

OVERCOMING THE SINS OF THE PAST

January 18, 2015

Peter described Satan as “a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8; NKJV). Within that description, we learn many things about the nature and characteristics of Satan. We learn that Satan is diligent, he is observant, and he never ever gives up! Just because one becomes a Christian does not mean that the temptations of the world no longer hold their former appeals. In fact, when a person leaves the world through obedience to the Gospel, Satan works even harder to cause that person to return to former lifestyle he once led.

The Bible is full of examples of people returning to a life of sin after having obeyed the Gospel. Simon of Samaria made a good living by duping people into believing that he had the power of God (Acts 8:9-11); yet, when he heard Philip preaching and saw the miracles he performed, he obeyed the Gospel and became a New Testament Christian (Acts 8:13). However, after Peter and John joined Philip in Samaria, and Simon saw that they could impart miraculous gifts of God, he offered to buy the power they had with money (Acts 8:18-19). With great conviction, Peter quickly rebuked Simon and called upon him to repent of his sins or face the condemnation of the devil (Acts 8:20-23). To his credit, Simon did repent of the sin that he committed (Acts 8:24), and as far as is known, Simon remained faithful to the Lord the remainder of his life.

Understanding that once faithful Christians can get caught up in the sins of the past, how can one resist the temptations of the past? It is never easy to battle Satan and his helpers in this world, but we can be successful. We must first understand that we are not peculiar when it comes to being tempted. Every person that has ever lived, or ever will live, has been and will be tempted by Satan. Paul told the Corinthian brethren, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*” (1 Cor. 10:13).

The temptations that we face today are the same ones that have been faced by all those that came before us. The reason is that the avenues of sin are the same as they were in the Garden of Eden: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Satan tempts all people through desires of the flesh and eye as well as the desire for vain glory. Though none that live can expect to overcome each temptation that we encounter (1 Jn. 1:10), we can be encouraged by the fact that others have faced similar temptations and have overcome them. If we are going to be able to resist the sins of the past, the ones that “so easily ensnare *us*” (Heb. 12:1), we must be diligent in our endeavor to remain faithful!

God is faithful, even when we face temptations, so we must remember that He is not the source of the temptation. James said, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (Js. 1:17). It is not sinful to be tempted; sin comes only after we give in to the enticement and violate one of God’s commandments (1 John 3:4). God would not allow Satan to place on Job too great a burden for him to bear, and He will never forsake us in our times of need, but will do all that is consistent with his nature and his will to assist us (Heb. 13:5).

God will never allow us to be tempted above our means to resist, but that is only if we are faithful striving to gain even greater faith in Him. We must put God's righteousness and kingdom first as we

walk continual fellowship with him by studying the Word and communing with Him regularly (1 Jn. 1:7).

He will always provide a way of escape for the faithful Christian, but how does that happen? If we will continue to learn and mature in our faith we will have studied His Word and with that comes a greater desire to overcome the temptations that have disrupted our lives in the past. With greater knowledge, comes greater wisdom that will provide for us a means of avoiding the situations that have so often resulted in sin in the past. God has a great desire for us to overcome and be successful in our fight against sin, and He will provide for us the necessary tools to accomplish that goal.

God loves each of us and has given us a powerful means of standing firm in the faith. Just because there is the possibility of falling from grace (Gal. 5:4), doesn't mean that we will fall. Sin can only destroy if we allow it to do so! Remember, success breeds success, and we can be successful against Satan if we have the proper desire.