

Recap: The Priority of God's Word

We talked about what the Bible is, and why we should read it: it's revelation from God; it helps us know Jesus better; it renews our mind and teaches us His ways; it helps to sanctify us and grow our faith; it's our daily bread.

The Holiness of God

How should we understand temptation, sin, and obedience biblically? How can we avoid sin and please the Lord with our obedience and our good fruit?

The Bible says God is **holy**.

- He is separate from everything else that exists, and perfect in His character.
- All of His attributes and everything about Him is holy. "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isa. 6:3).
- Holy things have been set apart for a special purpose.
- Our problem is that we are **not** holy.

God calls us to imitate Him in His holiness! "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). Peter tells us to be holy in all our conduct (see 1 Peter 1:15-16). We should pray everywhere, "lifting up holy hands" (1 Tim. 2:8).

Man's Dilemma, God's Grace

We are strangers to holiness! Our first parents were cut off from God and hid from Him when they sinned. We have inherited their tendency to sin, and we disobey as they did.

- Not only do we commit sins, which are violations of God's law and God's holiness, but we have become sinful.
- We desperately need to be reunited to God, but we aren't capable of earning our way back into His favor.
- Thank God for His grace, and thank God for the Gospel!

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:1-10)

Our predicament:

- We are dead in trespasses and sins: we have disobeyed God, and failed Him.
- Before we knew God, we walked according to the influences of this world.
- We also walked according to the prince of the power of the air (the Devil). He creates an attitude that works in the *sons of disobedience*.
- We also walked in the desires of the flesh and the mind. Not only did we give in to outside influences, but we also defied God through the sinful nature inside us.
- Without Christ, wrath would have been our only inheritance.

Thank God, Paul encourages us with those two little words, **BUT GOD**. “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.”

When we place our trust in Him, God gives us that new life. When we come to Him in repentance and faith, He not only forgives our sins, He makes us new. His Holy Spirit comes to live inside us and recreates us. Salvation is nothing that I can produce, or grow my way into... it's a gift. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).

Standing Against Temptation

The first thing to learn about temptation is that it's not a sin to be tempted.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (James 1:12-15)

James compares the process to something being conceived and then born. Desire unites with something and conceives, giving birth to sin.

Every one of us will experience various kinds of temptations. But our temptations are not unique! "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).

Falling into sin after being tempted isn't God's fault, or the Devil's fault... it's our fault! Look at the "blame game" in Genesis 3:

- Eve blamed the tempter.
- Adam blamed his wife.
- Adam blamed God!

How to face temptation?

1. Know what the Word says about it, and commit to obey what God says.
2. Ask yourself whether this behavior will glorify God.
 - a. Will it be helpful?
 - b. Will it be hurtful to others?
 - c. Will it reinforce the power of sin over you?
3. Ask God to show you the way of escape. Don't put yourself into situations where you can compromise your obedience to God's Word and your morals!

The Way of Obedience

The Gospel message teaches us how to live in the power of Christ, and defeat temptation and sin. Scripture speaks about this in a few different ways.

1. Walking in God's prepared works.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). Believers are God's *poema*, His work of art, or craftsmanship.

God also created us to do good works. As His new creations, possessing a new nature, the Holy Spirit will now lead us to do good works by nature.

And notice that God has already prepared works for us to do. ***What are they?***

Notice also: God created us to do these works *in* Christ: in union with Jesus, and in partnership with Him.

Finally, God says we should walk in these works. They are to be our lifestyle!

2. Walking in newness of life.

Obedience isn't striving in our flesh; it's walking in newness of life:

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Romans 6:8-14)

Just as Jesus died to sin once and for all, so must we also reckon or consider that **we** have died to sin also. It will help our obedience to consider and remember that we have died. The old life was crucified with Jesus Christ. Before we knew Him, we didn't have the power to say *no* to sin.

3. Walking in the Spirit

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:16-17). Our sinful nature fights against what the Holy Spirit desires, and vice versa.

In Ephesians chapter 4 (just as we saw in Colossians 3), Paul talks about **putting on the new man**: “...put off... the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and... put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (see Ephesians 4:17-24).

We can choose—indeed we **must** choose—to put on the new man which has been created according to God. Our new nature has power to obey him by faith.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 Jn. 5:3-5).

God has done His part, very abundantly. Now we need to do our part: “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness...” (Hebrews 12:14a). God has made provision for our holiness, God calls us to holiness, so now let us **pursue** holiness.

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