

ON DEALING WITH SIN

1. All of us sin (1KI 8:46; ECC 7:20; PRO 20:9; 1JO 1:8).
2. Unfortunately, sometimes it is not until after we have sinned that our heart smites us and we realize the magnitude of what we have done (2SA 24:10). This is all the more reason to be on our guard *before* we sin.
3. Whenever you sin, you have lost a battle in your spiritual warfare. You failed. You are verily guilty.
 - a. The devil is called the tempter (MAT 4:1-3). When you yield to a temptation and commit sin, Satan has won that round against you.
 - b. But because Satan may win a battle, that does not mean he has won the war!
4. When you sin, all is not lost. You have an advocate with the Father, Who is ready to take up for you and help you out of the mess you have made (1JO 2:1-2).
 - a. Of first importance is that fact that you should not sin. But if you do, there is help.
 - b. Advocate - One whose profession it is to plead the cause of any one in a court of justice; a counsellor or counsel. *fig.* and *gen.* One who pleads, intercedes, or speaks for, on in behalf of, another; a pleader, intercessor, defender.
 - c. Our advocate is Jesus Christ *the righteous*.
 - i. In another court, an unjust advocate may plead for innocent clients, but in this court the clients are guilty.
 - ii. It is the righteousness of the advocate that is the plea in this court.
 - iii. The Father loves the righteous and hears the prayers of the righteous (PSA 146:8; PRO 15:29; JOH 11:41-42).
 - iv. Therefore, because our advocate is Jesus Christ *the righteous*, the Father will certainly rule in our favour.
 - d. Our advocate is also the propitiation for our sins.
 - i. Propitiation - The action or an act of rendering favourably inclined; appeasement, conciliation; atonement, expiation.
 - ii. Christ by His blood has appeased (pacified) our offended God (ROM 3:25; COL 1:20).
 - iii. Our Advocate pleads with a Judge, Who has been inclined to rule in our favour (ROM 8:31-34).
5. When you sin, let yourself feel shame and self-loathing for what you have done (EZE 36:31-32; JAM 4:8-10).
 - a. This is a very painful experience as PSA 38:1-10 vividly describes.
 - b. Don't try to drown out this pain with work, noise, drink, drugs, or pleasures as this will surely make matters worse (ISA 22:12-14).
 - c. This is being sorry for your sin (PSA 38:18).
 - i. Sorry – Pained at heart; distressed, sad; full of grief or sorrow.
 - ii. This sorrow is good for you. It will not damage you (2CO 7:8-9).
 - d. This is being broken and contrite for your sin.
 - i. Contrite – Crushed or broken in spirit by a sense of sin, and so brought to complete penitence.
 - ii. Contrition is necessary in order to experience *complete* penitence (repentance).

1. When God commands you to repent, He is calling you to be contrite for your sin.
2. Repent - To affect (oneself) with contrition or regret for something done; to change one's mind with regard to past action or conduct through dissatisfaction with it or its results.
 - iii. This brokenness and contrition pleases God and is a vital part of the pathway to recovery (PSA 51:17; ISA 57:15).
- e. The gospel is addressed to those who are broken and bruised because of their sin (LUK 4:18).
 - i. Healing, deliverance, recovery, and freedom are promised to them.
 - ii. Although you have sinned, there is hope and help for you.
 - iii. But if you shut the door to feeling shame for your sin, you shut the door to the relief proclaimed in the gospel.
- f. Be thankful you can feel shame for your sin.
 - i. "The unjust knoweth no shame" (ZEP 3:5).
 - ii. Those who feel no shame for their sin will repeat it (JER 3:3, 5; EPH 4:19).
 - iii. The painful remorse you feel is a safeguard against returning to your sin (2CO 7:10-11).
6. Although you feel shame for your sin, do not get stuck there. Proceed to confess and forsake your sin (1JO 1:9; PRO 28:13).
 - a. Confess - To declare or disclose (something which one has kept or allowed to remain secret as being prejudicial or inconvenient to oneself); to acknowledge, own, or admit (a crime, charge, fault, weakness, or the like).
 - b. Forsake - To give up, renounce. To break off from, renounce (an employment, design, esp. an evil practice or sin; also, a belief, doctrine). To abandon, leave entirely, withdraw from.
 - c. The opposite of confessing and forsaking our sins is covering or hiding them.
 - i. Adam is an example of one who covered his sin (JOB 31:33).
 1. Adam first of all tried to hide from the Lord to avoid detection (GEN 3:8-10).
 2. When confronted with his sin Adam shifted blame (GEN 3:12).
 - ii. One's various attempts to avoid detection, to rationalize, or to deny responsibility for sin are so many efforts to cover it.
 - d. Those who cover their sins shall not prosper.
 - i. Prosper - Of a person, community, etc.: To be prosperous (having continued success), fortunate, or successful; to flourish, thrive, succeed, do well.
 - ii. You will not thrive or succeed by covering sin.
 - iii. The guilt and pain of covering sin is far worse than the pain of confessing it.
 - iv. You will get no genuine relief from the burdening guilt of your sin until you confess it (PSA 32:3-5).
 - e. Sin needs to be confessed only as narrowly as the offence extends.
 - i. If you sin against a single person, you need to confess it to that person and seek his/her forgiveness (MAT 5:23-24; LUK 17:3; JAM 5:16).
 - ii. If your sin is public and brings reproach on the church, you need to confess it to the church and seek their forgiveness.

