

MINISTERIO LA FUENTE



RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

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SEEING THROUGH THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

Last week we looked at how to deal with temptation, how to deal with Satan's attempts to persuade us to sin. Satan hates us and wants to destroy us, so he tempts us to sin. He tempts all of us, and he will continue to tempt us all until we receive our new, transformed bodies when we go to be with the Lord. Meanwhile, we must remember that it is not a sin to be tempted. We sin when we accept the temptation and begin to act upon it either in thought or in deed.

SIN IS DESTRUCTIVE

Sin is always, always destructive. It may be enjoyable for a time, but its results are always destructive. As born again people, God's forgiveness covers all of our sins, but we always have to suffer some consequences from our sins. Satan is always the one who tempts us to sin, and he is a thief. When we sin, something is always stolen from us.

As I shared last week, we are in a war. Our enemy, the devil, wants to destroy us. One of his most powerful weapons is to tempt us to sin. And our commander, Jesus Christ, is able to lead us to victory after victory. Good soldiers do not wait until the battle starts before they start preparing themselves physically and mentally. They prepare themselves beforehand. Like good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we must not wait for Satan's attacks before we start preparing ourselves. We should prepare ourselves beforehand. Today's message will help you learn how to recognize Satan's attacks and so to prepare yourself for victory in the battle.

HOW DO WE RECOGNIZE SIN?

One of Satan's primary weapons is temptation, trying to persuade us to disobey God and sin, so that he can then steal from us. So it's important to recognize his attacks. But how do we know when we are being tempted? How do we know if something is sin or not? How do we recognize sin?

Simply put, sin means acting independently of God. We were made to live in relationship with Him, and anything we do outside of that relationship is independence from Him and therefore is sin. But sin can be subtle and very deceiving, so we need to know how to recognize sin, how to recognize that we are thinking or acting independently from God. Imagine that some thief is stealing from you and you do not even realize it. That is how it is with Satan and his temptations; and until we are trained, in some areas of our life we do not even realize that he is stealing from.

THE CONVICTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is part of the Holy Spirit's job to convict us of sin. That is, to warn us that we are being tempted to sin; and if we do sin, to show us that we have sinned so that we can repent and change our ways.

Our own hearts can be deceitful, so we can't rely primarily on our own judgment to help us recognize sin in our lives. We must rely on the Holy Spirit to convict us.

King David prayed this prayer: *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* (Psalm 139:23-24 KJV) He did not trust in his own ability to identify sin in his life. He relied on God to show him.

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independently of God.**

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would lead us into all truth, and of course this includes showing us what sin is so that we can avoid it. *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth* (John 16:13 KJV)

But how does the Holy Spirit convict us of sin?

CONSCIENCE

Every human being has a “conscience.” Your conscience is that part of your being which tells you that certain things are right and wrong. The dictionary defines conscience as “*The faculty of the mind, or inborn sense of right and wrong, by which we judge the moral character of human conduct.*” For example, even those who do not know Christ, still govern their behavior by some indwelling sense of right and wrong. They have a conscience. A hardened murderer may feel that it would be wrong to hit his mother. His conscience is telling him that it is wrong. A veteran bank robber may give some of his money to charities. Something in him is telling him that it would be good to do that. His conscience is speaking to him.

God gave us our conscience. Even if we do not know Christ, our conscience gives us an idea of what we should and should not do.

¹²*All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.* ¹³*For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.* ¹⁴*(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, ¹⁵since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)* ¹⁶*This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.* (Romans 2:12-16 NIV) Paul is saying that even those who have not heard of God's laws, have a law in their hearts which guides their behavior. This natural, inborn law is their conscience.

But, our conscience is not entirely trustworthy. Men's consciences have been perverted by sin, and are no longer a reliable guide for what is right and what is wrong.

For example, it was Paul's conscience that told him to persecute Christians. *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.* (Acts 26:9 KJV)

Throughout history, people's consciences have told them it is God's will that they should kill Christians. *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.* (John 16:2 KJV)

Men's consciences have been defiled by sin. *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.* (Titus 1:15)

Men's consciences have been seared by sin. *Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron* (1 Timothy 4:2 KJV) Meat that has been seared is no longer tender. Men's consciences are no longer tender and sensitive, because they have been seared and hardened by sin. So they are no longer a true guide to what is right and wrong.

