

Gaining the Victory Over Sin

How do we gain the victory over sin? A lot of people would say, "Well, you resist the Devil and he will flee from you." And so we resist the Devil and he wins the battle and we fall into sin. Then we plead with God to help us fight the battle and most of the time we still lose. There are those who have experienced this so often that they have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to gain the victory over sin and have created theologies that teach that.

So, What is the problem? Why don't we gain the victory over sin? Well I believe there are a number of reasons. First we weren't told or didn't read the whole text in context. What does the whole text say? It says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7. Something was left out, something very important. We must first submit to God. If we aren't submitted to God we are fighting the battle in our own strength, and that is impossible. If we did win the contest who would get the credit? We would. Also if we simply ask God to help us, who would we think did most of the work, and who gets most of the credit again? Wouldn't we say, well I did most of the work. Yes, God helped me, but I did most of it. He was just there for moral support since His being there gave me the courage to win. And we again take most of the credit. This won't work.

We must first submit to God. This means complete surrender to God. Then turning the battle against Satan over to Him. God has already won the battle against the Devil and He wants to win it for us as well. He wants to GIVE us the victory. Did you get that? He wants to GIVE us the victory! But we must submit, surrender and trust Him before He can do anything for us. This means that we have to get to know Him. You may not have realized it before, but gaining the victory over sin is a gift. Yes, victory over sin is a gift from God. Paul puts it this way in 1. Corinthians 15:57. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus got the victory and now He wants to give it to us. Isn't this how all of salvation works? It is a gift. All we have to do is receive it. But there are some conditions to receiving it.

If we follow the counsel / conditions that James gave us to "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." James 4:8. Then God will give us the victory. When we draw near to God the devil trembles and flees from us. Why, because we have become irresistible? No, because God is irresistible. He will fight the battle for us and will give us the victory. Who then gets 100% of the credit for the victory? God, and we will then praise God and give Him thanks for giving us the victory over sin and Satan.

What does it mean when we are told to "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." First, we have to get into God's word and get to know him intimately. Get close to Him. Then we need to cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts, and not be double minded. This means that I can't ask God to give me the victory over some sin, say smoking, and then go out and buy a pack of cigarettes. That is not cleansing my hands and purifying my heart, it is being double minded, saying and asking for one thing but doing the opposite. Yes, God will give us the victory but we have to do our part by staying submitted to His revealed will for us. Otherwise, He will say, "sorry, you are on your own". And we don't have a fighting chance on our own, we will fail every time. "Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." When we ask God to help us gain the victory over sin and to do good works, we are asking Him to help us to produce more filthy rags.

"Because man fallen could not overcome Satan with his human strength, Christ came from the royal courts of heaven to help him with His human and divine strength combined. Christ knew that Adam in Eden with his superior advantages might have withstood the temptations of Satan and conquered him. He also knew that it was not possible for man out of Eden, separated from the light and love of God since the fall, to resist the temptations of Satan in his own strength. In order to bring hope to man, and save him from complete ruin, He humbled Himself to take man's nature, that with His divine power combined with the human He might reach man where he is. He obtained for the fallen sons and daughters of Adam that strength which it is impossible for them to gain for themselves, that in His name they might overcome the temptations of Satan." {Selected Messages Book 1 279}

"The apostle carried the minds of the Corinthian brethren forward to the triumphs of the resurrection morn, when all the sleeping saints are to be raised, henceforth to live forever with their Lord. "Behold," the apostle declared, "I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Glorious is the triumph awaiting the faithful. The apostle, realizing the possibilities before the Corinthian believers, sought to set before them that which uplifts from the selfish and the sensual, and glorifies life with the hope of immortality. Earnestly he exhorted them to be true to their high calling in Christ. "My beloved brethren," he pleaded, "be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." {Acts of the Apostles 320, 321}

"The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters, is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God. From the first intimation of hope in the sentence pronounced in Eden to that last

glorious promise of the Revelation, "They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads" Revelation 22:4, the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible is the unfolding of this wondrous theme,--man's uplifting,--the power of God, "which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57.

