

January 18, 2012

What Is Sin's Deceitfulness?

We realize how easy it is for any of us to get caught up in our daily routine and by evening evaluate that day by **what** we accomplished or **what** we let slip. That's why we want to remind you that it takes ***persistent personal determination*** and the ***mutual support*** of others who are with you on your journey to your salvation to daily prompt you about our *Lord's* goals and purposes for each day. We believe the writer to the Hebrews had this same point in mind when he urged, "*See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, untrusting heart that turns away from the living God. But **encourage one another day after day**, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin*" (Hebrews 3:13).

What is *sin's deceitfulness*? It can certainly encompass a variety of unrighteous outworkings, but perhaps among the worst is that you go through your day unaware of and oblivious to the *purpose and goal of our Lord Jesus* for each encounter you have that day. None of them are "accidental" from His perspective!

We have some scriptural truths for you to post on your refrigerator, bathroom mirror or wherever, as daily reminders:

- **My goal for each and every day is to be resolute to see my Father glorified, His Kingdom extended, and the love of Jesus reflected to others in whatever opportunities He presents me.**
- **The Spirit of Christ within me makes this goal possible IF I ask Him to help me see people from His perspective; His love in and through me enables me to lay my life down for others.**
- **I must be conscious each day of the ways the Spirit of our Lord is changing my character to increasingly conform to His through searching His Word and applying it, through my encounters with others, and/or through any situation I find myself in.**
- **I am determined to raise no resistance to my Lord's desire to develop in me His love and concern for others, whether through His Spirit at work in me or through input and correction by others who follow Jesus with me.**
- **Each day I will remind those who press on with me in following Jesus of these goals. TODAY is the day to encourage each other. I may not have tomorrow.**

If you inscribe these pursuits in your heart and let them guide you each day, you'll be choosing a way of life that has your Father's attention and favor. Watch what He can do in and through and around you to advance His Kingdom!

And please heed this word of encouragement:

Don't be hindered by your past sins and mistakes. Satan, as well as people around you

who don't follow Jesus, will try to beat you down by reminding you of your past. If you've confessed your past sins and turned from them, your Father doesn't remember them. He has forgiven you and cleansed you, and sees you both as you are today and what you can be in the future through your ongoing obedient trust. Press forward on your pilgrimage to your salvation, by His Spirit growing more and more in the character Jesus. Don't keep looking back! Living with past regret is like slogging through quicksand; it will pull you down into fruitlessness. (Psalms 103:10,11; Hebrews 8:12; Luke 9:62; Philippians 3:14)

Throughout the first and second letters of Peter is threaded this effectual understanding of Father's purpose for having chosen you to follow His Son. Ponder these verses in light of *our Lord speaking to you* through them:

*"**You have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood... who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time...***

*for you are receiving the **goal of your faith**, the salvation of your souls.*

*Therefore, **prepare your minds for action**; be self-controlled; **rest your hope fully on the grace that is to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed.***

*Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, **live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear...***

*You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people **belonging to God**, that you may **declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light"** (1 Peter 1:2,5,9,13,17; 2:9).*

There are some essential biblical truths here to help you keep pressing onward to that glorious goal: • God chose you, you didn't choose Him. • The Spirit in you is sanctifying you to become more like Jesus so that you'll readily live with Him as Lord of your life. • As you press on in obedient trust, Father will guard your faith no matter what you face. • You are still on a pilgrimage to your salvation; earth is not your home. • Be prepared to harness your thoughts so that you don't give way to temptation. Thoughts precede actions, so align yours with the Spirit! • Your works, whether righteous or disobedient, will be judged by Father. Out of reverent fear of His holiness and power, live as a stranger to the world's ways and values. • You're called as one who is *owned by Him* to declare His praises through both worship *and* personal testimony. • He has called you *out of* the darkness of sin's ways; don't give way to compromise that rationalizes sin in your life.

You've probably heard a lot about "Tebowing" in the news lately. Tim Tebow, the young

quarterback for the Denver Broncos, refuses to hide his faith whether on the field or off. Both teammates and opponents attest to the fact that he lives what he speaks. Through one man's stand for Jesus, Tim has become known throughout the sports world and beyond—admired by some, hated by others. How many folks know about *your* relationship with Jesus? Are you willing to face the mockery Tebow faces for standing for Someone he loves and serves (1Peter 4:14-16)? Put another way, are you a "closet Christian," or one whose light is like a city on a hill, seen by all (Matthew 5:14-16; 10:32,33)?

"Free the Captives!"

In our December 26, 2011 e-mail we wrote:

"We're working on a new project that will require a whole new technical capability to be effective. There's a particular reason for this new assignment from our Lord. Our hearts have been deeply affected by the accounts our friend Patrice has shared about her crime-ridden, inner-city neighborhood in Cleveland. Also, our friend Matt volunteers in a youth detention center and we're burdened to help him be more effective in his ministry. Please pray for us as we research and try to learn new software programs to bring this new work about!"

In 1994, upon our arrival back from Israel, our Father directed us to "Free the captives!" It has taken these years to unwrap our understanding as to the extent of His command. This past month or so I (Mike) have discovered that our Lord has rekindled a burden I've carried since boyhood, a heart concern I inherited from my Mom and her father: *I am compelled to help those who are being discriminated against, despised, or hobbled in any way that robs them of the dignity God wants them to experience.* We discuss this issue in our December 2000 Newsletter, *To Act Justly and to Love Mercy.* When Jesus speaks of seeking out lost sheep (Luke 15:4), that describes our hearts!