The way we were brought up, and the culture we live in, can pervert our conscience. For example, in Latin America, the macho culture teaches that it is normal to lust after many women. Those men who have accepted 'machismo' have had their consciences seared, that is, they are no longer sensitive to the fact that to lust after many women is sin. They think it is normal to do this, and their conscience does not convict them of their wrongdoing and the destructiveness of their behavior. In some cultures, it is common for people to lie. When these people lie, they do not feel their conscience condemning them, because their conscience has been perverted to think that it is normal and acceptable to be untruthful.

As born-again believers, God wants to redeem our conscience, so that it once again can be useful in guiding us in how God wants us to live. So, we have to cultivate a pure and true conscience. *The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.* (1 Timothy. 1:5 NIV)

And we have to keep our consciences clean. *So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.* (Acts 24:16 NIV) *Holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.* (1 Timothy 1:19 NIV)

As we submit our conscience to God, it becomes an important tool in helping us recognize sin, and guiding our behavior. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost* (Romans.9:1)

How do we cultivate a true and pure conscience? By training ourselves in the word of God.

Exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

THE WORD OF GOD

Our ideas of what is right and wrong have been perverted by the world in which we live. But as we read, hear and accept God's word, our consciences are trained in what is real, true and right.

The word of God cuts through all our erroneous ideas and gets to the truth and heart of the matter. *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* (Hebrews 4:12 KJV)

Not only does the word of God train us in how to recognize sin, it also trains us in how to give ourselves to God and to the good works he has prepared for us to do. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* (2 Timothy 3:16-17 KJV)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105 KJV)

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Psalm 119:11 KJV)

As we expose ourselves to the word of God, we become more acquainted with God's character, with the things He loves and the things He hates. The word of God is full of specific examples of sinful behaviors.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21 NIV) These are examples of sinful behaviors.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: ²⁸But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28 KJV)

It is important to understand this. Many people think that sin is only things that you *do*. But Jesus made it clear that sin can also be things that you *think*. Your thought life is extremely important. Learn to discipline your thoughts. Do not sin in your mind by welcoming and entertaining sinful thoughts. **When Satan puts a tempting thought in your mind, take it captive, and reject it.** *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ* (2 Corinthians 10:5 KJV)

TRUST IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

As we have seen, our job is to train our consciences by immersing ourselves in the word of God. Do not be lazy. Give time and attention to the word of God. As we do our job, the Holy Spirit will be able to help us by bringing back to our minds the things God has shown us in His word, just when we need them. *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* (John 14:26 KJV) This will help us recognize sin and choose the right path.

FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS

God speaks to us through His word, through His Holy Spirit, and also through our brothers and sisters in Christ.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. (Proverbs 13:20 KJV)

Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head (Psalm 141:5)

Open rebuke is better than secret love. ⁶Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. (Proverbs 27:5-6 KJV)

We have to open our hearts and lives to this kind of fellowship with our brothers and sisters. It can hurt at times, but it is beneficial to us to allow others to speak into our lives, and to be willing to speak into their lives. This is a safeguard for us against the destructiveness of sin.

*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. ¹³But **exhort one another daily**, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* (Hebrews 3:12-13 KJV)

When Satan puts a tempting thought in your mind, take it captive, and reject it

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:42 KJV)

As you put yourself in fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ, you will find yourself much better equipped to recognize and deal with the attacks of the enemy.

Like good soldiers, we need to prepare ourselves for battle. Remember that sin is destructive. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of sin that you are not even aware of, ways that Satan is stealing from you without you realizing it.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise.

Cultivate a true and pure conscience by opening your heart to the word of God and giving time and attention to His word. Spend time with your brothers and sisters in Christ and open your heart to fellowship with them. And trust the Holy Spirit that He will remind you of His truths and convict you of specific sin in your life. He is faithful.

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"IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK" - JESUS (JOHN 7:37)