

PRINCIPLES FOR GETTING RID OF BESETTING SINS

In the middle of Paul's exciting explanation of grace, he explains the intertwining of sin and grace in the life of a believer and what to do about it. In Romans 6, after clearly laying out our position - our identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, he says,

:11, "In the same way count yourselves dead to sin but alive God in Christ Jesus."

:12, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires."

:13 "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness."

:16 "When you offer yourselves to someone to obey him you are slaves to the one you obey, whether you are slaves to sin which leads to death, or to obedience which leads to +R."

In summation, what Paul is saying: You belong to the power you choose to obey. It is that simple. Every moment of every day we choose whom we wish to follow.

But what about those besetting sins which we have tolerated for so long? Neil Anderson calls them "strongholds" which have been developed in our minds before we were Christians, or as young Christians. Satan is a genius in manipulating our mind. He knows if he can control our mind, he can convince us to act independently of the Holy Spirit and eventually we will sin. It is setting our mind on the flesh (Romans 8:5-8).

1. Don't ignore sin in your life.

2. Don't rationalize your besetting sins by saying, "that's just the way I am. I can't help it. I inherited this." We must become convicted of our sins. "A belief is what you hold; a conviction is what holds you." A conviction is not authentic unless it includes a commitment to live accordingly. We must be convicted enough to be willing to change. To say to God, "do whatever it takes to root this sin out of my life for good."

3. Make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). Remember, the flesh is strong and fights the Holy Spirit, and Satan is a brilliant specialist in glamorizing the sin areas we have kept for ourselves - our secret sin areas of flesh enjoyment.

4. These strongholds usually trip us up when we are idle and in a slothful "I'm-not-going-to-do-anything-but-what-I-want-to-do" mode. That was David's attitude that Spring day when he saw Bathsheba. He was probably thinking, "I have fought God's battles for years. It's time for retirement. I've earned it and I deserve rest and relaxation this glorious Spring day. Joab can lead the army. He's an excellent general."

Did you realize that the sin of Sodom came as a result of the "abundance of idleness and selfishness?" (Ez. 16:49). Does this sound like the United States today? I think so. The amount of time and money spent on amusement and recreation is incredible, and the quality of that amusement is amazingly like Sodom (e.g. movies, TV).

Does this mean we can never relax or have fun? Not at all. God exhorts us "come apart and rest" regularly. You would be surprised at how much fun and relaxation and refreshment disciples of Christ can have together with Him and one another - without catering to carnality of any kind.

5. The final principle we need to understand is that our flesh, our sin nature, is no different after we become a believer than it was before. Out of it flows sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, envy, drunkenness, orgies. (Gal. 5:19-21). And, it fights against the Spirit. The only solution is to be "crucified with Christ," to "set our mind on the Spirit," and allow the Holy Spirit to "put to death the deeds of the flesh" by His Almighty Power. (Romans 8:5-13).

WHAT ABOUT GRACE?

The Grace principles are:

1. Grace cannot be understood or experienced while we are under guilt. The two are mutually exclusive. Grace demands repentance. That is simply agreeing with God that we have sinned and turning away from it towards Christ and His cross. He paid for that sin. He loves us. He forgives us. He removes the guilt from our hearts and frees us to enjoy grace.

2. Choosing to present the members of our body to +R will result in a lifestyle marked by God's blessings - stability and the Holy Spirit's power. All of these blessings multiply as we become "models of grace." In the process of being transformed by God's grace through the help of the Holy Spirit, we must become experts in self-knowledge. Once we have discovered our area of weakness - avoid it at all costs. We often feel that just "thinking" about it is fairly harmless. It isn't harmless. Thinking can lead to damaging action. It is in the thinking stage where we can make positive changes by choosing to take every thought captive to Christ. Choose to think as Paul exhorts us to in Phil 4:8. That is a very important step in presenting the members of our body to +R. But, if we continue to have improper thoughts, it is only a matter of time before we take action.

3. A love relationship with Jesus Christ will produce a life of willing obedience. Though obedience will never be perfect in this life, the love behind it will motivate towards godliness. Actions based on obedience must rule over actions based on what you feel you want to do. You can't "feel" yourself into a new way of acting - you have to act yourself into a new way of feeling. When you feel weak, hang on in the Lord's strength. Obey out of sheer willingness to obey.

4. There is a wonderful quality of life resulting from a godly walk with the Lord. You seldom hear about it because those who have a genuine communion with Him are the most humble. They don't focus on the "how," they just love the Lord and have a truly intimate walk with Him.

