

## **WHY THINGS GO WRONG AND HOW TO PUT THEM RIGHT - Part three**

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### **GETTING OUT AND STAYING OUT OF PERSONALLY DESTRUCTIVE CHOICES**

(continued)

Last week our study was focused on how to ***get out of the sin and bondage of wicked choices***. The key steps are ***confession, belief, and renewed obedience to the Lord***. Those steps are like the three legs of a tripod. They must be taken ***together*** to be effective. Remove any one and the structure will topple.

Tonight, we're going to study the Scriptural resources to help us ***stay out of sinful choices in the future***. There's no use in ***getting out*** if you can't ***stay out***. And the Bible says you ***can*** stay out. God wants to direct all His power to keep you from falling:

**Jude 24-25** - "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, [25] to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."

Jude writes about ***two*** distinct realities. Starting with the second, we can be confident of being presented "***blameless***" before our Lord when He comes because we will be, as the apostle John describes, just ***like Him*** when we ***see Him***. But Jude also writes about our Lord's provision to "***keep us from stumbling***" right now, in our present state of growth.

Now here's the important question - ***How does God go about that process? What does He do to keep me from falling? Do I have any part in that process? Is it automatic? Does it happen to me while I'm sleeping? How does God, by His Holy Spirit, keep me from falling?***

I'll tell you how I think that process takes place. I think King David shed tremendous light on this subject when, in prayer, he asked God to do something very special for him:

**Psalms 139:23-24** - "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! [24] And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

***"...see if there be any grievous way in me...."*** David writes of this careful inward probing of the Lord. He needs to know ***what's trending in his hidden, unexamined self***.

Those words really correspond very nicely with our present study. First, he wanted God to make him clean on the inside, in his heart and in his thoughts. And then, second, he wanted God to ***lead him in the everlasting way***. He wanted God to stay close to him - to show him where to put his feet so he wouldn't stumble.

That's what we're looking at tonight. God wants to keep you from falling - from tripping up. He wants to lead you in the way everlasting. But before you can ***do*** God's will, you must ***know*** God's will. And there are ***three passages of Scripture specifically designed to lead you and me in the way everlasting***. The ***ten commandments*** will guide your ***actions***. The ***beatitudes*** will guide your ***attitudes***. And ***1 Corinthians 13*** will guide your ***relationships***.

#### 1) **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS WILL REGULATE YOUR BEHAVIOR**

It is true that errors come in pairs. People tend to make one of ***two*** mistakes in thinking about the ten commandments:

- a) ***Some people think they are Christians because they obey the ten commandments***. "Are you a Christian?" "Why yes, I don't lie or steal or murder or commit adultery. Of course I'm a Christian!"

But the Bible is clear that the commandments - the ***law*** - is powerless of ***redeem, to save, to undo the results of the Fall we studied in the last two lessons***. In fact, the Bible is clear, the law was never given to save anyone. That was not God's ***purpose*** in giving the law:

**Romans 7:7-9** - "What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I

would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” [8] But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. [9] I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.”

*“...I would not have known sin (7). We don’t accurately comprehend the mechanics of sin until we see it as something deeper than isolated actions. Sin is what **produces** the offspring of bad deeds.*

Paul thought he was doing fine. He thought all his religious training had made him holy and pleasing to God in every way. And he **was** a very good person. He worked very hard at studying and keeping the law.

Then he mentions one of the ten commandments, specifically the one dealing with the **inward sin** of covetousness. And he sees he is a sinner. He sees something he can’t root out of his own heart by his own efforts. **Finally, the law does what the law was designed to do. It causes Paul to acknowledge his need for salvation through the death of Jesus Christ.**

The law, if taken seriously, points sinful people like us to Jesus. The law’s **initial work** (notice that phrase) it to **show the presence of sin** and then **destroy the deadly moral pride that keep people from bowing before Jesus Christ for salvation.**

So, regarding the first mistake people make, **no one will be a Christian by the works of the law.** The law is powerless to save anyone. But there’s another mistake people make when they consider the ten commandments. And this mistake is usually made by people **after** their conversion.

