

ALAN TAYLOR

P O BOX 700623; TULSA, OK 74170-0623

918-447-8951

alantaylorministries.org

The Pursuit of Holiness

Years ago, the Lord began to teach me about the struggles that believers face everyday. He showed me how the fleshy soul of a person is not saved at salvation, and how each individual must not only build a relationship with God, but at the same time put the old fleshy ideas to death as well. Over the years, I've had many people ask me to pray for them and cast out a demonic spirit, to set them free, and for most of those requests, I've had to inform them that laying on of hands was not their answer. I can cast out devils, I will tell them, but I can't cast out flesh.

How many times have people, hoping to have their life transformed in a service, found themselves right back where they started? I thought that, "He who the Son set free was free indeed." Each of us have different battles that we face when we are born again, and all of us can relate to facing weaknesses that seem to beat us up. We may even begin to question if it is possible to truly be free from sin.

Many Christians live their lives with an idea that holiness is something we slowly obtain to. Over the years, we plan to let go of certain things and eventually (hopefully before we go to heaven), we will be living holy before the Lord. In our culture, many churches have come to settle with a lifestyle that doesn't pursue holiness, and allows certain sins to remain.

It seems that many have given up on true holiness, and have accepted a lifestyle that seems acceptable to those around us. We hear, "No one is perfect, we all sin," or my favorite, "we are not Jesus." I can understand how people have arrived at thinking that it's impossible to live a life that is sanctified. So many in the past have failed in their quest for holiness, what chance do we have? Many Christians have come to accept sin as part of our life. The devil will lie and tell you that you are the only one with weakness. This creates an environment where we can't really talk about our struggles with anyone, and we constantly feel as failures toward God. In all of our struggles, we know there must be more to being a Christian than staying where we are at.

I have found great compassion and forgiveness from God towards me in every fault of my flesh that I have faced. In fact, you and I can only expect love and grace from our Heavenly Father, as we continue to pursue Him. I can tell you this though, I have found no peace or joy in sin. I've never felt at home with compromise. I have caught myself in the past making excuses for keeping my pet sins, only to find confusion and defeat at the end of that road. In the kingdom of God, it is impossible for a Christian to ever find fulfillment without seeking holiness.

There is no doubt, according to scripture, that born again Christians should be living a life that is set apart for God. "*Sin shall not have dominion over you*", from Romans six, is clear enough; **you are made to rule over sin not the other way around.**

Romans 12:1 says "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

Holiness to God is normal; it is our reasonable service to live holy. It should also be normal for us **because it is possible for us to live a life completely sanctified to God.** We can walk into a position in Christ that He purchased for us with His blood. A position of being whole and complete in Him, while not needing anything this world has to offer. God is jealous, and He wants every part of us. Truly this is who we want to be as well: Complete in Him.

The devil has a plan to destroy us. If he can't stop you from being Born Again then he will do everything in his power to stop you from completing your call. He is afraid of you and all that God can do through you.

Ephesians 6:11 reminds us to "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

This word, "wiles", indicates that it is a military action against you. He has studied your weaknesses and has devised a plan to stop you from moving any closer to God. Sin comes to life in us only when we partake of it. So, it is easy to understand that the devil is not going to tempt you with something you are not interested in. James 1:14-15 shows us the pattern the devil will use to tempt us. *"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."* No one can make you sin; you can only be drawn into it by temptation.

The devil comes to steal, kill and destroy; this is all that he is good at. You can see from James that the path he uses to take you to death is sin. He cannot come and kill you out of nowhere, he must walk you into death and destruction through temptation. Sin doesn't come to life in us until we act on it, either with our thoughts or with our actions. The devil has a plan for you and will only tempt you in areas you are weak in. This is why it is best not to judge others for areas they are weak in. He is always trying to lead you into death by your own sin. The enemy is always trying to get the church to accept their weaknesses as who they are.

A few years ago, a man came to my office looking for help. He said, "I need someone to pray for me so that I can be free". As we were talking, the Spirit of God spoke to my heart and told me his complete history. I already knew that he had been through two of the best Bible colleges in America. He had already told me that he had been a church-going Christian his whole life. What he didn't tell me, and what God revealed to my spirit, was that he was battling a sexual sin. I told him what I saw in the spirit, and he was surprised I knew, because he didn't share any of that with me. I went on to tell him that the reason he was fearful was because he no longer felt convicted by his thoughts and actions.

