

THE PRINCIPLE OF SIN AND TEMPTATION

By the "Law of Sin," we mean an indwelling, commanding, ruling principle which regulates the mind and will and emotions.

By "indwelling", we mean it is "in" the members of my body." (Romans 7:23). It always is present in the soul - Mind, Will, Emotions. It is always ready to apply itself to every situation... "when I would do good, evil is present with me." (Romans 7:15). And, it is easily able to express itself because it lies in the mind. It controls the will. It is embraced by the affections. It is intimately at home in the soul. It is "the sin which so easily entangles us." (Hebrews 12:1).

Since there is a "law of sin" in our very soul, our center of life - it is imperative for us to understand and deal with it. Our very walk with the Lord depends on our dealing with it. Ignorance of the principle of "indwelling sin" will breed (1) self-sufficiency and pride, (2) carelessness, and a (3) miserably failing Christian life.

The Nature of Indwelling Sin

Sin is camouflaged (Jer. 17:9,10), "unsearchable" - it is the Lord alone who understands and sees it.

Sin is deceitful. It is full of contradictions which defy logic. The way we rationalize our sins does not even make sense. It is full of false promises. Sin promises us to do this or that, and it appears good, but it never delivers what it promises.

The Power of Indwelling Sin

Sin is at enmity with God. It opposes and hates God and His Grace. Sin attacks holiness and God's authority in our lives. "It is not subject to the will of God, nor can it be." (Romans 8:7).

No area of one's life is free of sin, i.e., the mind is darkened and full of vanity; the will wrestles with its stubbornness and willfulness; all our affections deal with sensuality and aversion to God. Our knowledge is imperfect; our obedience is weak; and our love is mixed and impure.

Sin allows an outward appearance of serving God, but keeps our heart far away, e.g., Pharisees were serving God but had no relationship with Him. Satan blinds people by religious performance without a personal relationship.

Sin opposes God by warfare. It deliberately attacks (1 Peter 2:11, James 4:1, Romans 7:23). It usually captures

our affections first (Col. 3:5, Gal. 5:17), and when it controls our "loves" (we love our sins), then sin can capture the soul. Then we fall into sin and are held captive by it. This is true only of Christians who do not want to sin. Unbelievers don't fight sin, but believers really want to follow Christ and live for Him. So, sin works to make us desire a sin, and become its captive - over and over again.

THE DECEIT OF INDWELLING SIN

In Hebrews 3:13 we are warned not to allow ourselves to be "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Deceit is most often the origin of sinning (1 Cor. 6:9, Gal. 6:7, Eph. 5:6).

1. Sin deceives our minds by:
 - (a) proposing immediate gratification of some desire,
 - (b) making a false judgment;
 - (c) by operating little by little - manipulating the mind by a series of steps towards its goal of sinning.
2. Sin deceives by emphasizing "cheap grace." The deceit is to separate grace from its purpose, i.e., sin says since we are totally forgiven, why worry about sinning? (Romans 6:1-2). The real effect of grace properly understood and applied is to make us hate our sins and be more sensitive to it, and walk closely with the Lord.
3. Legalism is another way sin deceives us. We try to make laws to keep ourselves out of sin, but the law causes more sin. (Romans 5:20).
4. Sin takes advantage of weariness, busy-ness, and specific duties to keep us from obeying God when we fail to watch for sin's deceit, we become spiritually lazy, i.e., our attitude toward God and spiritual growth and activities will be an attitude of carelessness. We will gradually be diverted from glorifying God and enjoying Him to following our own plans and purposes - our efforts for Christ are ineffectual with mixed motives. We lose the joy of our walk and our love for Christ grows cold. We begin to lie and live double lives.

THE EFFECTS OF INDWELLING SIN

Sin continually obsesses our imaginations with images and objects of lust, i.e., (a) things we want, (b) men we desire, (c) looks we lust for, (d) figures we are trying to make our body look like. In our mind, we paint these obsessions as something beautiful and satisfying, but they do obsess and consume us and we lose our love for Christ and His Kingdom. This is an abuse of grace and the end result is the removal in our minds of the evilness of evil. Grace

not only means we are totally forgiven in a love relationship with Christ, but also is the means of becoming more like Christ in a continual closer walk with Him. He is to be the center and focus of our life.

Steps in a Declining Spiritual Life:

1. Careless indifference and neglect of God's Grace (Gal. 5:2, Isa. 17:10).
2. Loss of reverence for God. (2 Cor. 3:18).
3. Losing the "simplicity of the Gospel." (2 Cor 11:3) resulting in the loss of faith, love and obedience to God.
4. Lack of vigilance against Satan (1Pet 5:8).
5. Enjoyment of some secret lust in our heart - it darkens the mind and hinders the relationship with God.
6. Neglecting regular communion with God thru prayer and meditation in the Word.
7. Increasing in knowledge without practicing the Word (1Cor 8:1). So true in XCF - we know a lot.
8. Growth in the wisdom of the world which says trust yourself and your own ability. The world's wisdom destroys faith in God and causes us to enter into self-deception and self-fulfillment.

How does temptation play its part in our struggle with indwelling sin?

All believers face temptation as long as Satan has his power, as long as the world with its lusts exists, we will face temptations. As long as we face it without falling into it or entering into it, we are in 1 Cor. 10:13 or 2 Peter 2:9 - we are "delivered out of temptation." But, we need to learn about the POWER OF TEMPTATION in order to avoid it. Again, keep remembering we are dealing with a very smart Satan, a completely corrupt world, and our own sinful heart. Self-confidence is the worst form of weakness. Do not flatter yourself that you can hold out against temptation's power - remember, Peter's great fall.

