

Overcoming Sin

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James 1:12-15

We receive a wonderful blessing when we become Christians — the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ.

At our BAPTISM, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all PAST sins.

- Rev. 1:5, “*And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*”
- Ananias told Saul (Paul): Acts 22:16, “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*”

But this does not mean that our problem with sin is over. We still sin at times.

- 1 John 1:8, “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*”
- 1 John 1:10, “*If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*”

Satan does his best to cause all of us to sin. 1 Pet. 5:8, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*”

If we are to maintain a close walk with God, and ultimately receive the riches of glory in heaven that He has prepared for us, we must overcome the problem of sin in two ways:

By sinning less and less; striving towards perfection. And by knowing what to do when we do sin. 1 John 2:1-2, “*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*”

Propitiation — atonement. Method by which we can have our sins removed.

This lesson is concerned with helping us see how sin develops, and how to overcome sin with its terrible consequences.

To overcome sin, we need to understand how it develops. The Bible outlines the development of sin in:

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 hath 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 hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”*

How sin develops.

The first stage is “temptation”.

James 1:14, *“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”*

In this verse, we see that “temptation” includes two things:

- LUST (some translations say “DESIRE”, suggesting a strong desire for something).
- ENTICEMENT (an opportunity and encouragement to satisfy the desire).

Putting it in the form of a simple equation:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Desire} \\ + \text{Opportunity} \\ \hline = \text{Temptation} \end{array}$$

To illustrate:

A small child is TEMPTED to steal some cookies when he WANTS (desire) them and has an OCCASION (opportunity) to take them.

The temptation becomes stronger if he wants them badly enough, and has a good chance of getting them without being seen.

PLEASE NOTE: At this stage in the development of sin, actual sin has not yet been committed.

It is not a sin to be “tempted”. For Jesus Himself was tempted, yet did not sin:

- Heb. 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.*”
- Heb. 2:18, “*For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour (AID) them that are tempted.*”

The second stage is “sin” itself.

James 1:15, “*Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*”

It becomes sin when we YIELD and ACT on the temptation.

Thus sin involves the added step of some sort of action on our part.

Again, in the form of a simple equation:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Desire} \\ + \text{Opportunity} \\ \hline = \text{Temptation} \\ + \text{Action} \\ \hline = \text{Sin} \end{array}$$

The third stage involves the consequences of unrepented and unforgiven sin: DEATH.

James 1:15, “*Then when lust hath conceived (TO SEIZE, TAKE, OR HOLD ONE PRISONER), it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*”

The “death” spoken here refers to spiritual separation from God.

This separation occurs first in this life. Isa. 59:2, “*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*”

If we die physically in this state, then we will experience the “second death”, which involves eternal punishment!

Rev. 21:8, “*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*”

Putting all this into a final equation:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Desire} \\ + \text{Opportunity} \\ \hline = \text{Temptation} \\ + \text{Action} \\ \hline = \text{Sin} \\ + \text{No Forgiveness} \\ \hline = \text{Death} \end{array}$$

Observations about the development of sin.

Sin will have overcome us if we receive the “final punishment” of Rev. 21:8.

But we will have overcome sin if we can avoid this punishment and experience the glories God has prepared for His children!

How can we be sure to overcome sin? By stopping its development at any one of the four points leading to the final punishment!

Now, let’s examine how this may be done...

How to overcome sin:

Change our “desires”.

Since this is where the process of sin begins, it is the best place for us to begin.

Bear in mind that it is a part of Christian growth to change our desires.

Paul told young Timothy:

- 2 Tim. 2:22, “Flee also youthful lusts...”
- Rom. 12:1-2, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”
- Gal. 5:24, “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

A mother through instruction changes the desire of a child against wanting a cookie if he steals to get it.

How do we change our desires?

A mother through instruction changes the desire of a child against wanting a cookie if he steals to get it.

Notice that the WORD OF GOD has always been instrumental in helping people overcome sin.

Psalms 119:11, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

STUDY GOD’S WORD.

Matt. 4:3-10, “And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

We can see how the Word of God can change our desires as we read of His love, longsuffering, and mercy. When we understand His will, then we have the desire to serve Him.

Psalms 116:12-14, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name

of the LORD. *I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.*

When we see how the Word of God can change our desires as we read of sin and its damnable consequences, then we come to hate sin!

Psalms 119:104, *“Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.”*

Something else that helps us deal with our temptations is prayer.

