

Overcoming Sin

Introduction. Sin attracts, enslaves, and intimidates. It can feel so powerful that we feel defeated and hopeless. God is greater than our sins, and can defeat them by the gospel (1 John 4:1-5).

The encouraging part of dealing with sin is that God teaches us how to overcome it. I want us to discuss five different ways to do that in our sermon today.

I. Develop Greater Faith in God

- A. Sin is unbelief in action; obedience is faith in action.
 - 1. Moses and Aaron were guilty of unbelief (Numbers 20:12).
 - 2. By faith Abraham obeyed (Hebrews 11:8).
 - 3. When we exercise obedient faith, we yield our will to God. This develops self-discipline and self-denial.
- B. Trust in God to lead us to a new life.
 - 1. Trust His instructions, not my wants, wishes, and wisdom (Proverbs 3:5-6).
 - 2. Fear not, wait on God, and obey when He speaks (Exodus 14:13).
 - 3. Trust in God until the calamity passes (Psalm 57:1).
 - 4. True change of heart includes commitment to live a new life (Psalm 51:17).
- C. Prayer and study draw us closer to God.
 - 1. Fellowship with God grows as we listen to and talk with God.
 - a) God's Word makes us wise (Psalm 119:97-104), so meditate day and night on God's Word (Psalm 1:1-2).
 - b) God hears our prayers (Philippians 4:6), so pray daily (Psalm 55:16-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).
 - 2. Family prayer and study draw us closer to God and to each other.
 - a) Homes need to be centered on God and His Word (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).
 - b) Husband's loving leadership: teach his wife God's Word and pray with her (Ephesians 5:23).
 - c) Father's loving leadership: teach his children God's Word and pray with them (Ephesians 6:4).

II. Seek God's Forgiveness

- A. Even if we sin, God's love and forgiveness are always available. We just need to repent and seek God's grace.
- B. God's grace is based on His greatest gift: the death of Christ. Christ was the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Through Scripture, we see the horror of sin and the love of God (1 John 4:9-10).
- C. The alien sinner must be born into God's family.
 - 1. Each step of the new birth reverses the deadly effects of sin (John 3:3-5).
 - 2. The Spirit works through His Word in the new birth to convict and convince sinners (1 Peter 1:23).
 - a) Trust in Christ, not self (John 3:16).
 - b) Repent by loving God, not sin (Acts 2:38).

- (1) Learn to walk after the Spirit, not the flesh. Everyone gets to choose the flesh (sinful, selfish desire) or the Spirit (God's revelation). You can't go both ways at once (Galatians 5:16).
- (2) If we can defeat the sins of the flesh and then manifest the fruit of the Spirit, then sin will be defeated and we'll live a new life (Galatians 5:19-23).
- c) Confess Christ, not man (Romans 10:10).
- d) Submit to Christ in baptism and begin a new life (Acts 22:16).
- D. A sinning saint can be restored (Acts 8:22-24). Each step of restoration reverses the deadly effects of sin.
 - 1. Someone might think, "There's no possible way God could forgive me this much for all the sins that I not only commit, but give into a specific sin multiple times in my life.
 - 2. Jesus taught that if someone repents, we should forgive them (Luke 17:3-4). He also said that the number of times of forgiveness is effectively limitless (Matthew 18:21-22). If God tells us to be that way with each other, don't you believe that He'll graciously be that way we us as we fight the devil?

