

The Key to Power Over Sin



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I thought that the way to get power over sin would be to study the origin of sin. In other words, where did sin come from? How did I get infected with it? But what a long, involved study that is. It's a rather complicated story of a star war that took place before I was born, when the chief angel, Lucifer, led an army of a third of God's angels in an insurrection.

The origin of sin also has to do with man's being born with a free will, including an alternative to commit evil. It has to do with Satan bringing that alternative to the attention of Eve, the first lady of creation. It has to do with both Adam and Eve having their eyes opened to the inner struggle they had introduced into their bodies and minds. How sin was communicated from Adam to the rest of the human race is another one of those theological problems still being argued.

I decided against trying to locate the origin of Adam's sin. I am more concerned about my own struggle. A person afflicted with cancer isn't concerned about entering into a study on how cancer originated. He simply wants a cure for his own disease. It's true, the physician should understand the cause of disease to find a cure. But the afflicted body is more concerned about immediate help.

I simply asked the Holy Spirit to show me how to honestly deal with the evil that is right now present in me. To me it doesn't matter where it came from, how it originated or how it got into my mind - all I know is that it is there, that I don't want it to dominate me, and that I need help to overcome it. I asked God to show me the answer in simple terms I could understand. With simple, child-like faith, I have stumbled upon truths that have opened my mind to a new life of freedom from sin's dominion. They are the keys to my victory over the deception of sin.

What discovery did Paul make that could cause him to rejoice and say, "There is now no condemnation hanging over my head" (Romans 8:1 Phillips)? What stopped him from saying, "I want to, but I can't"?

He talks about A New Principle of Life. This new principle of life in Jesus actually stopped the sin merry-go-round, plucked him off the endless ride, and freed him once and for all from its power.

Simply stated, here is how this new life principle works, according to Paul.

I. Believers Are No Longer Slaves to Sin.

- We have no obligation to our sensual nature (Romans 8:12 Phillips).

Abraham Lincoln is said to have "freed the slaves" with the Emancipation Proclamation. This legal document declared slavery dead. All slaves were set free.

When this news first spread through southern plantations, many of the slaves would not believe it. They continued slaving for their masters, convinced their promise of freedom was a hoax. Numbers of unscrupulous landowners told their slaves it was a false rumor and kept them under bondage. But little by little, the truth dawned on them as they saw former slaves walking about, happy in their new-found freedom. One by one, they threw down their loads,

turned their backs on slavery, and walked away to begin a new life.

Maybe you haven't heard yet, or maybe it sounds too good to be true, but Christ emancipated all the slaves to sin at Calvary. You can now "walk out" on the devil! You can throw down your load of sin, walk away from Satan's dominion, and enter into a new life of freedom.

Let me show you what the Bible means when it talks about dying to sin. When Lincoln emancipated the slaves, the "issue" of slavery died. Not the slave master - not the slave. The slave could walk away free, saying to himself: Slavery is a dead issue.

Now the slave could slip back into the field and pick a few more rows of cotton - perhaps through fear or instinct - but that, in no way, made him a slave again. He was free, but he had to exercise his freedom. The proclamation couldn't force compliance, and neither could the slave master force him to return. It was a matter of the will of the slave.

The Bible says, "...he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe we shall also live with him" (Romans 6:7-8).

What that means is simply this: Since the matter of your slavery to sin is a dead issue, seeing that Christ has already declared you emancipated, you are now free to live as a new person in Christ by thinking of yourself as unchained.

Christ can't make you do right, and Satan can't make you do wrong. Christ declares we are free by faith, but we must act as a free person.

When someone receives Christ as Lord, what is it in him that dies? Sin doesn't die. Satan doesn't die. Nor does the evil die. The "issue" or the "controversy" dies. Sin created a controversy in the heart of man about who was in control, and the battle between good and evil was the result. God simply emancipated the mind from sin's control, killing the controversy of slavery.

When the Bible says, "we die to sin," it simply means that to us the issue is dead! There is no more argument - the matter is not negotiable - man is free! The issue as to who is in charge is dead! Paul used legal terms to describe the Christian's freedom from sin's bondage. The same legal terms are used daily in Congress: The bill is dead. The amendment was killed. The resolution died.

Eons ago, in Hell's court, Satan decreed a law that, as prince of the world, all living souls were his subjects. God's supreme court killed that law of sin. It died because Satan could not enforce it anymore. God declared it unconstitutional and substituted His own law - the law of the spirit, giving Him all rights to the believers body.

No Christian can now say, "I can't help myself. I can't break free from my sin." Paul was finally delivered from this kind of talk, and so must we be! Satan can't make you sin now; it is your own lust coming back to birth. If Christ did not break the power of sin, the crucifixion was a hoax.

You will always be a slave until you quit excusing your weaknesses by claiming to be helpless. You are not helpless as a child of God. You are not the devil's patsy anymore, so get busy and discipline your wild, stubborn will. A Christian who says "I can't" is actually saying "I won't." Pretending to still be a slave is an alibi Christians use to put off facing the responsibility of their freedom.