He who grasps this thought has before him an infinite field for study. He has the key that will unlock to him the whole treasure house of God's word.

The science of redemption is the science of all sciences; the science that is the study of the angels and of all the intelligences of the unfallen worlds; the science that engages the attention of our Lord and Saviour; the science that enters into the purpose brooded in the mind of the Infinite--"kept in silence through times eternal" Romans 16:25, R.V.; the science that will be the study of God's redeemed throughout endless ages. This is the highest study in which it is possible for man to engage. As no other study can, it will quicken the mind and uplift the soul." {Education 125, 126}

"True sanctification is a Bible doctrine. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonian church, declares, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." And he prays, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly." 1 THESS. 4:3; 5:23. The Bible clearly teaches what sanctification is, and how it is to be attained. The Saviour prayed for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth." 2 JOHN 17:17, 19. And Paul teaches that believers are to be "sanctified by the Holy Ghost." ROM. 15:16. What is the work of the Holy Spirit? Jesus told his disciples, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." JOHN 16:13. And the psalmist says, "Thy law is the truth." By the Word and the Spirit of God are opened to men the great principles of righteousness embodied in his law. And since the law of God is "holy, and just, and good," a transcript of the divine perfection, it follows that a character formed by obedience to that law will be holy. Christ is a perfect example of such a character. He says, "I have kept my Father's commandments." "I do always those things that please him." JOHN 15:10; 8:29. The followers of Christ are to become like him,--by the grace of God, to form characters in harmony with the principles of his holy law. This is Bible sanctification.

This work can be accomplished only through faith in Christ, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. Paul admonishes believers, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." PHIL. 2:12, 13. The Christian will feel the promptings of sin, but he will maintain a constant warfare against it. Here is where Christ's help is needed. Human weakness becomes united to divine strength, and faith exclaims, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 COR. 15:57.

The Scriptures plainly show that the work of sanctification is progressive. When in conversion the sinner finds peace with God through the blood of the atonement, the Christian life has but just begun. Now he is to "go on unto perfection;" to grow up "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Says the apostle Paul: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." PHIL. 3:13, 14. And Peter sets before us the steps by which Bible sanctification is to be attained: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. . . . If ye do these things, ye shall never fall." 2 PET. 1:5-10." {The Great Controversy 469, 470}

"Take ye away the stone." Christ could have commanded the stone to remove, and it would have obeyed His voice. He could have bidden the angels who were close by His side to do this. At His bidding, invisible hands would have removed the stone. But it was to be taken away by human hands. Thus Christ would show that humanity is to co-operate with divinity. What human power can do divine power is not summoned to do. God does not dispense with man's aid. He strengthens him, co-operating with him as he uses the powers and capabilities given him. {The Desire of Ages 535.3}

Asking God to help us gain the victory over sin is a deception of the Devil. At times he will allow us to gain the victory to keep us deceived, but anything good that we do in our own strength is filthy rags, worthless in God's eyes. God has made it plain that we are powerless in our own strength to save ourselves, only God through the blood of Jesus can save us. He will do nothing for those with a divided heart or mind. God will never empower/help us to do anything in our own strength because then He would be producing filthy rags in our lives. All He will do is remain outside the heart, pleading with us to let Him come into our hearts and take full control. He will only empower those who give him 100% of themselves - nothing of self can remain. Our part is to surrender, ask, and allow God, through the Holy Spirit dwelling within us to give us the victory.

In conclusion, when we are having a problem with a sin in our life it does no good to simply ask God to help us gain the victory over it. We need to ask God to give us the victory. And then we act, in faith, as though we have the victory. In other words, we stop buying cigarettes and throw away the ones we have. We remove ourselves as much as possible from the temptation. If we do our part He will do His part, GIVING us the victory, guaranteed!

What human power can do, divine power is not summoned to do.

If you are powerless to do anything else, you can always pray. Pray this prayer whenever confronted by temptation.

"Father, I am so weak, and I am about to yield to a temptation, but I give you permission to come into my mind at this moment, strengthen my weak will by uniting divinity with my humanity and make this decision in my human flesh for me."