- iii. If your sin is only against God and does not affect another, then you need confess it only to God.
 - iv. But since all sin is ultimately against God, all sin must be confessed to God (PSA 51:4).
 - f. A general admission that one has sinned is not sufficient.
 - i. The sins must be specifically acknowledged.
 - ii. When you confess, you disclose something. You are disclosing nothing if you do not admit to anything specifically.
 - g. One must not only acknowledge his sin; he must also forsake it, give it up.
 - i. If the sin is not renounced, one will not be successful in overcoming it.
 - ii. This renunciation is done with words (JOB 34:31-32; HOS 14:1-3). The expressions "no more" and "not...any more" state that the sin is being given up.
 - iii. This renunciation is also done with deeds (DAN 4:27; ACT 19:18-19; 26:20).
 - 1. Destroy the things that were links to your sin like books, emails, letters, cards, messages, pictures, relationships, etc.
 - 2. Evil behaviour must be replaced with good behaviour (EPH 4:24-32; ROM 12:21).
 - iv. One must forsake any thought that would permit him to repeat his sin.
 - 1. In ROM 13:14 Paul commands us to "make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."
 - 2. This is not letting or allowing sin to reign in our mortal bodies, as Paul commanded in ROM 6:12.
 - 3. One must renounce his excuses for and rationalizations of his sin as these make provision for it.
 - 4. Otherwise one is not breaking off with his sin and leaving it entirely, which is what forsaking it is.
 - v. If you remember and discuss the sins you have committed with pleasure rather than pain, then you have not forsaken them.
 - 1. This is a characteristic of a hypocrite (JOB 20:5, 12-14). Hypocrites do not prosper in the long run.
 - 2. This will render your prayers ineffectual, which will in turn weaken your resistance to sin (PSA 66:18).
7. Realize that God promises forgiveness and mercy to those who confess and forsake their sin (1JO 1:7, 9; PRO 28:13). Let this realization encourage your repentance.
- a. These promises are broad enough to cover *all* sin and unrighteousness.
 - b. God has plenty of mercy to cover any and all of your sin (PSA 103:8-11, 17).
 - i. If sinning against God frightens you, then you are just the kind of person that God's mercy is directed towards.
 - ii. David pled the multitude of God's tender mercies over against the magnitude of his sin (PSA 51:1).
 - 1. Tender – Of persons, their feelings, or the expression of these: Characterized by, exhibiting, or expressing delicacy of feeling, or susceptibility to the gentle emotions; kind, loving, gentle, mild, affectionate.
 - 2. God deals with us kindly and gently when we come to him in humble repentance and confession of our sin.

