

Semester 4 – Week 12 - Class 23

THE SECRET TO OVERCOME SIN

Matthew 1:21 **“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”** Mary would be the mother of Jesus and Jesus is to save the people IN their sins? NO! He shall save the people FROM their sins.

John 16:33 **“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”** Jesus declares that He has overcome the world. He tells us that we live in a world where we will have tribulation, but in spite of that He wants us to have peace. Since 1 Peter 2:21, 22 says He is our example who did no sin and we are to follow His steps, then are we not to overcome the world as well?

Revelation 2:7 **“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”** A promise is given to he that overcometh. Would a promise be given if sin were impossible to overcome? How do we not sin? Psalm 119:11.

Psalm 119:11 **“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”** David said that if the word is hidden in his heart he might not sin. What is his heart? His mind. How do we hide the Word in our heart? Reading His Word every day. We are to store the scriptures in our hearts, but Who is the Word of God? Jesus. John 1:1-3, 14. Jesus is to be in our heart (minds) that we would not sin.

What has Paul admonished us to do so that we may be able to withstand in the evil day?

Ephesians 6:13 **“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”**

Hebrews 4:15 **“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin.”** Does Jesus know what we are going through in our daily walk? How do you know from this verse? Because He was tempted in ALL points as we are yet without sin.

The Word of God is the most commonly neglected resource in resisting the lower nature (passions). Such as sexual sins or anger. Christians have never learned to truly make use of God's weaponry to fight the enemy of evil temptations. Now temptation by itself is not wrong. All of us are tempted to do evil. Even Jesus our Saviour was tempted, yet He was without sin.

Sin can become a habit. Habits are simply thoughts or acts repeated often. Not all habits are bad. Habits can be our friends, i.e. driving, typing, or tying shoes. But what happens when habits are bad, corrupt or evil? They are the temptations that we must achieve the victory over. The question is how do we achieve victory over the things by which we are so often tempted?

First of all, God can indeed give us the victory, but we must understand that no victory will come to us from God without our cooperation. The Lord is not going to reach down with a hand from heaven and remove a cigarette from our lips, nor will He physically take the whisky bottle out of our hands. He won't strike the television with lightning to keep us from watching violent programs, or stir up a great wind and blow all our pornographic material out of the house. These are things we choose to overcome, all the while claiming God's power to back up the choice that we've made.

Victories for the Christian are not determined by “willpower” alone, or taking motivational courses. So how do they come? Let's go to the Bible for some answers.

The first step to victory is found in Joshua 24:15

Joshua 24:15 **“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”** What does Joshua say serving the Lord is? “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.” He said it is a choice. So if sin is a choice, is overcoming a choice as well? Right living begins with right choices! For the sake of illustration, let's say that you're trying to quit smoking. (If you don't have a smoking habit, apply the principle to your own particular need.) If you say to yourself, “Well, I kind of want to quit smoking,” or “I sort of want to overcome”, or “I think it would be a good idea . . .” ... that's not making a choice! That is fooling around with sin! First, make a choice, by saying, “I

choose this day to serve Jesus Christ and to NOT DO THIS SINFUL ACT ANYMORE. You must make that choice.

Step 1 – Choose whom you will serve!

This is exercising the will, which is the power to make deliberate decisions and choose determined actions. We make a choice first and then God will give us the power to fulfill that choice we have made. The power is what we are so often lacking.

Once you have made the right choice, the next step is to claim this promise in 1 Corinthians 15:57.

1 Corinthians 15:57 **“But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** God gives us the victory that we need! If we are sinning and realize that what we’re doing is sin, we don’t need to pray and ask if it’s God’s will for us to overcome that sin. We already know it is God’s will that we stop sinning! 1 John 2:1 **“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.”**

There is no need to pray, “Lord if it’s your will that I stop smoking, then please help me to quit” or “Lord, if it’s your will for me to stop stealing, please help me to quit.” God has already told us in His Word that we are not to do these things. And when we know that something is against God’s will, we can confidently claim this promise that He will give us the victory over it.

In Mark 11:22 we read, **“And Jesus answering saith unto them, have faith in God.”** In order to withstand the devil’s attacks, we must “Have faith in God.” In verse 24, Jesus promises **“Therefore I say unto you, what things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them.”** Do you know, a lot of people say, “Lord, please give me the victory, Lord please give me the victory, Lord please give me the victory,” and five years later they’re still saying, “Lord please give me the victory,” but they never claim the victory?