- And so we should not be like cringing, fearful slaves, but we should behave like God's very own children, adopted into the bosom of his family (Romans 8:15 Living Bible).
- Now Christ has made us free. Now make sure that you stay free and don't get all tied up again in the chains of slavery (Galatians 5:1 Living Bible).

II. Freedom From Sin's Slavery Must Be

Accepted by Faith.

The whole thing then is a matter of faith on man's part, and generosity on God's (Romans 3:16 Phillips).

Faith is something you do about what you know. Knowledge means nothing unless it is acted upon.

The children of Israel received the good word that God had given them Canaan for a homeland. That information would have meant nothing at all to them if they had remained in Egypt as slaves. But the Bible says, "By faith... they forsook Egypt... by faith they passed over the Red Sea (Hebrews 11:27-31).

The Israelites did not march to the border of Canaan, fire one volley of arrows, and expect all the enemy armies to drop dead. The land was theirs, but they had to possess it "one dead soldier at a time."

What does that have to do with my getting victory over the grip of sin? Everything! Christ settled the issue of slavery to sin by declaring you emancipated from its dominion, but you have to believe it to the point that you do something about it.

It is not enough to say, "Yes, I believe Christ forgives sin. I believe He is Lord. I know He can break the power of sin in my life." You are mentally consenting to what you heard. But faith is stepping out on that promise of freedom and acting upon it.

How? By breaking off with old friends who drag you down. By convincing yourself that freedom is, in reality, yours. Claim it! God said it, so act on it. Shake off your passiveness and move into your new life of peace and freedom with determination assurance.

Your struggle can and must eventually end. The Bible is clear on this matter - Christians are expected to enter into a rest.

There still exists a full and complete rest for the children of God... and he who experiences this rest has (quit the struggle) and is resting from his own works.... Let us then be eager to know this rest for ourselves... and beware that we do not miss it through falling into unbelief (Hebrews 4:8-11 Phillips).

Action-Faith Creates Confidence

Believers overcome the evil power of this world through faith. True faith is the only thing that can help you stand up with confidence against the powers of temptation. Self-control is possible only when, by faith, the truth about being emancipated is accepted.

Loving God means obeying His commands, and these commands of His are not burdensome. In fact, this faith of ours is the only way in which the world can be conquered (1 John 5:3,4 Phillips).

Be self-controlled and vigilant always, for your enemy the devil is always about, prowling like a lion roaring for its prey. Resist him, standing firm in your faith, remembering that the strain is the same for all your fellow-Christians in other parts of the world. And after you have borne these sufferings a very little while, the God of all grace who has called you to share His eternal splendour through Christ, will Himself make you whole and secure and strong. All power is His forever and ever, amen! (1 Peter 5:8-11 Phillips).

Keep Your Momentum

The most important thing I can say to a believer who is still battling a secret sin is: Keep your momentum! No one has ever drowned when swimming upstream toward Christ. No one is left bleeding by the wayside if he is wounded in his struggle to be free.

When you fall or when you are face to face with an addiction that won't let go, God draws a line right where you are. He says, "Get up; confess; and keep moving on. Don't cross back over the line. Don't go back to slavery. Keep coming to Me. You have been emancipated, so keep your momentum toward your freedom, by faith.

The most important move you ever make, as a believer, is the move you make right after you fall. Satan whispers, "You are rotten to the core, sensuous, childish, immature. You will never be holy; you will never be anything in God. So quit! Give up. It's useless to try. Go back! God is too high and holy; it's too complicated and difficult; you'll never figure it out. It's all over!"

Lies - all lies! So you sinned? So you thought you had freedom and lost it? So you think people will call you a phoney? So you sinned with your eyes wide open - knowing better - with the Holy Spirit screaming in your ears? So

you never thought you could do such a vile thing again? So what? Is there godly sorrow in you now? Are you determined to get up and act emancipated? Are you humbled, shamed, and repentant? Are you ready to move on? Accept God's forgiveness and move on! You are still His child. You are not a slave to sin. His loving kindness is greater than all your sins. Accept His love and forgiveness and take heart.

Stop your everlasting introspection. You won't find victory probing around the garbage dump of your evil nature. That would be like a losing general, crossing the enemy lines to consult with his foe, asking, "Can you please tell me what I'm doing wrong? I want to defeat you, but I can't seem to make headway. What am I doing wrong?"

Right direction doesn't come by understanding the wrong. It comes only by understanding the bountiful mercies of God in Christ Jesus. So quit looking inward; look up to Him who loves you at all times. Stop trying to figure yourself out, and rejoice in His restoring, healing love.

For God is at work within you, helping you want to obey him, and then helping you do what he wants (Philippians 2:13 Phillips).

III. Believers Are Supernaturally Helped in Their Hour of Temptation

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

This is the most powerful and encouraging promise in all of the Bible for believers who face temptations. God makes it very clear that no child of His is left alone to battle against lust, passion, or any habituating evil. Supernatural help is needed and provided.

Believers all over the world are becoming weak against temptation, and they are yielding to the flesh in increasing numbers. It seems as though some Christians now think of temptation as a kind of incurable disease that won't let go until it destroys its victim. They cringe in fear when temptation strikes, thinking, "Oh, no - here I go again. It's got me in its grip, and I just know I'm going to give in. I have no will power; I'm too weak to resist."