When Jesus was at the Garden of Gethsemane before his betrayal, He told His disciples:

Matt. 26:41, *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

Pray.

Prayer really does help.

So the more we listen to God by studying His word and the more we pray about our temptation, the less likely we will have the DESIRE to sin, thereby beginning to overcome sin by “nipping it in the bud”!

But changing our desires takes time; while engaged in the process of changing our desires, what else can we do?

Limit our “opportunities”.

Remember, we are tempted only when there is BOTH desire and opportunity.

So while we work on changing our desires, we should limit the opportunities to fulfill wrongful desires.

This can be done by asking for God’s help, as Jesus taught by example in His prayer to God: Matt. 6:13, *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”*

Pray.

We can cooperate with God by purposely avoiding situations that might excite wrongful desires.

Following the example of David. Notice the vow he makes. Psalms 101:3-4, *“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.”*

And the example of Job. Job 31:1, *“I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?”*

Job’s covenant to himself was similar to David’s vow.

It is not a sin to see that a woman is beautiful. The Bible says that Queen Esther was a beautiful woman. It is a sin, however, to gaze upon a woman and desire her.

Remember, Job said, *“I will not think upon a maid.”*

Matt. 5:28, *“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”*

“Look on” or “looketh on”:

- {oy’-da} to see; to perceive with the eyes; notice, discern, discover (Jesus looked on His disciples).
- {thēh-o-reh’-o} to be a spectator, look at, behold from afar (Mary Magdalene looked upon Jesus from afar when He was on the cross).
- {thēh-ah’-om-ahee} to behold, look upon, view attentively, contemplate (as a farmer looking over his crops).
- {at-en-id’-zo} to fix the eyes on, gaze upon; to fix one’s mind on one; look steadfastly; , look earnestly upon; stare (as Cornelius looked upon the angel of the Lord in his vision).
- {blep’-o} to see, to direct the mind, discern, to look upon, gaze at, to contemplate, to perceive by the senses, to feel.

When combined with the word “lust” – to direct the mind, contemplate, desire longingly for, covet.

In other words, it is wrong to look upon a woman in a way that his senses are aroused.

So we avoid situations that might excite wrongful desires.

We can also cooperate with God by avoiding those whose evil behavior encourages us to sin with them.

Again, David sets a good example. Psalms 101:6-7, *“Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.”*

Paul also adds his warning. 1 Cor. 15:33, *“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”*

But we will unlikely remove EVERY desire and opportunity to sin in this life, what then?

Exercise “self-control”.

Remember, it becomes sin when we yield to ACTION in fulfilling our sinful desires.

If we can control ourselves so as to not yield to sin, then we can overcome it!

How does the Christian exercise self-control?

Self-control is but one aspect of the “fruit of the Spirit”.

Gal. 5:22-23, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*”

Temperance doesn’t mean, “Do in moderation.” Notice the same verse in the NIV translation:

Gal. 5:22-23 (NIV), “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*”

Temperance means self-control.

When we become Christians, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Acts 2:38, “*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*”

The Spirit is God’s instrumental agent by which He imparts strength to us. Eph. 3:16, “*That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man,*”

When we are strengthened by the Spirit, we are able to “put to death the deeds of the body”. Rom. 8:12-13, “*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify (KILL) the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*”

As Paul said in Phil. 4:13, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*”

It is when the Christian has faith, trust, and obedience in God’s Word that he receives this divine help. Having the Holy Spirit aid us in exercising our self-control will help us a lot more than we can realize. Eph. 3:20, “*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,*”

Pray.

It is certainly proper to pray for strength by the Spirit, as Paul did in behalf of the Ephesians. Eph. 3:16, “*That he would grant you, according*

to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man,”

But it is equally important to act upon it, trusting that you are not alone as you try to do God’s will.

Phil. 2:12-13, *“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, 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.”*

As an exercise commercial once said: JUST DO IT! In other words, PRAY FOR IT! Pray for strength when you feel you need it.

The Christian, then, has no excuse for yielding to a temptation.

1 Cor. 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.”*

But there may be times when we don’t take advantage of the strength God provides through His Spirit, and we sin; what then?

Obtain “forgiveness”.

Remember that sin is victorious when it results in punishment.

But if we obtain forgiveness through the blood of Christ, we can avoid that punishment and thereby still overcome sin!

1 John 2:1-2, *“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”*

“Propitiation” — “atoning sacrifice”.

