

Text: Various

Title: Your Fight Against Sin

Truth: How God's Grace Abounds in the Daily Battle Against Sin

Date/Location: Sunday October 10, 2021 at FBC

Introduction

God is gracious beyond measure and beyond words. He restores what has been broken; He cleanses those who contritely confess their sins; He forgives; He does not impute iniquity to those who trust in Jesus; He shows us that we are sinful people and stand in need of grace—and that knowledge itself is the result of a magnificent grace. God uplifts us when we are brought low by our own sin; God's grace teaches us to praise Him and to help others do the same. God's grace teaches us not to sin presumptuously, thinking that God will forgive us anyway. Finally, we learned in our preaching series on the grace of God that God grants us the power to overcome sin in our lives. We are not helpless or hopeless even if the deck seems stacked against us because of an addictive sin or long-running habit. We can live holy lives in Christ!

Following are some practical tips to help you with your own struggle against the sin that so easily is stirred up inside the flesh. This is particularly relevant for those who already are followers of the Lord. That is, for those who know Christ died for them and their sins; for those who believe in Him; for those whose eternal futures are secure; and for those who desire to live godly lives to honor their Lord and Savior.

1. Memorize 1 Corinthians 10:13

1 Corinthians 10:13 – No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man;
but God is faithful,
who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able,
but with the temptation will also make the way of escape,
that you may be able to bear it.

- A. Notice the five parts of the verse.
- B. If we back up to verse 12, we can get a running head start on the meaning of this passage.
 - 1. Temptation demands humility.
 - 2. Temptation is universal to humanity. It is not unique to you.
 - 3. God's faithfulness to you helps you overcome temptation.
 - 4. Temptation can always be beaten by faith in Christ.

2. Know the Origin and Development of Sin in You

- A. Early in our walk with Christ, we can be excused for thinking that sin primarily comes from the world or the Devil. After all, since Satan tempted Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden and got them to sin, does not my sin come from the same place? **It does not.** Those agents only provide opportunities and enticements to sin, but that is not where sin really comes from. Again, these may present you with situations, sights, sounds, or ideas that allure you, but that allurement comes through your heart's own pride, impatience, covetousness, lust, anger, selfishness, deceit, or hatred.¹ But also, tempting ideas may come from *within* you, no external stimuli present at the time.
- B. James 1:14-15 gives us the devious pathway of sin inside of us:
 - Internal desire tempts and entices → Desire conceives
 - Sin is born → Death is the end result of sin
- C. The heart is deceitful (Jer. 17:9). Out of it arises evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts, lies, blasphemies, etc. (Matt. 15:18-19). Your sin comes from within you. You *are* a sinner. That is your identity. Before you come to Christ, you are an uncontrolled sinner, we might say. You are ruled by sin. After you are born anew through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, then you are a saved sinner, but still a sinner until you go to Heaven.

¹ I generated this list by looking at two passages of Scripture: Exodus 20, the ten commandments, and Proverbs 6:16-19. You could add James 4:1 here too.

3. Deal with Sin That Comes on Quickly

- A. Suppose you lose your temper or say something inappropriate in the spur of the moment. How do you fight against that kind of thing? People suggest things like counting to 5 or 10 or taking a deep breath before you say something. These can be helpful, but they are incomplete as they rely on the strength of the flesh rather than upon God.
- B. Genuinely confess your “sins that come upon you quickly” sin to God, against Whom you sinned first and foremost. Confess such sins to those whom you have harmed. Trust in His forgiveness as promised in 1 John 1:9. “I am sorry for _____.” Be specific. Express the remorse you feel. (If you do not feel remorse or grief over the sin, then you have a bigger problem and you need to appeal to God for help.) Also, express what steps you will take to not repeat the sin in the future.
- C. Pray for God’s help daily, many times a day. Rely on the in-resident Spirit of God to help you.
- D. Do a careful study of the passages that address your sin problem—both before you sin next time, and after you messed up last time. A few starting points are suggested on our church website.² If you do not see something there, you can use Bible software to search, and you can always reach out to your pastor for additional resources. The benefit of working on this is to really think about God’s thoughts about your struggle. Going over and over the material in Scripture on it will help you.

For example, if you have outbursts of anger, spend some time thinking about and memorizing verses like these: Proverbs 16:32, 14:29, 15:1, 25:28, Ephesians 4:31. If you tend to complain, read up in these verses: Phil. 2:14, Exodus 15:24, 16:2-12, Num. 11:1, Psalm 106:24-25, Luke 15:2, 1 Cor. 10:10, Jude 15-16. If you do not know of something you need to work on, ask your spouse or a close friend. Just be ready to be humble!