The power of temptation to darken the mind is phenomenal (2 Cor. 4:4). It distracts us from thinking as God would have us think. We become confused. Our judgment will be weakened. The sense of Christ's presence and His love will leave us, and depression quickly follows.

Temptation fuels our lusts by inciting them in endless turmoil of activity in our lives in the world. The temptation becomes an obsession. Our defenses break down, and sin results.

Public widespread temptations overwhelm a whole country gradually and spread infectiously "because sin will abound

and the love of many will grow cold." (Matt. 24:12) Even Christians adjust their lives to the culture of their country, especially when it is a "professing Christian" country. The music, the education, the amusements, the prosperity - we take for granted. All are powerful temptations from Satan himself.

(1 John 2:16). "Pride of Life." Success in profession or ministry, approval of those in high places, can tempt us to do "good" things with the wrong motive, removing us from our walk of depending on the Lord and following His lead. This develops a hardness of self-sufficiency and a lack of spiritual sensitivity.

THE REMEDY FOR INDWELLING SIN.

Q: How do we "put to death the deeds of the flesh?" (Romans 8:13).

A: "By the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the only One who is powerful enough to put to death the indwelling sin principle or "law of sin" in the members of our body. If we try to do it, we will either become (a) defeated and depressed (Romans 7), (b) or lead a double life and become self-righteous.

How does the Holy Spirit do this? By making real to us our "crucifixion with Christ, (Romans 6:6) so that we can "count as true" that we are "raised into New Life.", and "made alive with God."

What this death to the old sin nature is not:

1. The elimination of our sin nature --
We cannot "zip" ourselves out of our body of sin.
2. It does not mean pretending sin is removed -
that only adds hypocrisy to sin.
3. It does not mean improving or refining your
temperament.
4. It does not mean occasional conquests of certain
sins, or exchanging some external sins for other
internal ones, and vowing not to commit certain
troublesome sins.

There are several steps which the Holy Spirit takes us through, and we need to be aware of them because our free will - presenting the members of our body - is an integral part of the process.

1. Crucifying our old man - our body of sin - with Christ must be accepted as a judicial fact. God says it is so. (Romans 6).

2. We belong to Christ and must crucify the flesh with its passions and desires. (Gal. 5:24, 6:14).

3. Because these crucifixions are spiritually true, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for the flesh in regard to its lusts." (Romans 13:14).

We can have conquest over indwelling sin by:

...our pride being replaced by growing humility
 ...our lusts washed away by purity of mind and conscience

...our anger neutralized by patience.

...the "love of this world" replaced by loving Christ and His Kingdom - the Body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit, by His Power, and renewing life, triumphs over the principle of sin in the old man.

"Putting to death" involves pruning sin (John 15:5) and allows the grace of God to grow with vigor and new life within us.

Mature believers who are having victory over indwelling sin make it their daily habit to (Col. 3:5) consider the members of their earthly body dead to immorality, impurity, passions, etc., for they have "died and their life is hidden with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3).

We are to renew our inward man day by day. (2 Cor. 4:16):

1. To leave the indwelling sin alone is to let it bring forth its fruit.
2. To neglect this daily responsibility is to reject the help of the Holy Spirit, who is willing to give us His help.
3. To neglect this help is to allow your heart to become hardened by sin.

It is also our responsibility to "Grow in Grace (2 Peter 3:18) and "the knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ", and "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7:1).

The Holy Spirit causes us to grow in grace and holiness as we obey him. We must work with him willingly and with our whole mind and affections. He works in us and with us. He seeks our willingness to cooperate with Him. Obedience without reservation is the key to this whole process of dealing with indwelling sin and overcoming temptation.

THE PREPARATION AND PRACTICE OF WALKING IN THE SPIRIT OBEDIENTLY AND CONSISTENTLY

It is the love of Christ which controls us (2 Cor. 5:14) - the reality of His death for our sins; the communion we have with him through the Holy Spirit; the renewing grace and help from Christ for our sanctification (1 Cor. 1:21).

Practices

1. Meditate on the greatness of God - His Majesty, His Holiness, and your own finiteness, unworthiness - less than a "grain of dust." (Is. 40:12-28)

2. Meditate a great deal on your unacquaintedness with God - how little you really know of God (Prov. 30:2-4). Whittle down your pride as you honestly communicate with God.
3. Meditate on your great value, given to you in Christ, as you accept His forgiveness and gift of eternal life. Now you are a joint-heir with Christ, and can draw near with confidence to the "throne of grace." God is your loving Father.
4. Meditate on the
 - (a) love God has for you
 - (b) to know Him personally
 - (c) the privilege it is to serve Him
 - (d) how simple it is to believe in Him
 - (e) how restful to put your trust in Him
 - (f) how rewarding it is to obey Him
 - (g) the peace of heart and mind that is sure to follow.

THE PRINCIPLES OF SANCTIFICATION

God's Part:

1. Live in Christ - in your position, believing and using all the provisions available in Him - "Abiding in Christ" makes His strength available and we are "strengthened with power in our inner man." (Eph. 3:16,17). And, Christ dwells in our hearts - in Him all the fullness dwells. (Col.1:19). Jesus intercedes for us. He tenderly watches over us. He never leaves us. He is always faithful.
2. The Holy Spirit is conforming us to Christ. He works to convict, discipline, empower, direct, us to all truth. He helps us and prays for us. He applies God's renewing graces to our heart so that we can conquer sin and put the flesh to death.