Yes, Christ is truly the “propitiation” for our sins!

By His blood, we were forgiven of past sins when united with Him in BAPTISM.

By His blood, we can also be forgiven of present sins when we **REPENT, PRAY, and CONFESS our sins to God.**

- Acts 8:22, *“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.”*
- 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

At any time the Christian can overcome sins that were committed, by repenting, praying, and confessing them to God!

Some observations about overcoming sin...

If you've noticed carefully, you should have seen that at each of the four points in the development of sin, God is able and willing to help us overcome sin!

- God helps us to “control our desires” by providing His WORD to renew our minds and He strengthens us when we pray about it.
- God helps us to “limit the opportunities” through His PROVIDENCE as we pray for such.
- God helps us to “exercise self-control” over our actions through His SPIRIT strengthening the inner man when we pray for such assistance.
- God helps us to “obtain forgiveness” through the BLOOD OF HIS SON as we repent and pray for forgiveness.

Isn't the grace of God wonderful?

- 2 Thess. 3:3, *“But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.”*
- 1 Cor. 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.”*

One thing that is readily apparent in all of the areas of overcoming sin is prayer.

1 Thess. 5:17, *“Pray without ceasing.”*

In learning the four points at which we may overcome sin, don't think that we can simply wait until we reach the fourth point to act.

That is, to just go ahead and sin, then ask God for forgiveness.

There are several reasons why we should not do this:

In baptism, we were freed from the power of sin, and should then present ourselves to God as servants of righteousness.

Rom. 6:1-6, *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Though we can receive forgiveness for sin, we might still suffer the “temporal” consequences of sins. Gal. 6:7-9, “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*”

If we turn away from God and His word, He will allow us then to believe or do whatever we want, and then we become hardened to that lifestyle.

- 2 Tim. 3:8, “*Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.*”
- Rom. 1:28, “*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient,*”

Reprobate – degenerate. They are unable to reason clearly. That’s why when loved ones leave the church they no longer hold God’s word dear in their hearts and their actions seem strange to us. When their logic becomes so flawed, we wonder why they can’t see it themselves. Where previously God helped the Christian along the path of righteousness, once that person begins to search elsewhere and reject God’s word, He then allows them to believe or do whatever they want.

If we allow sin to deceive us so as to become “hardened”, we may get to the point of sinning “willfully” and lose our salvation!

- Heb. 3:12-14, “*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end,*”
- Heb. 10:26-31, “*For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much*

sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

DEATH: **TOO LATE!**

So don't take the grace of God lightly and attempt to abuse it!

Conclusion.

How much better it would be to praise God for His grace, and use it to overcome sin in our lives!

May the promise found in James 1:12 help motivate us to do so:

James 1:12, “*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*”

OVERCOMING SIN James 1:12-15			
<u>How Sin Develops</u>	<u>How To Overcome Sin</u>		
Rev. 1:5	Desire + Opportunity ----- = Temptation + Action ----- = Sin + No Forgiveness ----- = Death	Change our desires, study God's word, pray Limit our opportunities, pray Exercise self-control, pray for assistance Obtain forgiveness: Repent, pray, and confess our sins to God Too late!	
Acts 22:16			Phil. 2:12-13
1 John 1:8			1 Cor. 10:13
1 John 1:10			1 John 2:1-2
1 John 1:10			Acts 8:22
1 Pet. 5:8			1 John 1:9
1 John 2:1-2			2 Thess. 3:3
James 1:12-15			1 Cor. 10:13
James 1:14			1 Thess. 5:17
Heb. 4:15			James 4:17
Heb. 2:18	Rom. 6:1-6		
James 1:15	Gal. 6:7-9		
Isa. 59:2	2 Tim. 3:8		
Rev. 21:8	Rom. 1:28		
2 Tim.2:22	Heb. 3:12-14		
Rom. 12:1-2	Heb. 10:26-31		
Gal. 5:24	James 1:12		
Psa. 119:11			
Matt. 4:3-10			
Psa. 116:12-14			
Psa. 119:104			
Matt. 26:41	Gal. 5:22-23		
Matt. 6:13	Acts 2:38		
Psa. 101:3-4	Eph. 3:16		
Job 31:1	Rom. 8:12-13		
Matt. 5:28	Phil. 4:13		
Psa. 101:6-7	Eph. 3:20		
1 Cor. 15:33	Eph. 3:16		