If I say, “Well, I want a million dollars.” So I’m going to pray, “Lord please give me a million dollars.” Can I confidently claim that God’s going to give me that million dollars? No! Because it’s probably not God’s will that I have that million dollars. So I can’t confidently claim that one. But when I can read in the Bible that it is God’s will that I not do certain things, then I can confidently claim God’s assistance of power to achieve victory over that besetting habit.

If I was to offer you a gift, when does that gift become yours? When you have received it, right? I could hold that gift out and say, “Please take this, please take this, I’m really, really giving this to you, please take it.” But until you actually take it or receive it, it never becomes yours.

We can say, “Lord, I need this victory. Lord I know I need to quit this sin, please help me Lord, give me the victory,” and we can pray it and ask it, and ask it, and God all the while is handing out His power to us, saying, “Won’t you please take the power to back up what you want?” After asking, get up off your knees, and say, “Lord, I believe that you have given me the victory or thing that I asked for in prayer according to Your will.” Then claiming that promise that God will fulfill His part in answering prayer. **WALK AS A CHILD OF GOD!**

“... what things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them.” It’s a promise!

The first step in overcoming is making the choice. **“I CHOOSE TO QUIT THIS SIN.”**

The second step is to say, “Thank you, God, for the victory! I believe it! I receive it.”

Then we move on to step 3, Romans 6:11, **“Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Claiming this promise too we tell ourselves that we have now become dead to that sinful habit that had formerly enslaved us. Ask yourself the question: Can a corpse be tempted? How much response is there going to be from this corpse? NONE. Why? Because it’s DEAD! It can’t respond to temptation. Now the Bible says, “You reckon (consider) yourself to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God.” Say to yourself, “I can no more respond to that sinful temptation than a dead person could.” I consider myself to be dead to that thing.

This conditions the mind to continually reject the hateful thing and turn away from it before the mind pays it any attention.

Somehow it seems that as human beings our minds are geared to remember things in “threes”. When you are tempted by Satan on any point remember this “one, two, three” plan and say it out loud.

1. NO! (I choose not to do that sin!)
2. THANK YOU GOD FOR THE VICTORY (The power is of God)
3. I'M DEAD TO IT (I will in no way respond to the temptation)

So I make a choice ... that's my "NO." I "THANK GOD FOR THE VICTORY," that's when I claim the victory from God. And then I say, "I WILL NOT RESPOND TO IT." If you will do that, you will not succumb to that sinful temptation. How can you succumb to something that you've made a resolute choice against; you've thanked and accepted God for the power to back up that choice; and rejected the thought by stating, "I don't even respond to it?"

When you say "No!," it's important to say it like you mean it.

How can we make sure that temptation is held to a minimum?

Romans 13:14 says this, **"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."** Notice the two parts of this verse. First, "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ." Begin and end every day with a thorough conversion. When you get up in the morning, you **"put on the Lord Jesus Christ"** by asking God for the Holy Spirit so that you can **"... walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.."** Romans 8:1,4

Have you noticed that when you've spent time with God early in the morning you feel stronger spiritually to go out and meet the day; but when you don't spend that time with the Lord in the morning either through prayer or Bible study or both, that somehow you just don't feel that close walk that you want to have?

(Proverbs 16:3) **"Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established."**

When you don't spend the time putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, then when the temptation comes, you don't have spiritual power to fight it. It's so much easier when you already feel that closeness.

In Galatians 5:16 we're told, **"This I say then, Walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."** You're either going to be in the spiritual mind or in the carnal mind. When you walk in the spirit, the fleshly things cannot have strength, and visa versa.

When you have the fleshly mind, the spiritual things do not appeal to you. The fleshly mind wants to smoke, the fleshly mind wants improper reading material, the fleshly mind wants to overeat, the fleshly wants to drink alcohol, etc., and Paul is saying, "put on the spiritual mind, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." In Romans when we are told "make not provision for the flesh" that means, "Don't put yourself in a situation to be tempted unnecessarily."