² <https://www.fbcaa.org/bible-resources/HelpFromBible>

4. Read Your Bible Regularly

As you read Scripture, you will encounter passages that deal with the state of your soul. *You are reading the Bible regularly, right?*

- A. If you are not reading your Bible regularly, don't whine about having a hard time with sin in your life. Obviously, you must be doing something more important than reading the Bible!
- B. Sarcasm aside, what does Bible reading "do" for you? When you read, you think—or at least you *should* think. When you read the Bible, you think the Bible. The Bible says what God has thought already, what He has said and what He wants us to ponder of the history of His people and the work of His Son. So, when you read Scripture, you are thinking God's thoughts, God's history, God's analysis of things, God's wisdom, God's guidance, God's direction. That is far better than thinking on sinful things or useless things or not thinking at all.
- C. Over the course of time, such reading = thinking will begin to change how you think. Humility, coupled with the work of the Spirit of God, who is the divine teacher, and with the help of other Christians who are teachers, you will change because thinking affects our beliefs, and beliefs affect our actions, and a long pattern of thinking, beliefs, and actions becomes character.
- D. When you read Scripture, you are learning truth. You are sanctified by the truth (John 17:17). To be sanctified is to be made more holy, to be purified, to live more like Jesus Christ.
- E. Where does the Bible say to read the Bible? I take it from portions like these: Psalm 1:2; Heb. 4:12; 1 Timothy 4:13; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 119:9, 11, 16; Deut. 17:18-20.

5. Dedicate Yourself to Your Church

- A. I am speaking very practically here: the time you spend in church will be far more productively spent than in other ways. You will replace time that you could sin with time that you can worship and learn Christ and be encouraged by other believers and find counsel to help with stubborn sins. Besides, we are directed by God to regularly gather together in person (Heb. 10:25).

B. Your participation in the assembly of Christians will not only help you. It will also help THEM. Going to church is often considered by the attender as a “what’s in it for me” kind of thing. That is not at all what being part of the family of God is about. You are not primarily a *consumer*; you are a participant; you are an active member; you are a servant of others (Hebrews 10:24).

6. Pray Always

- A. What argument do you need more than these? Luke 18:1, 1 Timothy 2:1, 1 Thess. 5:17, Eph. 6:18, Romans 12:12, Col. 4:2, Matthew 7:7, Phil. 4:6.
- B. Prayer is another great way to steward your time. There is not much better you can do than be praying. It is far better than checking off another task on your to-do list. It draws you closer to God and by it you can invoke God’s blessing which will move you ahead far more than more “productivity.”
- C. Prayer is how we show dependence on God. Christians do not have a self-centered “can do” attitude. Instead, we have a “can’t do” attitude like John 15:5 indicates. We need God’s help to live right and to accomplish things for the Lord.
- D. Prayer is how we communicate to God. But prayer is not two-way; Prayer is one-way, and God gives the answers in how he ordains things. God speaks to us in Scripture, and we speak to God in prayer and in worship like during singing of Christian hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs.

7. Devote Yourself to God

- A. What do you love more? Your sin, or your God? Do you love your pet temptations, or your Savior? Do you love your feelings of self-satisfaction, or a clean conscience before the Spirit of God?
- B. God instructs His people to love Him above all else and have nothing higher priority than Him in their lives. Exodus 20:3, Deut. 6:5, Psalm 18:1, Matthew 22:37-40 (// Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27).

- C. Addiction to sin means not only is there a shortage of holiness, but also there is a shortage of love for God. There is also wrong worship. We worship what we love.
- D. Handling sin from the standpoint of the flesh is ultimately unworkable. Colossians 2:20-23 tell us that religious prohibitions are of no value in restraining our sinful nature. Galatians 3:3 rebukes the idea that we can begin in the Christian life by faith through the Spirit of God but try to continue it or finish with mere human effort. It's like a diet that says, "no to this, no to that, and no to this other thing." That provides very limited help and does not guide you to know what *to do*. How to overcome cravings? What are the right things to eat? What is the right amount? What are the best kinds of food? Is there any enjoyment in this diet?
- E. Instead of a law-based motivation system, love for God and neighbor is a far more powerful motivator. Of course, if you love yourself more than you love God and others, that breaks down. Ask yourself, "if I continue doing this kind of thing, is that really displaying love for God and my spouse and my children or my parents and my neighbors? Or do I really just love myself?"

Conclusion

As I said at the beginning, the above Scriptural guidance is for Christians. And there is more to say. Put to death the sins of the flesh (Col. 3:5). Deal with transgressions very sternly (Matt. 5:29-30). Think of on this and let me know what you come up with!

For non-Christians, there is only one remedy, and that is to call on the Lord Jesus Christ. Seek His pardon; turn from your sin—all of it—and turn to Jesus. This is what the Book means when it says, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." Decide to follow Him instead of your own wicked cravings. He receives sinners such as you and will forgive and cleanse you and put you on the path of victory in the battle against sin. You will then be engaged in the fight. Until then, you have no effective resource in your battle.

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