

The Way of the Lord

18. Your Relationship With Your Lord Jesus (Part 3)

We want to discuss another factor that hinders a follower of Jesus from experiencing spiritual power. We were all born with a force within us which the Bible calls our SIN NATURE. Its singular goal is to tempt you to SIN, which means violating God's commands. RESISTING your desire to sin is a battle you'll fight til the day you die. And compounding your struggle against sin are Satan's schemes to TEMPT you.

When you sin, you break fellowship with our Father and His Son, Jesus. That means you've violated the terms of the Covenant you agreed to uphold. But thankfully, in Jesus you have two mighty truths to cling to:

1. On the cross Jesus paid the penalty your sins deserved. That's how much your Father loves you!

- *"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world"* (1 John 2:2).
- *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins"* (1 John 4:10).

2. Our Father foresaw that you would sin, breaking fellowship with Him and His Son, Jesus. In His mercy He provided a way for you to restore fellowship through confession AND repentance. REPENTANCE grieves you with godly sorrow that you have violated your Covenant with your Father. Repentance calls for you to turn away from your sinful action or attitude and embrace your Father's commands. CONFESSION is your affirmation that you agree with God. You KNOW that you've violated His command. Your confession brings forth both forgiveness AND purification from our Father: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from ALL unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).

Whenever you sin, your repentance and confession CLEANSSES you from all unrighteousness. The fellowship of Covenant union with your Father and His Son Jesus is restored. Out of grateful love for our Lord, you have the privilege and responsibility to confess each sin and turn away from it so you can follow God's way instead.

If you REFUSE to confess—to agree with God how repulsive your sin is to Him—you won't receive either forgiveness or cleansing from it. And when your righteousness hasn't been restored by your Father, your prayers go unanswered. Consider these biblical truths:

- *"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil"* (1 Peter 3:12).
- *"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened"* (Psalms 66:18).
- *"We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does His will"* (John 9:31).

If you don't NEED God to answer your prayers, then perhaps you don't KNOW Him as Lord of your life. If you're SELF-sufficient, you aren't dependent on Him as His little child. But if you love your heavenly Father and yearn for your life to bring Him

glory, ANSWERED PRAYER will be the fruit of your wholehearted, obedient trust.

Since the whole idea of sin is so rarely discussed these days, let's take a closer look at it. Sin is certainly a predominant theme in the Bible! There are *sinful actions* and *sinful inclinations*. Both of these violate biblical commands. Jesus cites certain *sinful actions* in Mark 10:19: *"Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud..."* (Mark 10:19).

Paul lists other *sinful actions* that are abhorrent to our Father: *"The ACTS of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will NOT INHERIT the kingdom of God"* (Galatians 5:19-21).

A *sinful inclination* means that you habitually hold on to goals and values that are contrary to God's Word.

- *"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God"* (James 4:4).
- *"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever"* (1 John 2:15-17).

Sinful inclinations embrace the world's values and make you an enemy of God. Since ONLY the person who does the will of God lives forever, do you want to be His enemy? If you harbor unforgiveness and bitterness toward someone else, you're giving way to an especially destructive inclination. *Forgiving others from your heart* is one of your Father's requirements for remaining in His Covenant. You may want to review how important forgiveness is in our Hebraic Article, *The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*. As long as YOU don't forgive others, the FATHER won't forgive YOU. (See Matthew 6:15.)

Jesus warns against still another sinful inclination. That's WORRY (see Matthew 6:25-33). When you worry, you nullify your trust in Him. This is especially true when you worry about the *future*. The future is our Father's domain, and it's essential for your faith walk that you DON'T DISTRUST Him about it. That's why Jesus concludes His warning about worry with this command: *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well"* (Matthew 6:33).

Concentrate on extending His kingdom and living righteously by staying repentant when you do sin. Be sure you aren't trusting that your plans about the future will work out the way YOU intend. James offers you this warning: *"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that'"* (James 4:13-15).

When you do make plans, *"Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun"* (Psalms 37:5,6). The WAY of the Lord is to resist sinful actions and

rid yourself of all sinful inclinations. These can KEEP you from experiencing the spiritual power Jesus promises you.

For Further Study:

- Discussing How To Restore The Early Church, Lesson 43
- Teaching E-mail 42. *Develop Loyalty—Giving Up Your Life For Someone*
- October-November 2003 Newsletter: *Love the Lord Your God with All...*

Each is a free download on our website: <restorationministries.org>