- b) **Some Christians think because they are saved by grace, the law no longer has any place in their lives.** And then they start piling up the Bible verses, misinterpreted as they’re ripped out of context:

***“We’re not under the law. We’re under grace!” “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty!”***

And those statements are true. We are **not** under the law as a means of salvation. And we are not under the **condemnation** of the law for our sins. We are saved by grace. And there is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus:

**Romans 8:1-3 - “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. [2] For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. [3] For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh....”**

But that doesn’t mean the law has no place in the Christian’s life and experience. True, the law is not an instrument of salvation. So true enough, we’re not **under the law** in that sense. But it is a **guide. It will protect my happiness and freedom in Christ Jesus.**

With the inward power and presence of the Holy Spirit in my life, the law of God is, in the words of Old Testament prophecy, **inscribed on the tablets of my heart.** I am, through the presence of Christ in my life by the Holy Spirit, **enabled to keep the law with joy.** It’s not a chore. It’s a delight. Keeping the law is turned into a labor of **love.** But it’s still **labor.** It’s just no longer the **burden** of paying for my salvation.

That process is called **sanctification.** My growth in the discovery of the joy of holiness is a progressive, gradual discovery as I learn to **turn from self and turn to the will of the Lord in the daily choices of my life.**

With that understanding, every Christian should have a working knowledge of the ten commandments. Let’s look at them briefly:

The Ten Commandments Exodus 20:3-17	Related NT Scriptures
1. Vs 3 - You shall have no other gods before me	Mark 12:28-30
2. Vs 4 - You shall not make for yourself an idol...You shall not worship them or serve them	Matthew 4:10, 1 John 5:21
3. Vs 7 - You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain	Matthew 5:33-37, Matthew 6:9, James 5:12, James 3:10
4. Vs 8 - Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy	Acts 20:7 (note the early church's celebration of the first day of the week celebrating Jesus' Resurrection), Hebrews 10:25
5. Vs 12 - Honor your father and your mother	Matthew 15:4, Ephesians 6:1, Colossians 3:20, 1 Timothy 5:1-2
6. Vs 13 - You shall not murder	Matthew 5:21-25, Matthew 19:17-19, Romans 13:8-10, 1 Peter 4:14
7. Vs 14 - You shall not commit adultery	Titus 1:6, Matthew 5:27-28, 31-32, Romans 7:3, 1 Corinthians 6:9
8. Vs 15 - You shall not steal	Matthew 19:18, Romans 13:9, Ephesians 4:28. 1 Peter 4:15
9. Vs 16 - You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor	Matthew 5:43-44, Colossians 4:6, Titus 2:8, James 3:2-10
10 Vs 17 - You shall not covet your neighbor's house...wife...servants...ox... donkey...or anything that belongs to your neighbor	Mark 12:31, Romans 13:10, Romans 15:1-2, Galatians 5:14, James 2:8

The purpose of this table is not to give a detailed explanation of each commandment. We've already studied that in the series called, ***Foundations for Reconstruction.*** The purpose of this table is simply to show the ***ongoing application of the ten commandments in the thinking of the New Testament church.***

Those issues don't disappear in the ministry of Jesus or the Apostles. Those issues are still alive and in play in the church age. But the  ***motive*** has been changed. I don't abstain from stealing because I don't want to be stoned to death. I don't want to grieve the Holy Spirit.

Another difference. In the spirit of the New Testament I don't just deal with the  ***outward action*** in my consideration of sin. I trace all actions to their  ***root attitude***. Adultery comes from lust. Murder from anger and hatred. And so on.

And finally, sin isn't dealt with in a spiritual sense until the sinful action is replaced by the principle of the opposite spirit. This can be seen in Paul's treatment of the obvious sin of  ***theft*** in  ***Ephesians 4:28*** -  ***"Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need."***

Consider each of the following situations carefully. Which commandment(s) is being broken in each case?

- a) John has just been promoted. He is excited because his advancement at work is the number one goal in his life. True, he'll have to quit his involvement in the church. But, after all, how many chances like this will he get?
- b) It's Sunday morning, Don is on his way to the golf course when he hears on the car radio that Christians working in shopping malls will now be forced to work Sundays regardless of their religious convictions. Don is outraged.
- c) Wendy is dating a non-Christian young man. Her parents disapprove, but Wendy feels they are simply out of touch. She has no intention of marrying him anyway.
- d) All the young families in the church are living in nice houses except the Winfreds. Finally the pressure to keep up is too much. They think they can probably buy a new house too if they just both work more evenings and weekends.
- e) Sue, a single teen, has just decided to go on the pill because, after all, she is against abortion.