Let's say I'm an alcoholic, do you think that if I go into a tavern or a bar and I sit down and I have people drinking all around me, and then I'm going to pray when I'm sitting there, "Lord, please help me not to drink while I'm here" ... do you think that's sensible? Do you think it's logical to put temptation all around you for the flesh, and then pray to God that He will deliver you from it? No! The first thing that the Lord would say is, "Well, if you really want to be delivered, quickly get out of the tavern!" Don't purposefully allow sin to surround you, and then ask to be delivered from it.

If we don't clean house, then the message is that we're secretly wanting the temptation to overcome us!

If I want to quit smoking, but I don't throw everything out, or get rid of every cigarette, every ash tray, every little lighter that reminds you of the habit, if I don't throw it all out ... if I keep even a half a cigarette at home ... am I serious about quitting? No! Because by keeping that half a cigarette there, I'm telling myself, "I'm going to fail, and I'm keeping it there for when I fail." It's self talking yourself into defeat. The only way to victory is to get rid of everything that reminds you of that habit! If I want to quit listening to hard rock music because I realize it's ruining my Christian experience, but I have my stereo set up in the living room and I have all my hard rock tapes and CD's displayed there do you think that I'll be able to be delivered from it when I'm being tempted every time I walk in the living room? No. I must throw it away! Because every time I see it, the flesh (carnal nature) is going to want it. Isn't that right? So if I have alcohol in the house, and I'm asking God to deliver me from alcohol, does it make sense to keep even one drop in the house?

Don't keep drugs in the house and ask to be delivered from drugs. Don't keep alcohol in the home or the car or your work place, and ask to be delivered from it. Don't keep pornographic material in the house, and say, "Lord, I don't want to lust." If we really want to make the Biblical claim **"I'M DEAD TO SIN"** (Romans 6:2,11)

GET RID OF EVERYTHING THAT TEMPTS YOU, AND THEN YOU HAVE A VICTORY! If we keep wrong things around us, it's a sign that we really don't believe that we're delivered from it, and so we're simply going to keep it there because we're planning to pick it up where we left off.

Now the next point is a very fascinating, but important point in God's plan for victory over bad habits.

James 1:12-15, **"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.."**

Some may remember a TV comedy show from the 70's called the Flip Wilson Hour. Flip Wilson, the comedian, would often use the famous line "The Devil made me do it." The Biblical truth however is quite opposite. The devil cannot make you do anything. The devil can pressure you. The devil can persecute you. The devil can sorely tempt you, but God has not allowed the devil the ability or the power to make you or me sin. For sin to occur, we must first allow the temptation into our minds. James says, "Lust when it conceives, it brings forth sin." That lust can be a lust for alcohol, a lust for smoking, a lust for overeating, a lust for pornography, a lust to allow ourselves to be impatient, angry or swear or some other carnal thing. When the thought comes to your mind, there's a door there. You can allow the wrong thought in, or you can slam the door shut. Remember: to be tempted by a sinful thought is not sin. To allow the thought to build and build there and conceive until you cherish it— then it becomes sin.

If I want to quit smoking, and the thought comes to my mind, "Smoke a cigarette," I can sit and think, "Hmm. Will I smoke that cigarette or not? My, that smoke would taste real good right now." What am I doing? I'm allowing the thought to conceive. I'm cherishing it, and cherishing it until the thought builds so big in my mind, I finally in desperation exclaim, "Oh, I've just got to smoke—and thus they do.

Many smokers who try to quit, fail because they continually look upon themselves and say, "Look at me, I'm trying to quit smoking. I feel so sorry for myself. Aren't I in a terrible strait," Well is it any wonder that they go smoke when they're constantly thinking about it? They act like they just got a divorce from their best friend. Their failure is in thinking and thinking about the cigarette instead of immediately claiming power from the One who has all power and say, 1. NO! 2. THANK YOU LORD FOR THE VICTORY! 3. I'M DEAD TO IT!!!

Sinful thoughts immediately rejected from the mind have no strength to overcome you. Practice it and see! Habits are formed in the mind by the same thought pattern traveling over, and over and over through the brain. You build up a "super high-way" that says "yes" to the sinful habit. What we're now attempting to do is say "highway closed" and then build another super highway that says "NO" to the habit. The wonderful thing about this is, every time the mind is told, "NO! THANK YOU LORD FOR THE VICTORY, I'M DEAD TO THAT HABIT," the mind accepts it easier the next time, and easier the next and the next, until it is very easy to resist, and that evil habit has no strength. Learning to practice this until it became a habit has been one of the most powerful things one can ever learn as a Christian.

