



Victory Over Sin

Hello everyone. Welcome to “Notes from the Presence.” Over the past week I have had several encounters with people who are trying to live sin free and Godly lives. Although I admire them for this very noble endeavour, they seem to be beating themselves up because they are not able to live up to a standard. In the end, they are defeating themselves and feeling bad. Today, I thought we would talk about this endless cycle of defeat and how to avoid it.

First off, I would like to say that sin in our lives is not cool. If it is a sin problem that we are facing, we need to confess it to God and receive forgiveness. This takes but a moment. The issue is, what happens after our confession? Jesus has now forgiven and forgotten our sin; however, we have not. We remember it and are left in a position of trying to figure out how to not repeat the same thing again. If it is an habitual pattern in our lives, we conjure up all kinds of scenarios in order to avoid the inevitable. Here are a few things we do:

First, we attach as much sorrow to the sin as we can. We do this in hopes that we will remember the sorrow of forgiveness and repentance and then use it as a sign post; an unpleasant place that we hope to stay away from in the future. The problem is that sorrow is easily forgotten in subsequent days and when the temptation comes again, we easily slip back into the same pattern. This eventually brings us to a place of repetitive sin - sorrow - sin - sorrow cycles that rob us of all joy in life. Quite frankly, this is a horrible way to live. It is a lifestyle that spells defeat and it is especially easy to fall into for a person with a sensitive nature.

Second, we employ flesh defeating practices in order to try to defeat what we are certain is a deeply rooted part of our very nature. These practices can range from using self-discipline in various ways, to making deals with ourselves. However, in the end,

discipline will not keep us away from sin, and self-motivating deals are easily pushed aside in moments of temptation.

Third, we fight against ourselves. Here we can easily go to places of self-abasement. In the past week, this is actually what I have seen as I talk to people. It takes on forms of doing things to ourselves that are negative. In the end, we hate ourselves, feel ugly, and do nasty things to our bodies and souls in order to punish ourselves for who we deem ourselves to be - dirty sinners just saved by grace. We hope that the self-punishment will somehow be unpleasant enough to steer us away from sinful ways.

Fourth, we use scripture to punish ourselves even further. We look at things like the ten commandments and try to let God deal with us on each issue. Friends, looking at the law in this way only spells defeat in our lives. Inevitably, we enter into condemnation with these practices and for good reason. The law was written with the specific purpose of condemning those who break it. If we hold the sins of our lives up against the law, we will experience the condemnation of the law. Many make the mistake of thinking that the feeling of condemnation is the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This couldn't be further from the truth.

Eventually, we slip into things like depression and despair. This is the result of years of trying but never managing to defeat sin. We tire of feeling bad all the time. There are few moments of joy in our lives. We wonder at how anyone could live a victorious life. We constantly feel ugly and cease to struggle, giving in to the repetitive cycles.

Up to now, I have painted a pretty bleak picture but in my experience, most of us live in varying degrees of the above scenarios. We hide it from ourselves and each other, but it is our constant companion.

I have spent many years of my own life in this very situation. I often wondered if there was any way to be free. In the end, my struggles took me on a long journey. I read through many books and much scripture in order to find keys and answers. Thanks to Jesus, I have discovered a few things that have helped me. I am unsure of even how to share them actually. Much christian teaching is focussed on sin. I have watched haters as they unleash their fury on such people as Joel Osteen for not preaching sin. However, if I could put my finger on one thing that has been the biggest contributing factor to any degree of freedom I now walk in, it would be this: what you focus your eyes on is what you will get in your life. If you focus on sin and how to defeat it, you will only get more sin. Unfortunately, this is how our nature works. What we look at is what we get.

All of the scenarios that I have noted today have one thing in common: they focus on sin and endeavour to put systems in place in order to defeat it. Here is what I have discovered that has helped me in the struggle that we all, as humans, face:

First, I have learned that if putting our eyes on sin reaps more sin, then I will put my eyes somewhere else. Where, you ask? Well, I choose to put my eyes on Jesus. I spend as much time in His presence as I can. I find that Jesus is actually very encouraging. He knows this struggle that we go through, He experienced it Himself. So, He is always encouraging me. He rarely brings up sin to me. He always brings up who I am and my destiny in Him.

This brings me to my second point. I have learned that worship is a wonderful way to put my eyes on Jesus. In the presence and in worship, sin will actually drop off of you naturally. You will wonder where it has gone. Your very nature will change and it will happen effortlessly. Is there such a thing as effortless change? Yes! It happens in the presence of Jesus and in His glory. Here we are changed from glory to glory.

Third, I have learned who I am not. I am not a dirty sinner. I am a new creation in Christ. My old sinful nature was killed when I accepted Jesus and I have now been made a partaker in His divine nature. This is MOST controversial, but friends, did you know that you do not have a sinful nature any more. Were you born in sin? Yes. Do all humans have a sinful nature? Yes. However, at the moment of salvation, our old nature was crucified with Christ and we were made a brand new being. We have been given a new nature. Listen to me carefully - in Christ, you do NOT have a sin nature any more. You are a totally re-created human being, filled with power, love, and the Holy Spirit. This includes your spirit, your soul, and your body! Your flesh is not evil. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The struggles we now have are not against flesh and blood but against external factors. The devil will try to get you to fight against yourself, telling you that you are, by very nature, dirty and sinful. However, he is the sinful one. He is also the accuser, and he is the tempter.

Fourth, I have learned that I am loved. I spend much time letting the love of the Father wash over me. Sin disappears in an environment of love - love covers a multitude of sin. God's love will destroy sin and longings for sin. I chose to put my eyes not on sin, but on His love.

Fifth, I have learned that all of the law and commandments are wrapped up in one thing - Jesus commandment to love one another as He has loved us. I don't focus on keeping the commandments, I focus on loving as best as I can. I also know that I love because

He first love me, and so I let His love encounter me. In this way, I don't love in my own strength because it is quite impossible to love like Jesus on our own.

In essence, I have learned to take the pressure off myself, put my eyes on Jesus, worship, and be loved. In these simple actions, sin has become a lot less of a problem. Is it completely gone? No. But I am joyful, happy, and on the road to victory rather than constant defeat - and from where I came from, that is WONDERFUL news!!!

Thanks for reading. Jesus is real and He is not looking at you with disgust over your sins. He is actually well pleased with you!