We've often said that "our ministry was born" at a black church in Birmingham, Alabama, as we saw our Lord move mightily to bring spiritual freedom during a weekend seminar we conducted there. In the late 90s we shared the Hebraic foundations in the Watts area of Los Angeles with some whose hearts also yearned for the disenfranchised to be lifted in the love and power of Jesus. In 2000 we delivered the Hebraic foundations to Indian reservations throughout the west, and addressed a gathering of First Nations in Calgary, Canada. We long for those who have been beaten down and robbed of dignity to experience the spiritual and emotional freedom Jesus promises those who are in Him.

We're currently learning how to visually illustrate the Hebraic foundations to reach the inner cities, the impoverished, Native Americans on reservations, the incarcerated and any others who are locked in a cycle of hopeless despair. Some of these arenas have been touched by "Christian charity" over the years. But few have been impacted by the love which only someone filled with the *love of Jesus* can demonstrate—the *love that*

hugs a leper!

We live in the second most crime-ridden area of Colorado Springs. Murders, drug deals, house break-ins and other violent crimes are a frequent occurrence within a few blocks of our home. But we know that our Lord brought us to this neighborhood for several important purposes. One that stands out to us as we walk to the library, the pharmacy, or Walmart is that the hardened people we pass on the sidewalks and in the stores deserve to be greeted with the love of Jesus. They are made in God's image and loved by Him! Over the years it's meant a lot to us to encounter individuals who once regarded us with suspicion now looking forward to greeting us. Some have even introduced themselves! And with some we've had the privilege to share the ONE we love above all others, Jesus.

Most of our ministry now takes place through the Internet. That venue can entice you into becoming insular and unconcerned for the people around you. We generally don't drive unless we have to, so our Lord Jesus has used our walking to keep us intermingling with the people in our neighborhood, souls He died for. Through our living here, He has kept alive in us His burden for *all* people to experience the freedom only He can give. That impels us to find creative ways to reach them. (By the way, please continue to pray that the VA would schedule Mike's knee replacement soon, or that Father would use some means of His choosing to correct the problem. Walks can be painful experiences since he never knows when his knee will lock up.)

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; *only light can do that.*

Hate cannot drive out hate; *only love can do that.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

On Martin Luther King's birthday commemoration two days ago, the Holy Spirit gave me (Mike) a prophetic word concerning how He intends to use Patrice and her sister, Rhonda, in Cleveland's inner city. The Civil Rights Movement was needed because it was time to stand up to oppression. But as essential as the Movement was, it was mostly based on human effort. Thus it didn't end discrimination nor did it free the spirits and souls of people. Decades later many have come to understand that true freedom can't be achieved through human effort alone. Now they are more receptive to hear about the freedom only the forgiveness and power of Jesus can bring. Possibly this is the intent of Paul's observation, "*the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual*" (1 Corinthians 15:46). After I related this message with Patrice, she cried. When Rhonda heard this word she broke into tears of hope and joy too. Earlier that very morning Patrice and Rhonda had been praying together, and what I shared is what the Spirit had already told them. That confirmation brought grateful praise to God from all of us for His wonderful mercy!

We're especially burdened that the cycle of boys and girls growing up without a father come to an end. We're grieved that fornicating children are bearing children, a situation

that breaks God's heart. The welfare system today only encourages this deadly cycle, and without the power of God it will only continue. God's people need to focus on the demonic enslavement of the men who have been held captive to strongholds and toxic memories for generations. It's through *the men* that we can end this vicious cycle and fulfill God's Word spoken to Zachariah, apperceiving His prophecy to Malachi: "*And he [John] will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to **turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord***" (Luke 1:17). So much emphasis within religious circles is placed on helping women and children, but with an underlying contempt for the men. This fragmented approach isn't how our Lord would minister! He is looking to restore households headed by Spirit-led men—whole families who can then reach out to others in need.

Our Lord has called Patrice, now in her 50s, to remain single to serve Him in such a time as this. Assisted by her sister Rhonda, they are providing us with the life stories of their relatives and others who live in the inner city. On her own street she regularly sees young men openly toting guns. Just this past week her prayers were interrupted by nearby gunfire! The boarded-up vacant buildings near her house are used by men who grab girls off the street and rape them. Crime and lawlessness surround her. Yet still she and Rhonda reach out to young and old alike to teach them the Hebraic foundations of the Lord they love and trust.

Last week a dear friend of ours provided Patrice with a laptop so she can record these life stories for us to use. Her own father's testimony has been used by our Lord to bring about amazing healing that's rippling throughout her family! The laptop will also facilitate her production of materials she can use with others, whether individuals, schools or community opportunities. Patrice has previously held positions of responsibility and influence in her area, and has the respect of many for both her faith and her integrity. Laid off from her job a few years ago, she's been caring for her invalid mother. At the same time she's been making repairs herself to their home due to a house fire set by a disgruntled relative.

In order for her to interact with our materials, Patrice must have Internet access. At the same time, she needs help with daily living expenses. During our 34 years of ministry, only once before have we asked those whom we've helped to help someone else. Our Lord has put in our hearts to ask those of you who are blessed by what we've shared for the financial help Patrice needs. Our heart's desire is that you help her so she can help us reach those of whom our Lord speaks: "*I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me*" (see Matthew 25:34-40).

Mike & Sue

