? It goes into your head through your senses, right? For us, a problem is the eyes. We need to guard what goes in through these eyes.

Not only do you need to do that, but you need to fill your head. What am I doing? I'm talking about putting off and putting on. You need to fill your head. You need to saturate your mind with what? With Philippians 4—good things, profitable things, things that will produce a good harvest in you.

How are you going to find those? How about the word of God? Brothers, I want to tell you something. One of the things that I have realized over the course of a twenty-five year ministry is that if we're people of the Book, we don't read it nearly enough. We don't spend enough time memorizing it, reading it, filling ourselves with it. I just know that. That's not a judgment against any one individual. I'm telling you that after twenty-five years of ministry in three churches that I know we don't read the Bible nearly enough.

We need to fill our heads, because here's the deal. You can have a plot of dirt that has weeds in it. Pull out those weeds, and if you go back later, it's going to have weeds again. You need to pull out those weeds and put plants and crops in their place. If you go out and weed the field and don't plant anything in its place, it's not going to produce a harvest. It's going to produce weeds again.

You need to put on. You need to fill your mind with things that are going to produce a good harvest. And I want you to know this, and this is the last thing I want you to know. The last thing I want you to know is that we will be kept from this because of sin. We have this stupid tendency—you know, it's in Psalm 96—“*Understand, O stupid people; when, O fools, will you be wise?*”

We're stupid people. And we're stupid because of our sinfulness. And what begins to happen is that we begin to think, “I'm the only one who struggles with this sin”, right? I'm the only one who struggles with this sin. I can't tell anybody. I'm going to be ashamed!

Why? I guess that every man in this room, under the ministry of Bruce Bickel, believes in total depravity. Well then, who in the world would sit here and believe “I can't tell him. He might be shocked about this.”

Really? Then what is total depravity? Can somebody explain it to me? Do you see what I mean? We know we're fallen, brothers. So if you're struggling, then go to a brother that you trust, find that mentor who plays better than you do, remember, and start playing hockey with him. And you'll get better. That's the idea.

Now here are the three principles. *Develop a renewed mind.* You need to develop your renewed mind. Your mind is renewed. You need to develop your renewed mind.

Secondly, you need to *cultivate motives* that have already been given to you. Ferguson only lists three; there are more. Cultivate motives that have already been given to you.

And thirdly, *you need to become skilled practitioners at killing the sin that remains.* Or, if you want to use it the way we've been thinking about it, we need to become expert janitors at cleaning up dead corpses in our lives.

“In For the Kill”

That’s the idea. I mean, if you’re waiting for the silver bullet, if you’re waiting for the lesson that says, “Let me just tell you. Now I’m going to tell you the secret of it all. The faithful have been wading through it all. Now let me tell you the secret,” you’re missing it. All right; well, that’s all.

Let me pray for us and we’ll be done. Father in heaven, thank You so much for this day and for the time You’ve given us. Lord, we pray that Your hand of blessing will be upon us and that You’ll cultivate these things in our lives. Cultivate them, Lord, for Your glory, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)