- c. God does not begrudgingly show us mercy. He delights in mercy (MIC 7:18).
 - d. It pleases God when you turn from your evil ways (EZE 33:11).
8. Having felt shame for your sin, and having confessed it and forsaken it, then accept that God has forgiven you, get up, and move forward in your service to God.
- a. You are called to “shake thyself from the dust” and arise (ISA 52:2).
 - b. A just man, though he fall, “riseth up again” (PRO 24:16).
 - c. A refusal to accept God’s forgiveness can arise from pride.
 - i. It has wounded your pride to have to admit you failed. You weren’t as strong as you thought you were. You wish you weren’t so beholden to God’s mercy.
 - ii. “I fear that some part of my striving against sin and my desires after an increase of sanctification arise from a secret wish that I might no be so absolutely and entirely indebted to Him.” John Newton
 - iii. You can be sure that such pride will only set you up for further downfalls (PRO 16:18).
 - iv. It could be that God pulled back and let you fall as punishment for the pride He saw lurking in your heart (2CH 32:25, 31, 26).
9. Now that you have confessed and forsaken your sin, retrace the steps that led up to your sin so as to put distance between you and ever committing that sin again.
- a. Your sin did not occur in a vacuum. Things were going on that led up to it and it is those things that need to be addressed.
 - b. Take Peter’s sin of denying Christ as an example. Here were the steps that led to Peter’s downfall.
 - i. Peter did not heed the word of Christ. He even took issue with it vehemently (MAR 14:27-31).
 - 1. He disbelieved it, dismissed it, and did not remember it until too late.
 - 2. If Christ had been wrong about this, He would have been a false prophet.
 - ii. Peter was guilty of pride.
 - 1. Pride - A high or overweening opinion of one’s own qualities, attainments, or estate, which gives rise to a feeling and attitude of superiority over and contempt for others.
 - 2. Peter held too high an opinion of his ability to withstand temptation. He was so self-confident that he took issue with the Son of God.
 - 3. Pride leads to a fall (PRO 16:18).
 - 4. 1CO 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.
 - iii. He failed to watch and pray and that in the face of a specific warning from Christ (MAT 26:38 with LUK 22:40 with MAT 26:40-41, 43).
 - iv. His zeal outstripped his knowledge and he attempted to defend his Lord with carnal means (JOH 18:10-11). He acted without counsel.
 - v. He followed Jesus afar off (LUK 22:54).
 - vi. He hung with the wrong crowd (LUK 22:55).
 - vii. At the root of Peter’s sin was unbelief of the word of Christ. We must be ever on our guard against unbelief as this will lead us astray (HEB 3:12-13).
 - viii. The good news is that having fallen, there was help for Peter in his advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ (LUK 22:31-32).

- c. Don't just forsake the specific sin you committed, but also forsake the thoughts, the attitudes, the actions, and the failures that led to it.
 - d. A wise general will study his defeats more than his victories.
 - i. It is written of none other than Mao Tse-Tung that "he devoted little time to analysis of successes; study of the failures was more rewarding." Hence, he succeeded in taking over China.
 - ii. When you learn from your defeats by learning where you went wrong, you can fortify yourself against being defeated again.
 - 1. In this way, although you may have lost some battles, you can still win the war.
 - 2. By this means, what Satan intended for your destruction can become an occasion for you to defeat Satan instead.
 - e. Such self-examination is a part of turning again to the Lord after you have sinned (LAM 3:40).
10. Sinners are not only called upon to forsake their ways, but also their thoughts (ISA 55:7).
- a. Thoughts, which proceed from the heart, lead to actions (1CH 29:18; ISA 65:2). Therefore, we must exercise a strict oversight over our hearts (PRO 4:23).
 - b. Examine what you were thinking *before* you sinned and forsake any thoughts that justified or encouraged you to sin.
11. Our battle with the devil, who is the tempter, is a battle for the control of our thinking.
- a. If Satan can control our thoughts, he will bring us down.
 - b. If we are to beat the devil in this battle, we must stand against his wiles (EPH 6:11).
 - i. Wile - A crafty, cunning, or deceitful trick; a sly, insidious, or underhand artifice; a stratagem, ruse. Formerly sometimes in somewhat wider sense: A piece of deception, a deceit, a delusion.
 - ii. Satan's objective is to deceive you, to play tricks on your mind.
 - iii. Deceive - To ensnare; to take unawares by craft or guile; to overcome, overreach, or get the better of by trickery; to beguile or betray into mischief or sin; to mislead.
 - iv. It is deception, wrong thinking, that will mislead you into sin.
 - c. In order to deceive, Satan works in conjunction with the lusts of our flesh, which are also deceitful (EPH 2:1-3; 4:22).
 - i. Lust - Pleasure, delight; desire, appetite, relish or inclination for something.
 - ii. In your flesh you have sinful lusts, desires for things forbidden by the law of God (ROM 6:12).
 - iii. Your sinful lusts will ensnare you and betray you into sin, in other words, they will deceive you (JAM 1:14-15).
 - iv. You also have lusts that are not sinful, but Satan will tempt you to fulfil those lusts in a manner that is contrary to God's law.
 - 1. An example of this is when Satan tempted Christ to turn stones to bread when He was hungry, when He had a strong desire to eat.
 - 2. The desires for food, sex, or sleep are legitimate desires; but many times men have sinned in seeking to satisfy those desires as when a man steals food to eat, or fornicates to satisfy the desire for sex, or sleeps on the job.
 - v. Satan's part in sin is to present enticements that stir your lusts. By this means he tempts you.

- vi. It is the nature of deceit to conceal true intentions.
 1. Lust deceives in that it conceals the true nature, cause, circumstances, and consequences of sin.
 2. Your lusts will never analyze a situation correctly so as to properly inform your judgment.
 3. Therefore, if you only consult your delights and desires in making a decision of whether to do or not to do something, you set yourself up to be deceived.
- vii. Satan and your lusts will press distractions upon you as if they are more important than spiritual duties.
 1. This is part of the deception that gives Satan and lust an advantage over you since this keeps you away from those things that work against them.
 2. Just remember this when you feel a strong desire to do something other than what is good for your soul!
- viii. Lust or desire can exert a tremendous pressure on our thought processes. That is why Satan plays to them in order to gain control of our minds.
- d. Therefore, Satan is very involved in our sinning. In fact, sin is the work of the devil (1JO 3:8).
 - i. However, although Satan and our lusts work together to draw us into sin, it is we who choose to yield to their enticements and, therefore, it is we who sin.
 - ii. You cannot excuse your sin by saying the devil made you do it.
- e. If we would not be deceived by the devil and our lusts, we must deal with sin at the level of lust and that right away.
 - i. We must make no allowances for sinful lusts (ROM 13:14).
 - ii. Our lusts must be allowed *no* controlling influence (ROM 6:12-13).
 1. The verbs *let* and *yield* suggest a mental process in which the mind makes a decision to allow something to take control.
 2. We make the final decision as to whether sin or righteousness will control our actions.
 - iii. We are commanded to flee youthful lusts (2TI 2:22).
 1. Flee - To run away from or as from danger; to take flight; to try to escape or seek safety by flight.
 2. Flee the lust while it is young. Do not allow it time to ripen or mature.
 3. You do not parley with lusts; you run away from them.
 - iv. You should immediately resist the first suggestion of sin to your mind. Do not allow the suggestion time to stir the lusts.
 - v. We are at war with Satan and our fleshly lusts (EPH 6:12; 1PE 2:11) and a critical element in effective warfare is speed.
 1. “In other words, *speed is a weapon*. Superior speed allows us to seize the initiative and dictate the terms of combat, forcing the enemy to react to us. Speed provides security. It is a prerequisite for maneuver and surprise. Moreover, speed is necessary in order to concentrate superior strength at the decisive time and place.” *Warfighting, The U.S. Marine Corps Book of Strategy*, p.41.
 2. Apply this wisdom to making the decision to resist a temptation: “Whoever can make and implement his decisions consistently faster

gains a tremendous, often decisive advantage. Decision making thus becomes a time-competitive process, and timeliness of decisions becomes essential to generating tempo. Timely decisions demand rapid thinking, with consideration limited to essential factors. We should spare no effort to accelerate our decision-making ability.” *Ibid.* p. 89.

3. Satan will flee, when we resist him (JAM 4:7). Therefore, the sooner we resist him the less of a battle we will have to fight.
 4. When tempted of the devil in the wilderness, our Lord wasted no time resisting Satan’s suggestions with the word of God.
 5. If we mull over and consider the devil’s temptations, we are not resisting him. Rather, we are giving him time and space to intensify the attack which only makes it harder for us to resist.
 6. Eve made the mistake of parleying with the devil rather than speedily resisting his suggestions (GEN 3:1-6).
 7. “At the time of Christ’s temptation and unswerving resistance, Satan is said to have ‘departed from him for a season’ (*Luke 4:13*). When the devil persists in tempting you, it may be that, though you have not yet yielded, neither have you openly repulsed his advances. Like a determined suitor, Satan looks for the slightest encouragement and, upon seeing it, continues to advance. The only way to be rid of him is to shut and bolt the door, and refuse to entertain the matter further....The safest strategy, then, is to give him no ground at all from which to work. If you so much as hesitate as you walk by the door where sin dwells, you give Satan more time to entice you to enter. Then you are on his territory.”
The Christian in Complete Armour by William Gurnall
- f. Therefore, if we are to win in this war, every imagination and thought must be brought under the control of the Lord Jesus Christ (2CO 10:3-5).
 - g. Knowing the truth, over against Satan’s deception, is the key to winning this war (JOH 8:32; 2TI 2:24-26). Truth will expose the deceptive tactics of Satan and our lusts.
12. A major piece of the deception that misleads us into sin is that evil is presented under the cloak of good.
- a. No man ever chooses to do evil only because it is evil. Even though he may know it is wrong, he will choose it because he thinks that it will benefit him, that it is good for him.
 - b. This was what God was protecting man from when He forbade him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (GEN 2:9, 16-17).
 - i. Adam knew good *from* evil *before* he ate of this forbidden tree.
 - ii. By eating of the tree man would experience good *and* evil. He would taste the good of the tree – it was good for food and pleasant to the eyes – but he would also taste the evil of rebellion against the commandment of God.
 - iii. It was in pursuit of what was good that man sinned against God (GEN 3:6).
 1. The woman was deceived in the transgression and actually believed that eating the forbidden fruit would benefit her and her husband (1TI 2:14).
 2. Adam was not deceived, but in love to his wife he joined her in the transgression. Love for one’s wife is a good thing, but not when it is put ahead of the love of God.
 - c. Consider some examples of this deception of evil under the cloak of goodness.

- i. Wine is a good thing since wine is a gift of God given for our enjoyment (PSA 104:14-15; 1TI 6:17). But wine used to excess will deceive you and betray you into sin (PRO 20:1; 23:29-35; EPH 5:18).
- ii. Sex is a good thing to be enjoyed in marriage, but when the desire for sex becomes the governing principle of one's conduct without regard to the laws of God it leads to fornication, adultery, and even sodomy (HEB 13:4; JUD 1:7).
- iii. Zeal is a commendable trait provided it is exercised in a good thing. But zeal of itself can land you in all kinds of error (GAL 4:17-18). Think of how many heretical and pernicious movements have been zealously advanced.
- iv. Satan's ministers use righteousness, a good thing, as a cloak for their errors (2CO 11:13-15).
 - 1. We should, therefore, expect false churches and cults to provide some good teaching about how to live right.
 - 2. False teachers use good words in order to deceive (ROM 16:17-18).
- v. Friendship is a good thing, especially familiar friendship as this reflects the relationship we are to have with Christ and God (JOH 15:14-15; JAM 2:23).
 - 1. A marriage is supposed to be a familiar friendship (SON 5:16).
 - 2. But how many have been lured into evil by friends or have betrayed the cause of God for friends?
 - 3. How many times has a man's wife been his downfall? The very first transgression came about because Adam chose the friendship of his wife over friendship with God.
 - 4. The person you are the closest to and that you love the most has the potential to bring you the greatest joy, but also to bring you the greatest temptation and pain.
 - a. Love is a powerful thing (SOL 8:6). The more you love someone, the more power that person has over you.
 - b. Therefore, your best friend has the potential to become your worst enemy.
 - c. Satan will seek to attack us through our friends, if he can (PSA 41:9).
 - d. This should put you on our guard to:
 - i. Select your close friends very carefully.
 - ii. To always be aware that the best of men are but sinful men at best and susceptible to temptation.
 - iii. To never trust any man in way that you should only trust God (JER 17:5; PSA 62:5-6).
 - iv. To never let the love of your friends come ahead of the love of your God (MAR 12:30).
 - v. To give no place to the devil lest he use you to attack your friends (EPH 4:27).
- d. This explains why Paul teaches that "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness *and* righteousness *and* truth" (EPH 5:9).
 - i. By means of the word *and* Paul connects goodness, righteousness, and truth.
 - ii. *And – conj. co-ordinate.* Introducing a word, clause, or sentence, which is to be taken *side by side with, along with, or in addition to*, that which precedes it.

- iii. The fruit of the Spirit is in *all* of these, goodness, righteousness, and truth, as they occur together, along with each other.
 - iv. Righteousness is conformity of life to the commandments of the divine law, which is God's truth (PSA 119:172, 151, 142).
 - v. Therefore, for something to be genuinely good it must be righteous and for it to be righteous it must be truth. Or to sum it up this way: In order for something to be good it has to be in keeping with God's commandments which are found in God's word of truth.
 - e. Therefore, when presented with a choice, always look beyond the apparent good it offers.
 - i. Inquire if it is righteous and according to the truth of God's word.
 - ii. Will this choice compromise and jeopardize your observance of a Biblical law or principle? If so, it is not a good choice even if it incorporates some good things.
13. In examining the thoughts that will lead you into sin, be especially on your guard against the thoughts of covetousness.
- a. Covetousness – Inordinate and culpable desire of possessing that which belongs to another or to which one has no right.
 - b. To covet is to lust or desire (ROM 7:7). So in addressing covetousness we are addressing sin at the level of the desire, as we noted above.
 - c. The opposite of covetousness is contentment (HEB 13:5-6).
 - i. Content - Having one's desires bounded by what one has (though that may be less than one could have wished); not disturbed by the desire of anything more, or of anything different.
 - ii. Contentment is something we have to learn (PHI 4:11-12).
 - 1. Contentment does not come naturally.
 - 2. In whatsoever state (condition) you are God means for you to learn contentment.
 - d. Covetousness opens a floodgate to all kinds of temptations (1TI 6:9-11).
 - i. Covetousness lies at the root of fornication, adultery, and theft, which can in turn lead to lying and even murder to cover the sin (EXO 20:17).
 - ii. Without covetousness, there would be no envy or emulation.
 - 1. Envy – *sb.* Malignant or hostile feeling; ill-will, malice, enmity. The feeling of mortification and ill-will occasioned by the contemplation of superior advantages possessed by another.
 - 2. Envy – *v.* To feel displeasure and ill-will at the superiority of (another person) in happiness, success, reputation, or the possession of anything desirable; to regard with discontent another's possession of (some superior advantage which one would like to have for oneself).
 - 3. If you are content with what you are and what you have you will feel no ill-will toward those who possess superior advantages.
 - 4. Envy goes along with strife, wrath, and hatred (ROM 13:13; JAM 3:16; JOB 5:2; 2CO 12:20; EZE 35:11).
 - 5. Emulation - The endeavour to equal or surpass others in any achievement or quality; also, the desire or ambition to equal or excel.
 - 6. Emulation is an expression of envy in that one endeavours to equal or surpass the one whom he envies.

- iii. Covetousness is idolatry (COL 3:5).
 - 1. Covetousness sets up another god before the true and living God (EXO 20:3).
 - 2. Therefore, the violation of the last of the Ten Commandments constitutes a violation of the first of the Ten Commandments.
 - 3. The covetous man makes something else other than God his confidence and hope, which is idolatry (JOB 31:24-28; LUK 12:15-21).
 - 4. The covetousness man serves his desire rather than God.
- e. Therefore, any thoughts of discontent must be forsaken right away. As Paul admonished when speaking of covetousness, “flee (run from) these things.”
- f. When examining the thoughts and attitudes that led up to your sin, ask yourself if you were discontent with anything in your life. You will all too often find this culprit lurking in the shadows.