

Helps to Overcome Sin

As Christians, we are often reminded of the dangers of sins. At least we ought to be. Sin is the very thing that will keep us from our home in heaven if it is not properly dealt with.

It is a subject that one needs to realize to be saved and it is a subject we must frequently be reminded of as we strive to stay saved. I preach about sin from time to time because we need reminders of what Satan is trying to do to keep us from obeying the gospel, whether for the first time or daily as a Christian. Sin means that we miss the mark of God's will and if we do not deal with it our souls are in jeopardy. Romans 6:23, *the wages of sin is death*. Romans 3:23 tells us that we have all sinned and as a result we fall short of His glory. And as Christians we MUST realize that we cannot live sinful lives – Romans 6:1-4, 1 John 2:1, *My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*. Our goal as Christians is to NOT sin. And while this text gives us comfort that we CAN be forgiven, sin is NOT something we can treat lightly. God EXPECTS us to overcome sin. So today, let us take a few moments to remind ourselves of some things that can help us to overcome sin and its temptations.

I. Use God's Word Properly

- a. First understand that His word reveals what sin is – 1 John 3:4 – it is lawlessness – living or acting outside of God's law. And it tells us everything we need to know about it. It tells us about temptations (James 1:12-16). But that is not our focus in this lesson.
- b. We need to understand that God's word is a tool that can help us to resist sins.
- c. Matthew 4:1-11 records the temptations of Jesus. He used scripture to resist the temptations of the devil.
- d. Psalm 119:11, *Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You*.
- e. Psalm 37:30-31, *The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, And his tongue talks of justice. The law of his God is in his heart; None of his steps shall slide*.
- f. Proverbs 2:10-12, *When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul, Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you, To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things*,
- g. A regular diet of God's word reminds us of all things associated with sin, avoiding and overcoming it. It keeps our minds moving in the right direction. 1 John 3:9, *Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God*. Remember that Jesus taught us that the seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11, 1 Peter 1:23).
- h. Illustration: A mother gave her son who was leaving home a Bible and said to him, "This little book will keep you from sin, and nothing but sin will keep you from this little book."

II. Prayer can help us overcome sin

- a. Matthew 6:13 – it was part of the model prayer Jesus taught.
- b. Matthew 26:41, Jesus in the garden warned His sleeping disciples to watch and pray lest they enter into temptation.
- c. Ephesians 6:10-18 as Paul describes the armor of God we need to fight our spiritual battle against Satan, in vs. 18 he includes that we must be *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication...*
- d. Remember also, Hebrews 4:15-16, *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*.

III. Continued alertness and self-examination –

- a. 2 Corinthians 13:5 – *Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves...* You need to be continually alert to whatever is a weakness to you. 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 – we often quote

vs. 13 dealing with overcoming temptations, but notice vs. 12 also – let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

- b. Being alert to Satan and His ways is always needed – 1 Peter 5:8, 2 Corinthians 2:11
- c. 1 Peter 1:13 calls for us to *gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. The term “gird up” was a term meaning to tighten up and was used of garments worn loosely until there was a need for swifter movement. They would tie up their flowing robe so as to not be hindered. We gird our minds!
- d. Deuteronomy 11:16, as part of Moses’ farewell address he said to them, *Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them*
- e. James 1:22-25 – of course the focus is upon knowing AND doing God’s word. Remember that we cannot be alert to what we do not know about.

IV. Remember who is watching

- a. There are many qualities of God to consider as we struggle with sin. His sovereignty (absolute authority), His holiness, His righteousness. God is the judge before whom we will one day appear and give an accounting for our lives – Hebrews 9:27, 12:28-29 – we must serve Him with reverence and godly fear.
- b. Consider also His omnipresence - He is everywhere. Psalm 139:7-12 reminds us of this. Jeremiah 23:23-24, “Am I a God near at hand,” says the LORD, “And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?” says the LORD; “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the LORD. Hebrews 4:13 – there is no creature hidden from His sight.
- c. Often sinful things are done in darkness and when alone. We do things when our spouse or parents or children or boss is not watching. USUALLY, we are thinking that no one is watching us. BUT if we can fully grasp that God is everywhere and always watching, this may help us to resist and overcome temptations to sin. If we can comprehend that He is looking over our shoulder at what we are doing AND IT MATTERS, that can be a deterrent.
- d. Romans 11:22 speaks of both the goodness and severity of God. Let us NOT forget His severity. Hebrews 10:31 – it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And reading God’s word reminds us of these things – consider Uzzah, Lot’s wife, Nadab and Abihu, David’s adultery, Ananias and Sapphira, etc.

