

Effort in Holiness by the Power of Another

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the importance of actively fighting against sin and selfishness in our lives, rather than being passive due to the work of Christ and God's providence. It explores how the cross and God's providence should motivate us to energetically oppose sin, showing that they do not lead to passivity but rather to a radical love and grace towards others. The message highlights the need to actively pursue holiness, kindness, and humility in light of God's all-governing providence.

Scripture: Romans 6:5, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Ephesians 4:32, Philippians 2:12, 1 Corinthians 15:10

Topics: "Active Resistance to Sin", "Pursuing Holiness and Kindness"

Description

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Transcript

In our final session, I want to bring the providence of God right down to the kitchen, the bedroom, and the workplace to show how precious and powerful and needed it is, particularly in our battling our own sin, selfishness, pride, self-pity, anger. How do you go about fighting your sin to produce, instead of selfishness, generosity and to produce humility and kindness and patience and all the fruits of the spirit? How do you pursue this in view of God's all-governing, all-ordering, all-sustaining providence in your life? Because the reason this question is urgent is because there are people who think that because of the work of Christ and the providence of God, we should be passive. We become passive instead of responding to providence and to the work of Christ with energetic effort in opposition to our sin.

And I want to show why that's an understandable mistake and that it is a mistake. I mean, think about the cross first and then providence. When we read what was achieved on the cross, we know all our sins are covered.

Our guilt is canceled past, present, future. And therefore, some people are inclined to think, well, if my sin is covered past, present, and future, then my own concern with my active holiness and overcoming my daily sinning is no big deal. It's all covered.

There's nothing urgent about it. So you can see how the cross might have that effect. Same thing with providence.

Well, if God rules me totally and is involved in my life and is sovereign, overcoming everything, let him do it. Those are both mistakes. First, I'll show it's a and then with regard to providence, there are three pictures I want to mention of how Christ saves us from sin in Paul's writings.

Picture one, when he died for us, we died in him. Romans 6, 5, we have been united with him in a death like his. So I'm dead.

Does that produce passivity? No. A few verses later, verse 11, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin. Verse 12, let not sin reign in your mortal body.

So because you died with Christ, energetically put self to death. Here's the second picture. We were bought by the blood of Christ.

First Corinthians 6, 19, you are not your own. You were bought with a price. Okay, I've been bought.

What does that do? Next verse, 20, glorify God in your body. Put your body to active service in such a way as to make God look glorious. Picture three, we were forgiven.

Ephesians 4, 32, God in Christ forgave you. And the way Paul thinks here now is, as you have been forgiven, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another. So in every picture, the effect of the decisive work of Christ on the cross is to make me active, not passive.

Active in opposing my sin, putting my sin to death. Now the same thing is true of providence. And there are at least two texts that I simply cannot live without because they make so much sense of both the doctrine of providence and my experience of my own battle with sin.

And the first one is Philippians 2, 12, 13. Piper, take it for yourself. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

So you take responsibility here and effect your final salvation in whatever way is by faith, by the Spirit. Do this. Reason, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work.

To will and to work for his good pleasure. It's not the other way around. It's not like, okay, I guess I'm going to have to work out my salvation so I can get God to work in me, God to work for me.

No, no. You work, you exert effort in killing your sin because God is working in you, which means my working is his working in me. I think that's what it says when it says he is at work to will and to work my very willing against my sin.

My very working against my sin is the willing and the working of God in me. And one of the reasons I think that is because of this second text, namely 1 Corinthians 15, 10. By the grace of God, I am what I am.

And his grace toward me was not in vain. His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them.

God's grace resulted in Paul's hardest imaginable working. I worked harder than any of them, and then he adds, but it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. So if anybody ever says, oh, that big view of

providence that John Piper developed in those 10 sessions, that big view of God's meticulous, pervasive, sustaining, governing, ordering of all things just turns us into passive robots.

Let this final word say, no, that is not what it does. It never has done that for those who have been biblical in Philippians 2, 12, and 13 ways, and 1 Corinthians 15, 10 ways. God's grace towards me has not been in vain, but I worked hard.

Nevertheless, it was not I, but the grace of God that was with me. So neither the cross in its glorious it is finished, nor providence in its meticulous thoroughness, neither of them produce passive people. Rather, they produce haters of our own sin and successful mortifiers of our flesh, or to put it positively, they produce radical lovers, people who are willing to take risks.

When you live by grace, grace from the cross and grace from undeserved providential control in your lives, when you live by grace, you pour out grace. Those who embrace the providence of God are people who live to extend grace to other people, because all the work of the cross, all the work of providence was free and gracious through and through. So the biblical truth of God's providence is a precious reality.

My pursuit of my own joy in God and my desire that God be glorified through my pursuit of joy in God would be impossible without the power of God's providence in my life. May God take these 10 sessions that we've enjoyed together and fill you with that kind of humility, that kind of boldness, and make you really active in the grace of God for the good of others and for the glory of Jesus Christ.

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