

From Addictions to Convictions

The Bible says in I Corinthians 6:12, *“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”* In the Greek there is an interesting word play. Vincent says Paul is saying, “all things are in my power, but I shall not be brought under the power of any.” Adam Clarke says of this verse, “A man is brought under the power of any thing which he cannot give up. He is the slave of that thing, whatsoever it be, which he cannot relinquish; and then, to him, it is sin.” This truth is as relevant today as it was in the first century of the church in which it was written. We live in an addicted society. People are hooked on things. If ever we needed a reminder of the freedom we have in Christ to obey God’s will and seek God’s best, it is now. An addiction is defined as the fact or condition of being addicted and dependent to a particular substance, thing, or activity. An even stronger definition is “the state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or to something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming to such an extent that its cessation may cause severe trauma.” The Latin root is: *addicti*, which means “a giving over or surrender.” There are different, yet all uniquely powerful, addictions.

1. Material Addictions

Henry Ford was asked how much money it would take to make him happy and his response was quite revealing: “Just a little more.” The Bible says in I Timothy 6: 8-10, *“And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”* The Bible clarifies that it is not money that corrupts; it is the love of money that corrupts. It is not sinful to have money; the sin comes when money has you. There are people who have money but don’t love it and there are people who don’t have it but love it. I am reminded of this when I see people rush to buy lottery tickets, depriving their family of needful things such as food and clothing. It has been said, “If your desires be endless, your cares will be too.” The biblical wording says it even more painfully, *“...and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*

2. Substance Addictions

A kinder society calls people who are dependent on the substance of whiskey, beer and wine, “alcoholics.” Another name for this dependency, perhaps not as kind, but every bit as truthful, is “drunkard.” Alcoholism has become a plague on modern society. Observe the problem alcohol causes: *“Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again”* (Proverbs 23:29-35). Drinking is conducive to sorrow, wounds, adultery and dulling of senses. In summation, God says those who imbibe *“...will seek it yet again.”* They are hooked!

Other substances that “hook” are tobacco, cocaine, and methamphetamine (“crystal meth” or “ice”). The list could go on. Nothing is more heart-breaking than when I see the effects of these dope substances on today’s youth. As the Word of God says, they *“...will seek it yet again.”* Even addicts know they are enslaved yet they keep going after their fix until many die from it.

3. Sensual Addictions

Sexual addictions have now reached an epidemic proportion in our country. It is fed by the immoral pornography trade and the internet access has caused a wild fire effect. In nearly every place I go to preach, I am confronted by people who talk to me after the services, telling me they have become addicted to pornography. Although it may be more available and dangerous now, it is certainly not new. Much of the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus deals with these matters. God warns, *“Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman...”* (Leviticus 18:17). This is meant to be for marriage only. Many have broken this taboo and they are suffering for it by an insatiable desire for not only voyeurism, but the lustful fires keep burning until they try to live out their wicked fantasies through fornication and adultery. America has become sick with this problem. May God give us the strength of the Psalmist who said, *“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes...”* (Psalm 101:3). Oh how we need the holiness of Job who, knowing his personal temptations, was able to say, *“I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?”* (Job 31:1).

4. Psychological Addictions

Some are hooked on power. They live lives of a bully and are not happy unless they are “power tripping.” They don’t realize that in trying to enslave people to their wishes they have become slaves to their own selfish desires for control. Jesus was the opposite of this mentality. He said, *“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”* (Matthew 5:5).

Others are hooked on fearing people. They so want to please; they go overboard and relinquish their own freedom. The Bible says, *“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe”* (Proverbs 29:25). The help for both types of people is the fear of the Lord. *“In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge”* (Proverbs 14:26).

5. Christ Fixation

The answer for all addictions is Jesus! No one breaks the substance, sensuality and psychological bondage like He can. He will replace your addictions with bedrock convictions.

Alexander the Great had conquered a large city and, as his custom was, the wealthiest members of the most important family were brought before him. In this certain situation the family consisted of a young man, his bride and her mother. Alexander asked, “Young man, what would you give for your life?” He answered, “Sir, I would give my riches, my wealth, all that I have.” Then Alexander looked at his young wife and asked, “And, young man, what would you give for her life?” He stepped boldly forward and replied, “Sir, for her I would give my very life!” With a majestic wave of his arm, Alexander declared, “You may go free!” The mother asked her daughter on the way back to their city, “Oh did you see the golden robe of Alexander?” The beaming bride replied, “No, I had eyes only for him who said for her he would give his life.” If we look to Jesus and consider Him, He will keep us from fainting in the day of adversity (Proverbs 24:10). *“Looking unto Jesus...For consider Him...lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds”* (Hebrews 12: 2, 3). Let us look to Jesus, who gave Himself for us; He will clothe us in His strength and replace addictions with convictions.

-Pastor Pope-