

## The Power Of Sin

All Christians know about the great spiritual struggle between their sinful nature and the Spirit of God. Galatians 5:17 tells us all about that struggle where it says, *"the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want."* The following testimony is to tell how the Lord delivered me from smoking and drinking. This experience showed me a very important truth that makes absolute sense and the same truth applies to any sin. It brought home the meaning of Heb. 12:11 which says, *"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it"*.

Here is my story:

Soon after I became a Christian I promised Jesus, rather reluctantly, that I would quit smoking and drinking - particularly smoking. Some time passed and I couldn't do it myself so one day I told Him that if He didn't help me then I'd never be able to quit. Amazingly, the next day the desire was totally gone - **TOTALLY!** It was hard to believe that the Lord had such power over my desires. Anyway, a week later I decided to have a couple of beers and smokes because *"I"* had it beaten and *"I"* could control things now. Well, I was immediately hooked again and consumed twice as much as before.

A few painful months went by and I couldn't keep my promise to the Lord so I asked Him for help again. Same thing! Again the desire totally disappeared and this time a month or so went by before I was foolish enough to "just have a couple". I knew that I had things under control *this* time so a couple would not hurt me. Naturally I got hooked again and I smoked and drank like there was no tomorrow.

Now the pain really started because I couldn't keep my vow to quit. I kept drinking and smoking for another year or two and I knew where every vow-to-the-Lord verse was in the Bible. I was suffering and I even got on my knees and wept a couple of times but God left me in the wilderness ... it was very, very painful as I believe we must always keep our word, especially to God. Anyway, one day after much heartache I said, "I'm going to quit today and if I have one tomorrow, I'll quit again and if I have one the next day then I'll quit again ... I'm going to the grave quitting." Well the Lord took it away for the third time and this time I never went back even though tempted a couple of times. Today I don't have the slightest desire to smoke or drink - I am totally delivered. He's a wonderful, powerful, loving and *very* patient God and I had learned that our strength is in **Him alone**.

The truth behind all of this is that when I made the vow in the first place I didn't *really* want to quit but I made the promise because I wanted to please God. It was a case of wanting my cake and eating it too. If you think about the way the Lord dealt with me you will see that He was willing to help me but I had to be truly repentant and not keep going back to the sin. The fact is I was hopelessly weak. James 4:7 says, *"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* Note the word 'resist' - we must fight sin, exercise self-control and call upon God for strength.

There are many sins to fight against but lust, like hate, is a powerful emotion. In resisting it, look the other way; don't go where you will be tempted; throw away any pornography you may have; resist temptation in all ways and be like Joseph who fled from Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:6-15). Exercise self-control as you call on the Lord to help you and He will deliver you and give you strength to resist future sin.

If you hate someone, pray for them. It's not possible to pray a genuine blessing on someone you hate so keep at it until you come to love the person. Ask God to change your heart so that you can love them as you should. Also, Jesus said that if we hate we will come under judgment and Romans 13:10 tells us that *"love is the fulfillment of the law."* If you suffer from hatred, bitterness or envy then you need to pray it out of your life as these things will exclude you from the kingdom of God (Gal 5:19-21).

I think that the best advice for anyone who is struggling in sin is, "Get on your knees with a repentant heart and tell the Lord how weak you are and that you need Him to deliver you and to give you the strength to resist whatever sin plagues you." If you think that you are too weak to do it yourself then you are very right because we are weak and Romans 8:7 tells us plainly that we can't do it ourself because *"The sinful mind is hostile to*

God. It does not submit to God's laws, nor can it do so." However, remember that Mark 10:27 says, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible **with** God", so take your sin to God.

Most importantly, you must **want** to be set free; you must learn to hate your sin as much as God hates it. Don't be like me and keep going back to it. I didn't really want to give it up in the first place so I suffered greatly until the Lord brought me to the place where I desperately hated what I was doing. Then He took it away and by that time I was so badly burned that going back to smoking and drinking was out of the question.

Remember, there is *no* sin too big for the Lord to handle, **NONE!** If you have a sin in your life that you can't get rid of then it is simply because you don't really want to stop. You actually love the sin more than you love God, just like me with my love of smoking and drinking. God is not too weak to take our sin away, we are too weak to resist it. Get serious with sin and then God will get serious with you. Rom. 6:14 says, "*sin shall not be your master*" and James 4:8 says, "*Come near to God and he will come near to you*".

Lastly, Galatians 5:17 says, "*the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.*" Paul confirms this in Romans 7:15 where he says, "*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do.*" BUT, he went on to say in Romans 7:24-25, "*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" So, we can see that our sinful nature wars with the Spirit but Jesus will rescue us, if we repent, and Galatians 5:16 gives us the promise that we can have victory over sin. It says, "***So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.***"

May the Lord bless you as you walk with Him.

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