I shared with him that God's mercy will never run out as long as we are fighting against the desires of our flesh, but once we accept those desires as who we are, then we begin to walk away from Him. He will never walk away from us, but we can walk away from Him. This was the reason God arranged our meeting, because this man was desiring that sin more than he was desiring God. He was on a path away from God, and he had gone so far, he was finding it difficult to want to come back. I began to teach him that who God made him in the spirit, was different than who he was made in the flesh. "There is a path to complete freedom from sin," I said. "You no longer need to be captive by this or any other sin. The moment you were Born Again, sin lost its power to control you. The only reason this struggle is so strong is because you have allowed desires to stay in your soul."

I told him of the battle that Jesus won over the devil and over sin. His response was interesting to me. He said "I just want someone to lay hands on me and get me free." I was shocked; he was looking for a quick

fix, and not true freedom. He didn't want to take responsibility for change himself, but wanted to blame his condition on God or some preacher. He wanted to leave saying that he tried but God left him that way or that the preacher wasn't anointed enough. I was concerned for him because he was no longer convicted by his actions. I didn't want him to walk away from God and follow that sin into death.

Most of us will never face that dark of a struggle, however, if the church continues to allow doctrines of lasciviousness to flourish, many more believers will discover themselves in a battle like this man had. Jesus has made it possible for each of us to overcome our flesh even if it seems too difficult however there is always hope for victory and there is always strength available from God!

Too many of us keep our weakness bottled up, and allow them to remain as part of our life. We don't have to anymore. We don't have to stay the same anymore. I know that you are hungering for more of God and are willing to pay the price to find wholeness. I am the same way; I just wanted to make sure that what I was doing was working. I tried everything to be free from the wrong desires that were in me. In the beginning I tried discipline, which may not be too bad if I were raised on the farm, however my level of discipline was pretty pathetic. Let's just say I would swear on the Bible to quit something in the morning and be right back at it that same night. I had become the king of brushing myself off and trying again.

There is nothing wrong with brushing yourself off and trying again; there is no condemnation in the Kingdom of God! In fact Proverbs 24:16 tells us, "*For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity.*" So don't ever give up, you can win if you fight the right fight and don't give up. I was becoming discouraged because I was picking myself up but seemed to just sit still and spin my holiness wheels year after year. When I was being tempted I would take my authority over the devil and command him to "GO FROM ME" in Jesus' name. That seemed to always work well but only for a short season, because he would always come back and try again. When he found me tired or depressed, I would give in to old sinful thoughts.

Next I tried having some minister lay hands on me. I responded to every altar call and the truth is the anointing of God came and changed something in my life. I had heard that "*the anointing destroys the yoke of bondage*" (Isaiah 10:27). I found out just like the young man who I first wrote about did. The anointing destroys the yoke of bondage, but didn't destroy the desire for sin that was in me.

The devil would love for you to wrestle with him year after year, just like I did, but you don't have to. Our battle is not with the devil, or even with sin. Jesus has already defeated sin and the devil. By the Cross of Calvary, and by the Blood of Jesus, freedom was purchased for you and I and the devil was conquered. Jesus then gave us the victory over sin and Satan while He made us more than conquerors.

You are already positioned to walk away from every past failure and mistake. Your fight is not with the devil but with the desires of the fleshly soul. You can have as much of God as you want and He has given you all the tools you need. You can go as far into God and freedom as you would like; the devil and sin cannot stop you. You are not alone in your battle towards holiness! Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to help you and to guide you.

When I first learned about praying in tongues I was so excited. I had been baptized in the Holy Ghost for years, yet never knew the power it possessed in driving out wrong desires in my heart. The very desires the devil was using to prey upon me. Jesus said in John 14:30 that, "*I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me.*"

Jesus tells us here that, the way to win against sin, is to have nothing in us that agrees with the temptation of the devil. Through spending time praying in the language of the Holy Spirit, your desires will be transformed making you different from the inside out. Sin lost its power to rule over you the moment you asked Jesus in your heart. Now the Holy Spirit wants to walk you, step by step, into the freedom that is already yours.

He knows your weaknesses and your strengths. God knows what happened to you in your past and He knows how the devil is tempting you. So when you take time everyday and allow God (the Holy Spirit) to pray through you the perfect will of God, you can trust that you'll never be the same again.

When we pray in tongues, it puts our reliance on God's ability in us instead of our ability. You don't have to be strong because the Holy Spirit will be strong for you. There were times in my past that I didn't think I could win over temptation. I couldn't find enough strength in myself to stop myself from sin. Yet, I could find enough strength to pray in the Holy Spirit for an hour or two. Slowly my desires began to change, and the devil was losing his stronghold in me. **I was becoming Holy from the inside out;** little by little I began to live above my flesh. Don't be intimidated by the weakness you may find in yourself. Those desires are not from God. With the help of the Holy Spirit, working through your Born Again nature, you can put to death each and every one of them.

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