

Four Important Distinctions We Need to Know

by Zac Poonen

We can overcome sin and temptation by following the example of Jesus Christ and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit and the blood of Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Romans 5:13, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Hebrews 4:15-16, James 1:14, 1 John 3:8

Topics: "Temptation And Sin", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the topics of Temptation and Sin, emphasizing the difference between being tempted and sinning, using Jesus as the ultimate example of overcoming temptation without sin. He also delves into the concept of the Old Man and the New Man, highlighting the new nature within disciples that loves purity and hates sin, but may struggle due to lack of spiritual nourishment. Poonen discusses Conscious and Unconscious Sin, explaining the presence of sin in our personalities and the need for continuous cleansing through the blood of Jesus. Lastly, he touches on Mercy and Grace, encouraging believers to seek both forgiveness for past sins (mercy) and empowerment to overcome future temptations (grace) through the promises in God's Word.

Transcript

1. Temptation and Sin : There is a difference between being tempted and sinning. The Bible says, "Each one is tempted when he is enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin..." (Jas.1:14, 15). Sin is not born in our heart until the lust in our flesh has been allowed to conceive. When a lust flashes a suggestion into our mind, we are tempted. If our mind agrees with that temptation, then a conception takes place and sin is born. To be tempted doesn't make us evil. Even Jesus Himself was tempted. But He never sinned even once in any way, and so He was totally pure.

The Scripture says that Jesus was "made like His brethren in all things" and "tempted in ALL THINGS as we are" (Heb. 2:17; 4:15). He was tempted exactly like us, yet He never sinned. That may not sound very wonderful to some of us, because we may feel that Jesus, being God, could naturally overcome sin easily. But remember, He had "emptied Himself" of the prerogatives of equality with God when He came to earth (Phil. 2:6, 7). Although He was God, yet while He lived on earth as a man, He had access only to the same power of the Holy Spirit that He offers us today. That's why we are told to run the race "fixing our eyes on Jesus". In our "striving against sin" today, we can look at His example and be encouraged (Heb. 12:2-4). That's because He overcame each temptation that we face, as a Man too. Thus He has become a Forerunner and an Example for us to follow (Heb. 6:20). This is "the secret of godliness.....- Christ came

in the flesh and was declared righteous in the spirit..." (1 Tim. 3:16). Although He had our flesh, He kept His spirit pure throughout His life. This is what gives us hope that we too can overcome as He overcame. For He has "inaugurated a new and living way through the flesh for us", in which we can follow Him (Heb. 10:20).

2. The Old Man and The New Man : The old man has been crucified, put off and buried. There is a new man now within us, who says, "Behold I have come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7).

It's possible for a disciple of Jesus to sin. But there is a difference between a disciple sinning and an unbeliever sinning, just as there is a difference between a cat falling into dirty water and a pig choosing to jump into the dirty water! The cat hates the dirty water, but may fall into it accidentally. The pig, however, loves it. It's all a question of nature. The disciple of Jesus has a new nature that loves purity and hates sin.

The old man wants to sin. The new man never wants to sin. But if the new man is not strong enough, he may not be able to keep the door of his heart shut against the lusts of the flesh. That's not because he wants those lusts. No. But because he is not strong enough to resist them. This may be, because he has not fed himself sufficiently on the Word of God, or because he has not strengthened himself through prayer.

So, there's a difference between committing sin and falling into sin. It's important to know this difference; for we can then avoid a lot of unnecessary feelings of condemnation in our heart. The Bible says that "the one who practises sin (that is, one who keeps on committing sin deliberately) is of the devil..." (1 Jn. 3:8). On the other hand, he writes to believers saying, "If anyone sins (that is, if one falls into sin accidentally), we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins..." (1 Jn. 2:1, 2).

3. Conscious and Unconscious Sin : There is also a difference between falling into sin and having sin. To have sin is to have unconscious sin in our personality - sin that we ourselves are unaware of, even though others who are more mature than us may be able to notice it in us. But such unconscious sin need never make us feel guilty. For God's Word says, "sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 5:13). (This also means that God does not impute sin to us when there is no awareness of sin in our conscious mind).

We shall have unconscious sin in us, until our dying day - to a lesser and lesser degree, however, if we walk in the light. The Bible says, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves..." (1 Jn. 1:8). One who says that he has no sin is actually claiming that he has already become perfect like Christ. But God's Word says that we shall "be like Him" only when He returns - not before that (1 Jn. 3:2). Those who claim to be totally sanctified and perfect already are, therefore, only deceiving themselves. Unconscious sin, however, needs to be cleansed; and "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all (unconscious) sin" too, as long as we walk in the light of God (1 Jn. 1:7). So we can stand boldly now, in the presence of an infinitely Holy God, without any fear. Such is the power of the blood of Christ to justify us. Hallelujah!

4. Mercy and Grace : We are told to come boldly "to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Mercy and grace are not the same. Mercy refers to the forgiveness of our sins. That relates to our past. But we also need grace - for our time of need, in the future. Our time of need is when we are tempted, when we are about to fall - just like Peter, when he was about to sink in the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:30). That's when we should cry out for grace; and just as Jesus stretched out His hand immediately to hold Peter, we'll find that we get grace too so that we stand and don't fall. There are wonderful promises in God's Word that assure us that God will keep us from

falling. Just look at some of these:

First of all, God promises that He will never allow us to be tempted by any temptation that is too strong for us to overcome: "...God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13). God's Word also says: "He is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless" (Jude 24). With these and many other wonderful promises given us in God's Word, there is no need for us to sin any more. Our life can henceforth be lived to do the will of God alone (as it says in 1 Peter 4:2).

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