V. Keep your hearts and minds pure

- a. What we have discussed thus far addresses alertness and relationship with God. BUT we must understand that overcoming sin is NOT always easy. It involves action on our part. And it involves choices that we have to make. While God is ready and will do His part, you HAVE to step up and do yours.
- b. Proverbs 4:23, *Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life*.
- c. Colossians 3:1-2 – set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth.
- d. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 – we are at a war that includes our minds.
- e. Be careful who you associate with – 1 Corinthians 15:33. This applies to people but also things that we choose to keep company with.

VI. Consider that others also care about you

- a. We speak about how God is watching. We know that He is grieved by those living in sin. It is NOT what He wants, but He is not going to force obedience on anyone.
- b. But another factor that can help us overcome sin is to realize there are others who care about us as well. Others that we do not want to disappoint OR lead astray.
- c. Genesis 39:9 finds Joseph responding to Potiphar’s wife when she tried to seduce him. He said, *There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*” NOTE his concern for offending God FIRST, but also, he did not want to disappoint his master.

- d. Many examples of sinful conduct involve selfish pursuits while failing to consider how it might hurt others. David's adultery is an example of this (2 Samuel 11-12). Consider when the rooster crowed after Peter denied Jesus the third time and He looked at him (Luke 22:61-62)
- e. In our lives, there are brothers and sisters in Christ who genuinely care about our souls and living godly lives. There are family members whom we love and do not want to disappoint – spouses, parents and children and other close relatives.
- f. Realizing that bad decisions may lead to damaged relationships or hurting the ones we love can serve as a deterrent to engaging in bad behavior.

VII. Realize the uncertainty of life

- a. James 4:13-14 reminds us that our life is a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.
- b. 1 Peter 1:24 reminds us that all flesh is as grass and withers away.
- c. 2 Peter 3:10ff reminds us that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.
- d. We do not know how much time this world has left OR how much time we have left. Life is very uncertain. And when we die, we will face the judgment – Hebrews 9:27. And as we know from scripture, our eternal destiny will be determined by our standing with God and Jesus at that time.
- e. Because life goes on day in and day out, man really doesn't think about these things. But as Christians, our minds ought to be "other-worldly" and we want to be ready when the day our time on this earth is over arrives. James 5:9 reminds us, *Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!*
- f. Consider some Biblical examples:
 - i. If Ananias and Sapphira knew what would happen when they lied to the Holy Spirit would they have acted differently?
 - ii. If Judas knew the outcome of betraying Jesus, would he have sold Him?
 - iii. Had Felix and Agrippa known that sending Paul away very likely resulted in failing to obey the Lord's gospel, would they have changed?
 - iv. Would Nadab and Abihu have offered that "strange fire" to the LORD?
 - v. Would Uzzah have reached out and steadied the ark? If David knew that would happen, would he allowed the ark to be transported that way?

Sin is something we all have to deal with. But how we deal with it matters and can have eternal consequences. Let us conclude with the 2nd recorded sinful occasion in the Bible – Cain and Abel. These 2 siblings brought offerings to the LORD. Abel's was accepted and Cain's was rejected. Cain was angry and the LORD appeared to him and said, *"Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."* (Genesis 4:6-7)

We may not be able to prevent sin in this world, BUT we can control what happens when we face it. Paul said to the Corinthians, *Awake to righteousness, and do not sin. For some do not have the knowledge of God.* (1 Corinthians 15:34). What are you doing to overcome sin? Think about it!