

FOCUSING ON PREVENTION

I was listening on the radio on Monday morning as I drove to Tims to get my coffee to the conversation the hosts were having about the World Junior Hockey game played the night before between Germany and Canada. Even though Canada won 3-0, the hosts were commenting how our players have not been winning games in convincing fashion like they have in previous years. This concern they were expressing about the Canadian team was not only because of the score against Germany but also a result of the shoot out loss a few days earlier to Latvia. The one host commented on how he knows the coach for Canada very well and revealed that his teams tend to focus on goal prevention as opposed to scoring. He then warned those listening to be prepared for some low scoring, nail-biter games moving forward due to the coach's focus on goal prevention.

When the one host finished saying this, the other one replied, "I blame Blue Jays GM Ross Atkins for this. We know how much he has been focused on run prevention and that it has come at the expense of the Blue Jays scoring themselves. Now his strategy is spilling over into our game of hockey." I laughed after he said this because I often hear Blue Jays fans complain about this whenever I listen to "Jays' Talk" on the radio after games.

Goal and run prevention may have been the main point of discussion on the radio Monday morning, but it was getting my attention when I returned home too. I wrote in my message last week how we were noticing some critters scurrying around in our crawl space. A wildlife removal company came on Friday to do an inspection and found two small openings from the outside where the mice were getting in.

On Monday morning this contractor was back at my house to put on "gate traps" at these two openings that would allow any mice in our crawl space to exit but not get back in. The contractor also ran silicone completely around the house between the brick and our siding to prevent mice from trying to create any new holes to enter inside. Once we stop hearing evidence of mice still up in our crawl space, the company will come back to remove these gate traps and fix the two holes. The theme on Monday morning for me while driving for my coffee and returning back home was definitely on prevention.

When I sat down at my computer later Monday morning to write this message, naturally my mind was still focusing on prevention. It did not take long for me to begin thinking about how God wants us to be focused on *preventing sin* from entering into our daily lives. Scripture makes it very clear to us how serious the

consequences of sin can be if we say yes to it. We just need to read Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve sinned by eating from the apple God had forbidden them to eat in order to be reminded of how serious the consequences can be. In different stories in the Bible, we discover that if we are not intentional at trying to prevent sin from entering into our lives that:

- even the smallest of sins can quickly grow out of control and become a habit,
- it will create separation between us and God by letting that sin enter,
- it will not only have negative impacts on us but may have adverse effects on others.

The Bible not only encourages us to be focused on sin prevention, but also provides us with helpful advice to say "no". Jesus showed us in the wilderness when He was tempted by Satan how prayer and Scripture are both effective in preventing us from saying yes to sin. In Galatians 5, we can read advice from the apostle Paul to rely on the help from the Holy Spirit in order to prevent us from sinning. In this letter Paul teaches how our sinful nature always wants to do what is opposite to what the Holy Spirit wants for us and how these two forces are always constantly vying for our attention. Paul next shares how harmful it can be for us to follow our sinful desires, and contrasts this with the various fruits we experience when we allow God's Spirit to help prevent us from saying yes to sin. Paul concludes his advice on how to prevent sin from entering into our lives by saying:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passion and desires of their sinful nature to His cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. (Galatians 5:24-25)

Paul is encouraging us here to turn quickly away from whatever is tempting us to sin and envision ourselves instead nailing it to the cross so that we will be able to stay committed to being led by God's Spirit.

Time will tell if Team Canada's focus on goal prevention will lead to a gold medal. When baseball starts up again, we will quickly find out if the Jays focus on run prevention will work this year unlike in others. In 6-8 weeks, I will know if we have won in removing the critters in my crawl space. These prevention strategies may or may not result in a victory, but when it comes to sin prevention it is a guaranteed win for us in our walk to stay close to the Lord.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean