

August 09, 2019

Warm hellos to you dear brethren, and spiritual family here on the Coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and scattered children of God.

My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed!

The Void that Sin Produces...and the Good News!

In the last two weekly *Mount Carmel Fellowship* nightly studies and discussion we've discussed what I talked about in my last Friday night pastor's letter. We delved into an area that many of us can suffer from, feeling absolutely empty and void...

We ended last Friday night's letter with "By the grace of God, repentance and the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, and Him living in us, coupled with our own dogged determination to see this through, and not give up, (enduring to the end if you will) we can overcome sin and leave it behind, for good. At its core it involves allowing Christ's mind in us, (Phil 2:5) through His Word, and filling our emptiness or void with Him. We simply can't remain empty or void."

As I promised, let's examine some very real options that God gives us to succeed, overcome, and fill that void, vacuum or emptiness that the sin produces...and examine more closely how sin does that.

Here's some thoughts on how: Just as if your car might break down, or something in our body, or even our home quits working properly, we have to identify, "What's broken, and why?" So we need to search deeply, asking God for insight and help to identify the Law of God you are breaking or have broken.

God established His perfect laws to protect us. Think of them like a spiritual fence: Outside that fence exists some of the worst evils this world has to offer, whereas inside the safety of that fence are the actions and decisions that lead to peace. There's nothing stopping you from climbing over that fence, but doing so can expose us to a world of trouble.

In God's Word, John defines sin as "the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV), which for us means that each section of that "fence" correlates to a specific part of God's law.

If we find ourselves outside of that "fence", our first priority (after repenting and getting back inside) should be identifying exactly what part of God's law we violated and why it matters.

It's one thing for you and I to understand that God said "You shall not steal"; it's quite another thing to understand that He said it because stealing has the potential to destroy our relationships, tarnish our reputation, harm the lives of others, and denigrates our character.

Identifying the sin or transgression of God's law doesn't just mean figuring out where we climbed over the fence; it means figuring out why the fence is there in the first place. There's always a reason, and it always matters. You see God does know what He is doing. He made this quite clear way back in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve...we know the story of what happened.

Okay, so once we identify the sin or breaking of God's perfect and Holy law, then what? Next we have to acknowledge where that Sin is coming from...not so easy as human beings, especially when left to our own reasoning.

Sin starts in the heart. In our recent Sunday evening discussions we've examined this closely. Jesus made that abundantly clear during His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21-30), and then again while addressing the hypocritical Pharisees: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19).

So here is the source. You or I can't deny it. We can reason yes, but a sin is a sin. Sin goes so much deeper than the act itself. Christ addressed that so clearly.

Our hearts nurture and protect sin long before it has the strength to manifest itself in a physical action of sorts. When sins come creeping back into our lives, it's often because we've tried to overcome them by simply ceasing to act—removing the action itself while not addressing from where it grows.

That's by itself simply not enough. The sin or transgression isn't just a bad choice we've made; it's a defect within our heart. All too often, as with many things, we simply want a "quick fix" a magic pill or the like.

Just as the Pharisees did, we can act all we want to appear as if we are "okay, but as long as the defect remains, sin will overcome all the better judgment and personal willpower in the world.

As we recall, in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus traced adultery back to lust, murder and hatred—serious actions that commence deep within our heart. All other sins are the same way.

If there's a particular action or actions we're struggling with, we have to identify the problem in our heart that causes those actions. Involving God in the process is critical—He sees the secret parts of our heart we've hidden even from ourselves (Psalm 139:23-24), and He'll reveal those parts to you if we allow.

Now we are getting to where we see, that only then can we get to the real cause of the problem. Only then are we headed in the direction where we can overcome the sin.

Now to the step that honestly, most overlook and miss...we have to replace the sin by yielding to God's Spirit and allowing it to live IN us!

Here we are to that "Aha!" moment! We've identified the law we're breaking, and understand why that matters, and we've traced it all back to the real cause of the problem in our heart. The decision that will determine whether we'll mortify the sin or just temporarily silence it.

We humans most often take the approach of attacking the sin itself—digging it out and discarding it. Yet in spite of our most well-meant efforts, the sin seems to hibernate instead of die, just waiting for the best moment to rear its ugly head and start wreaking that old familiar havoc in our lives.

Let's look a former thief, for example. Let's say he's acknowledged the error of his ways—and understands the damage he was doing to himself and others, and maybe he can even see in his heart how his wrong actions were driven by his own heart's selfishness and greed. Great! But...

One day he sees something he wants to steal—because, make no mistake, he will notice something. What happens then?

He tells himself, "I must not steal. Don't steal. I know better."

But the thief hasn't given himself an alternative. The short lived victory in this instance means successfully doing nothing. And he might win that battle once, twice, a dozen times. But he never completely overcomes.

And so, yes you guessed it, guess what's going to win out eventually?

Action. You and I are not designed to sit around and do nothing, and we can't beat sin by sitting still. That just creates a vacuum for it to grow back and take control once again, doing even

more damage than before. What our thief needs—what we need—is something to do instead of stealing. And it involves the key element of having Christ live IN us!

Paul discusses part of the answer. “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need” (Ephesians 4:28).

What if every time this thief had the desire to steal, he sought God, asking Him to live in him, and then he made a greater effort to give instead of steal?

What if he could fight those impulses with something better?

What if he could conquer his old habits with righteousness, that righteousness of Christ living IN him?

Our Lord and Master warned us about spiritual emptiness or vacuums, and unless you and I grasp the profound lesson of that warning, our journey as Christians will be self-defeating.

Sin cannot simply be removed, it must be replaced.

Removing sin creates a powerful spiritual vacuum in our lives and in our hearts, and if we don't actively replace it with something, our own human nature, and our adversary will gladly do it for us.

Unless we're actively seeking to replace sins with God in us, sin will enter into these newly vacated spaces.

Overcoming sin requires a conscious effort through truly seeking Him, repentance, and then allowing Him to live in us, and put into practice what He has laid out for us in His Word.

A thief must learn to give. Liars must learn to speak the truth in love. Those who worship idols must learn to worship in spirit and in truth, and so it goes.

Whatever sin you're struggling with, God provides the power to help you permanently remove it, and replace it with Him, not us. We have to fill that vacuum. And, we must go DO something.

Oh, believe me, I know it's difficult, but it's not impossible. We're instructed, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21).

These steps are a realistic plan to overcoming sin, and we know that it can be done because “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and God’s Holy Spirit make these steps possible, doable, and attainable!

But, remember, it isn’t a “once and we’re done” thing.

The process of repenting, changing, Christ living in us, and building holy righteous character, is the process of a lifetime.

Remember, God’s Spirit is one of Love, Power and a Sound Mind. God is Love, He is stronger, He is smarter, and—as long as we’re doing our part to rid ourselves of our own humanity, and our adversary’s handiwork we will succeed. And “if God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

As my fellow servant and friend Stephen Glover has often reminded us during the evening fellowships “if God is for us, then we are more than conquerors”. God is for us, “neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

We are conquerors. We will overcome sin! Our God will give us everything we need to win this fight, but we have to let Him live in us, and then get out there and fight the good fight, and keep filling that vacuum.

...as I close this letter, as I do every Friday evening...as we enter His Sabbath...reflect on this with me, will you?

And again, may God continue to richly bless you. Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily! Please do pray for us as well.

-*Scott Hoefker* (Pastor and wife (Gayle) The Living God Ministries Gulf Coast)

The schedule for this week’s Sabbath is:

August 9th / Friday: Gifts for the Lord/ Praises/Gifts and Prayers to welcome God’s Sabbath
7:00 pm (via Teleconference live connect with Stephen Glover and Friends.)

August 10th / Saturday: Spirit and Truth Worship Services 10:15 am, with local services held in Montgomery. (All others are welcomed and encouraged to connect live to Worship Services via our normal phone conference). **[There will be no local services in Spanish Fort this Sabbath as the Hoefkers will be in Montgomery]** There will be a potluck fellowship meal shortly after the morning Worship Service. All are welcomed to stay and enjoy.

August 10th / Saturday: Sabbath Fellowship Study (Interactive Bible Discussion) **4:00 pm** from Montgomery with Stephen Glover. (connecting live with all others via telephone conference).

Next Sabbath's Schedule for TLGM Gulf Coast:

August 16th / Friday: Gifts for the Lord/ Praises/Gifts and Prayers to welcome God's Sabbath 7:00 pm (via Teleconference live connect) with Stephen Glover and friends.

August 17th / Saturday: Spirit and Truth Worship Services 10:15 am, with local services held in Montgomery and brethren from Spanish Fort will be combining with the *COG Mobile, Sabbath Day* in Mobile. (All are welcome and encouraged to connect live to Worship Services via our normal phone conference).

August 17th / Saturday: Sabbath Fellowship (interactive Bible Discussion) 4:00 pm *from* Spanish Fort with Scott Hoefker (connect live to all others via telephone conference).

Telephone Ministry (English): Call **1-712-770-4700**; then, when asked, enter Code **112165 #** to join.

(Note: All callers are muted and must press ***6** to comment and ***6** to resume mute.)

All times are listed in Central Standard Time zone.

Our Daily Bread Recordings

Sunday through Saturday / Our Daily Bread [listen anytime 24/7 to a recorded 15 minute message] Call 1-712-770-4709 (note this call in number is different and ends in "9"), then when asked, enter code 112165# [reference code numbers are on "Spiritual Fellowship Opportunities" on this website <http://www.tlministriesgc.org> or at "Resources/Archives" on <http://www.haggai114.net>]

Daily Fellowship Opportunities

Sunday – Friday / **Morning Sacrifice** (Prayers & Scripture Reading) at 6:00 a.m.

Sundays / **History & Background of the Gospels** (Interactive) at 6:30 p.m. [Scott & Friends]

Mondays / Africa Discipleship at 7:00 a.m. [Glovers & Moses]

Almond Branch Fellowship at 6:30 p.m. (Interactive) (Stephen & Friends)

Tuesdays / **Haggai Fellowship** (Interactive) at 6:30 p.m. (Interactive) [Stephen & Friends]

Wednesdays / Africa Discipleship at 7:00 a.m. [Glovers & Moses]

1st & 3rd Wednesday / **Sons of God Fellowship** (Young men training) at 6:30 p.m. [Stephen & Friends]

2nd & 4th Wednesday / **Lydian's Fellowship** (Ladies) at 6:30 p.m. [Esther/Gayle & Friends]

Thursdays / **Mt. Carmel Fellowship** (Interactive) at 6:30 p.m. [Hoefkers & Friends]

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