III. Resist and Fight Temptation

- A. Determine to battle with God's help, and trust Him to give victory.
 - 1. He opens ways of escape, and we either choose to yield to temptation or to take the escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).
 - a) Sin of lust (Numbers 11:4-10; 1 Corinthians 10:6). The way of escape is thankful contentment for God's gifts (Exodus 20:17; Romans 13:11-14).
 - b) Sin of idolatry (Exodus 32:1-7; 1 Corinthians 10:7). The way of escape is to flee it and remember God (Matthew 22:37; 1 Corinthians 10:14).
 - c) Sin of fornication (Numbers 25:1-3, 6-12; 31:16; 1 Corinthians 10:8). The way of escape is to kill the flesh and flee (Numbers 25:8; Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7).
 - d) Sin of testing Christ (Numbers 21:4-6; 1 Corinthians 10:9). The way of escape is to trust God's ways and obey Him (Numbers 21:8-9; Hebrews 13:5-6).
 - e) Sin of murmuring (Numbers 11:1; 14:1; 16:41; 1 Corinthians 10:10). The way of escape is faith in God's purposes, provisions, and salvation (Psalm 78:21-25; Hebrews 13:5-6).
 - 2. God will always help us if we resist Satan (James 4:6-10) and learn and act on truth (Philippians 4:8-9).
- B. Focus on specific dangers.
 - 1. Know your weaknesses: sexual sins, false religion, sinful attitudes, or loosened restraint (Galatians 5:19-21).
 - 2. You can also focus on positive actions that align with your values and faith such serving the church (Phoebe and Urbanus, Romans 16:1, 8).
- C. The tongue is always a vital battleground. The temper and tongue reveal the heart (James 3:10-11).

IV. Seek Good Counsel

- A. There's three great sources of good counsel:
 - 1. Seek counsel from the wise, not from fools (Proverbs 24:6).
 - 2. Seek counsel from the mature, not the immature (Hebrews 5:13-14).
 - 3. Seek counsel from Christians, not from sinners (Romans 12:2).
- B. Help each other overcome sin.
 - 1. Individual Christians: A source of strength.
 - a) Always show you want them out of sin (Proverbs 17:17).
 - b) Give honest rebuke, not flattery (Proverbs 27:5-6).
 - 2. The church: A source of strength.
 - a) Consider and exhort one another (Hebrews 10:23-25).
 - b) Instruct and withdraw fellowship if necessary (1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6).
 - 3. The family: A source of strength.
 - a) Proper family relationships are needed (Colossians 3:18-21).
 - b) A properly functioning family unit serves as a stronghold for everything right and good, and it stands against all sin and evil.
 - (1) A husband's love in leadership, attitude, and example strengthens the wife to overcome sin.
 - (2) A wife's support and submission in attitude and conduct strengthens the husband to overcome sin.
 - (3) The parents' example guides children to resist sin.
 - (4) The desire to help each other serve the Lord and go to heaven is a great motivating power.
 - (5) Sadly, the sins that destroy trust and security, and create resentment in the family unit are sexual sin, pornography, hypocrisy, tyranny, gambling, drugs, alcohol, bad temper, sharp tongue, et al. For such sins, there's a grave need to repent and reassure the family of love.

V. Be Patient in the Process of Overcoming Sin

- A. The people of Athens had a "book burning" moment and left their sin behind (Acts 19:19). If we can walk away from sin, you should!
- B. However, the New Testament also speaks of sinful habits that are created slowly, and replaced gradually.
 - 1. This was a daily battle for Paul (1 Corinthians 9:26-27). He decided to "press on," which was a daily process (Philippians 3:13-14).
 - 2. Peter was impulsive, and made many mistakes and corrections.
 - a) He rebuked Jesus, then Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matthew 16:21-23).
 - b) He proposed three tabernacles, but God said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:4).
 - c) He denied Jesus three times, then "wept bitterly" in godly sorrow (Matthew 26:69-75).
- C. Take one day at a time.
 - 1. By faith in God, we can face each day in overcoming sin.
 - 2. Here's some practical steps:

- a) Seek spiritual blessings first and trust God for daily needs; avoid the danger of worry (Matthew 6:33-34).
- b) Ask every day for food, forgiveness, and deliverance from Satan (Matthew 6:11-13). Pray for strength and guidance.
- c) Find a trusted friend/mentor to talk to and pray with when tempted.
- d) Identify and avoid situations or environments that lead to temptation.

Conclusion. I hope you've seen that sin no longer holds the final word over your life. Through Jesus Christ, we have been given power, not only to resist temptation, but to walk in newness of life. Every struggle, every weakness, every regret can become a testimony of God's redeeming grace when we submit to Him.

Overcoming sin isn't about perfection; it's about direction. It's about turning from what draws us away from God and running toward the One who loves us beyond measure. And when we fall, as we all will, we rise again — not in our strength, but in His mercy. Remember, the gospel isn't true because it works; it works because it's true. The power of the gospel within you is greater than any sin before you.

I am deeply indebted to Ron Halbrook for the use of his material.