That is the defeated thinking of believers who do not know how to claim their right to assistance. What is this right promised to all believers? It is the right to supernatural help in temptation.

Do I mean by this that Christ not only delivers a believer from the power of sin, but also helps keep him from going back to it? That is exactly what the Bible says.

When temptation rolls in like a flood, Christ exercises His lordship and does something supernatural to combat it. He "makes a way to escape," so that believers can survive the ordeal or, in other words, "bear up under it."

Temptation is a test of man's free will; therefore, God can't take away His alternative to sin without destroying that same free will. So God does something just as effective for all who trust Him. He does something about the object of lust. He works outside of us at the very source of temptation.

That is best illustrated by a mother doing something about her child's temptation to steal cookies from a cookie jar. She can't whip the temptation out of him - so she simply puts the cookie jar "out of reach."

It is further illustrated by a father who moves his family away from a drug-infested neighborhood to keep his children from being seduced by narcotic users and pushers.

Parents have moved to a new continent to keep a son or daughter away from corrupting influences and friends.

These parents all acted in love, hoping their temporary intervention would allow time for their children to learn obedience from the heart. Although the time must come when children decide issues for themselves, a loving parent cannot stand idly by and allow an immature child to be overtaken by some evil influence. A concerned parent will either move the child away from the temptation or somehow put it out of his reach.

The Bible illustrates how God can put objects of temptation out of the reach of His children. For example, the children of Israel began to murmur against Moses for leading them out of Egypt. They wanted to go back to their old life style. Freedom seemed too costly. So God arranged to open the Red Sea and allowed the Egyptian army to

chase them across on dry land, then He closed up the Sea - blocking any chance of return. God did that only in answer to the fervent prayers of Moses and other Israelites who wanted freedom.

Just as Jesus did, believers are to resist temptation with the Word of God. Most temptations can be defused by focusing the laser of truth on them. But there are other temptations that are so engrained, so furious and tenacious - they cannot be endured without supernatural intervention. The severest of temptations are often the result of a direct and personal attack by demonic powers.

Paul speaks of "fightings without, and fears within" (2 Corinthians 7:5). Satan actually declares war on certain converts who deserted his army because they once best exemplified his power to possess. In his anger at losing such a "prize," he fights them from without by pounding on them with one severe temptation after another, to sift them as wheat. Jesus said to Peter, "Behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31).

Are you a believer who is being pounded by a recurring temptation that seems beyond your strength to resist? Homosexuals, alcoholics, addicts, and illicit secret lovers are especially overwhelmed by crushing temptations. So often, they yield and are soon swallowed up in remorse, guilt, and feelings of helplessness. As believers, they don't doubt that Christ has freed them from all obligations to obey the lust of their flesh. And, in many areas of their lives, they have seen progress and victory. Yet, there remains one besetting sin - one overpowering temptation to give in to a certain lust.

Thank God, there is a way of escape! God is a "miraculous intervener." It took a storm and a whale and a lot of supernatural intervention to get Jonah out of trouble. God has been known to turn water "bitter" and to cause manna to "stink", in an effort to make obedience less difficult.

God, in answer to fervent prayer, can make your object of lust become an abominable stench to you, and He can make yielding to sin become so bitter, you will hesitate ever giving in again. He may detour you; He may remove people from your life; He may cause the object of your lust to turn against you; He may throw up all kinds of road blocks; He may throw up a "Job wall" of protection; He may simply draw you irresistibly into the secret closet of prayer; He may send someone to warn or correct you - but in one supernatural way or another, God will answer prayer and intervene, making it possible for believers to overcome their most violent temptations.

Believers who, deep inside, don't want to give up their lust and who secretly hope to keep on indulging it can never receive this miraculous intervention when being tempted. God moves in to make a way of escape only when the heart is fully committed to a life of separation and purity.

If there is not such a commitment, it won't work. God is not obligated to intervene when someone really doesn't want deliverance.

Flirters with secret sin are left to fight temptation with their own strength. Then when they yield to sin, they blame God for not "pulling them out." They say, "I waited for God, but He just let me go ahead and do it."

But the believer who honestly wants to be free from sin's bondage can be assured his loving Father sees his struggle and will use all the power of Heaven to assist him.

When severely tempted, ask God for His supernatural intervention, and ask in faith, believing He will do it.

God has promised to "deliver us from all evil." Here is proof of God's help in time of temptation:

Ye that love the Lord, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked (Psalm 97:10).

We have escaped with our lives as a bird from a hunter's snare. The snare is broken and we are free! (Psalm 124:7 Living Bible).

My eyes are ever looking to the Lord for help, for he alone can rescue me (Psalm 25:15).

So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him (Isaiah 59:19).

I need no longer fear slipping or falling. He will keep me, love me, and bring me to glory by His power.

And he is able to keep you from slipping and falling away, and to bring you, sinless and perfect, unto his glorious presence with mighty shouts of everlasting joy (Jude 24 Living Bible).

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