The important point to remember in each of these situations is that all of them are dealt with in the ancient law God gave in the ten commandments. **No Christian can keep from wicked, self-destructive choices if he or she is ignorant or indifferent to those commands.**

Remember, the ten commandments will regulate your **actions**.

## 2) THE BEATITUDES WILL REGULATE YOUR ATTITUDES

Here we begin to see the New Testament goal for holy, spiritual living. Not only are we to avoid wrong **actions** in the breaking of God's laws, we are to avoid **the attitudes of heart and mind that will eventually lead to the outward breaking of those laws.**

The lesson here is **sin must be treated at its source.** Long before the commandment is broken, the heart, mind, and affections have been careless. **Sin has usually been incubating inwardly before it manifests itself outwardly.**

The beatitudes are God's gracious provision to enable each one of us to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to have God **"see if there be any grievous way in me"** (Psalm 139:24).

Most Christians don't understand well enough the importance of a **quick, working knowledge** of the beatitudes. Without the ability to have them at your finger tips, you will constantly find yourself **surprised by your own outward sins** - "I can't believe I said that!" The real battle against sinful choices must be fought **long before the actual choice is made.**

We all need simple exercises to train us to **relate the beatitudes to real life situations:**

The Beatitudes Matthew 5:3-11	The Opposite Attitude
1. Vs 3 - <b>The poor in spirit</b> - an attitude of reaching out to God for strength and resource	Self made man or woman. Able to make it on his or her own. I'm as good as the next person.
2. Vs 4 - <b>Those who mourn</b> - a sense of one's own sin and unworthiness that leads to repentance and confession	Excusing sin. Planning to cover up his tracks to enjoy the pleasures of sin without being caught.
3. Vs 5 - <b>The meek</b> - an attitude of humility and teachability. A willingness to be	Justifying sin. Refusing to admit guilt. Blaming others for sinful choices. Hard and

corrected by conscience, the Word and the Holy Spirit without argument.	non-complying in the face of any convicting work of God
4. Vs 6 - <b><i>Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness</i></b> - a heart that finds its greatest delight and fulfillment in forsaking self for the will and way of God's Spirit.	One whose heart is most fulfilled in physical, material accomplishments. Spiritual pursuits are seen as remote and other worldly.
5. Vs 7 - <b><i>The merciful</i></b> - an attitude of kindness and forgiveness rooted in an ongoing appreciation of personal salvation and cleansing freely received from Jesus	One who keeps track of wrongs suffered. A heart driven by personal revenge. People get what they deserve. Be nice to me and I'll be nice to you.
6. Vs 8 - <b><i>The pure in heart</i></b> - a life that is driven by only one passion. Same on the inside as the outside. No mixed motives. No part-time spiritual pursuits.	The hypocrite. One who wants to appear of greater spiritual quality in public than he is in private.
7. Vs 9 - <b><i>The peacemakers</i></b> - one who bridges relationships and loves people at personal cost to his own rights and pride. Not just a peacekeeper, but a peace maker. Directs love to those who deserve it least.	One who delights in tearing others down to make himself look bigger. Gossip, envy, cruelty, etc, mark his ambitions
8. Vs 10 - <b><i>Those who have been persecuted for righteousness</i></b> - A heart that will not turn from Jesus in the face of loss, injury, ridicule or pain. A life that is already rooted in eternity so as to be unmoved by present loss.	One whose life is fueled by popularity and the esteem of others.

If the ***attitude*** isn't right, the ***action*** won't stay true for long. We all live our Christian lives ***from the inside out***. Take that little table, reduce it in size, put it in your wallet or car or office. ***Read and use it every day to measure what's going on inside your own heart***. You will be amazed how good choices will start flowing with more ease and more consistency as God starts to use His Word inside your mind.

Next week we'll study the third point in this message - ***the power of Scriptural love to purify relationships***. Those are the three key passages. The ten commandments will guide your ***actions***. The beatitudes will guide your ***attitudes***. And 1 Corinthians thirteen will guide your ***relationships***.