2 Corinthians 10:5, **"... and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;"**

When tempted with an unchristian thought, remember, reject the thought immediately. Don't even wait five seconds. Don't wait two seconds. When the thought comes, say, "NO! THANK YOU LORD FOR THE VICTORY, I AM DEAD TO IT!" and then focus your thoughts on something else which is positive. To do this we must first have something powerful to put in your mind. The best thing to get your mind on is Scripture! When Satan assailed Jesus three times with strong temptations, three times Jesus immediately replied, **"It is written ..."** So you and I when wrongly tempted should also answer from the Word of God, "It is written, it is written, it is written."

1 Corinthians 10:13 **"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God [is] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear [it]."**

Focus on God's power, don't focus on your problem. Remember, Philippians 4:13 **"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."**

The call of God to a world lost in sin is found in Isaiah 45:22 **“Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”** We so often fail when temptations attack because we immediately concentrate on the evil thought to the point of cherishing it, rather than training our minds to instantly look to the One who’s power is complete to enable us to shun the thought immediately.

Let us praise God that there has been made a way for the Christian to successfully resist the devil’s attacks! The preaching of the cross (THE LOVE OF GOD REVEALED THERE TOWARDS A WORLD LOST IN SIN) is the power of God to us who are saved. 1 Corinthians 1:18 **“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”** (the original Greek more accurately translates “those that are in the process of being saved.”)

If we don’t have enough power, to deal with the temptations that we’re meeting, then the answer would lie in the fact that we are not focusing our minds enough on the cross. The cross was God’s remedy for sin. It demonstrated to us just how awful sin really is in God’s sight. If we can only look at the cross, (God’s incredible love to us in giving His Son to this world as a sacrifice for our sins,) and see what sin did to Jesus there, we will long to be free from sin’s attraction, and those who seek with all their heart will find the victory they so much long for.

One main reason so many of us have such a hard time with our personal sins is that as we consider them they are so often measured against what we consider larger, more hideous crimes and so we don’t think of them as so bad. The problem is that we don’t measure them by the same measuring stick that God uses and so they don’t appear in our sight of such a nature that we need to flee from that sin as fast as possible.

The ultimate way to quit all sinning is to sense what sin costs. And the way to sense what it costs is to see what it costs God. It is only as we come face to face with the fact that the sin which we may have deceived ourselves into thinking as small is in reality terrible enough in the sight of God to merit having to cause the death of His Son in order that that sin be forgiven, that it will become loathsome in our sight and we will shun it entirely.

Each day, we should tell ourselves, "Through the grace of God, I will be an overcomer." Now hear the very words. Notice, we're not to say, "I want to be an overcomer." "I'd like to be an overcomer." "I wish I could be an overcomer." No. We should arise and say, **"THROUGH THE GRACE OF GOD, I WILL BE AN OVERCOMER."** Would you say that with me? **I WILL BE AN OVERCOMER!**

There are some who act as though they are trying to be happy in spite of their religion. God wants us to be happy because of our religion. There's a big difference. Where's your greatest joy? Is it in Christ? Is it in doing the will of God? Are you satisfied with Jesus as your Divine Comforter?

I will be an overcomer. I will trust my Saviour. I will be free. I am free. Is it then presumption to say it? No, it's faith! I will surrender. I will believe. I will give myself to Jesus right now. I know that He receives me. I will be free, I am free. Jesus is my Saviour. I will love Him. I do love Him. Practice these things every day. Say, "Lord, I believe you. Lord, I do surrender. Dear Jesus I do love you, and I know you love me."

While it's all right to study the deep theological prophecies. And we should. Never let that keep you from the sweet, simple, trusting faith of a little child. If we knew a thousand times more than we know, it would still be true that only as we become converted and become as little children we can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

When the devil comes to you and tells you you're a great sinner, what do you say? "I know it. But Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

1John 4:19 **“We love Him, because He first loved us.”** Put your will on the side of God's will. Tell yourself each morning of every day. Jesus is my Saviour. I will love Him and serve Him because He first loved me.

End Semester 4 – Week 12 - Class 23

The Last Class **Semester 4 – Week 12 - Class 24 “Heaven – Is it For Real?”**