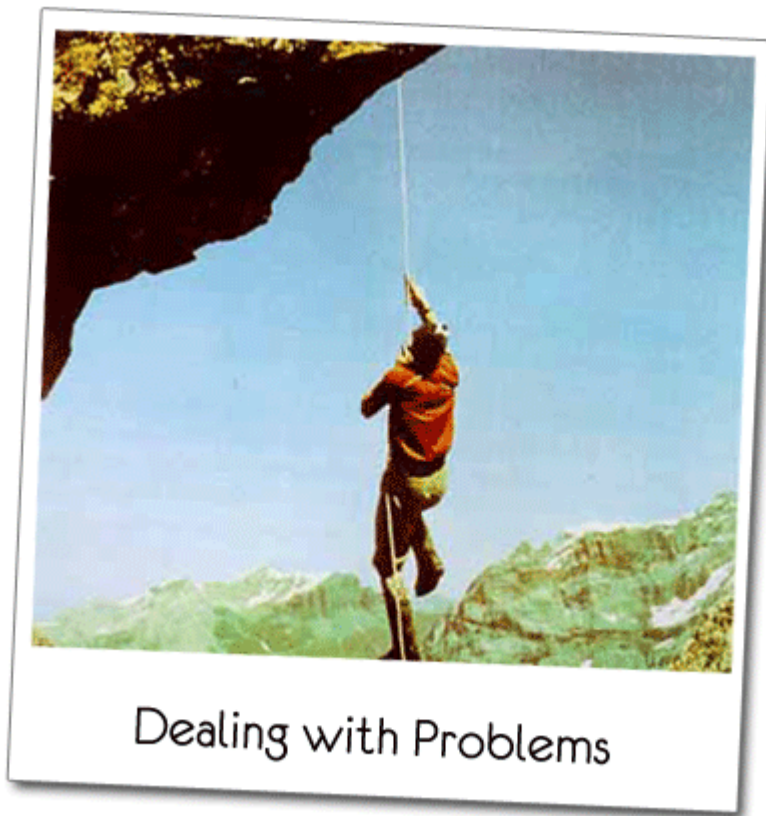


Dealing with Problems



The devil often uses all his wiles to discourage and defeat God's people. Here are some of the things that discourage Christians. In each case we can overcome discouragement and live effectively for God.

Some become discouraged by opposition

This world is no friend of Christ's. It opposed and crucified Him. Small wonder then if it opposes us who serve Christ.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).

Instead of becoming discouraged by opposition we should ask God for grace to bear it as the early Christians did, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). Remember, though we may suffer opposition, we are on the winning side. No matter who opposes us, God is for us.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

Some become discouraged through worry

The devil is ever seeking to rob God's people of the peace of heart and mind which they ought to be enjoying in Christ. The answer to sad, depressed feelings is to count the blessings God has given you and praise Him fervently for each of them in turn.

“Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7).



Especially praise Him for saving you. It is a good idea to read a portion of Scripture such as Ephesians 1:1-14 or I Peter 1:1-9 and meditate on the great blessings all believers have in Christ until you are stirred to praise the Lord and leave off your depressed feelings. Your heavenly Father is caring for you.

“The very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matthew 10:30).

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (I Peter 5:7).

So, if you are depressed by worry, instead of brooding on yourself and your woes, fill your mind with the Lord and all His works. You will not remain depressed for long:

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

The struggle with sin brings some Christians into defeat and despair

While Christians have a perfect righteousness in Christ, they are not yet perfect in their own natures. They still sin, and this often causes them to doubt the reality of the work of grace within them. Often they despair of living in the victory of true holiness. But the Christ who justifies also sanctifies.

Though they are not yet perfect, true Christians are always marked by their attitude to sin. They are new creatures who no longer judge things in a merely worldly way.

“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:16,17).

Whereas to the ungodly man the worst thing about sin is its detection and punishment, to the Christian the worst part about it is that it grieves the Lord and mars his enjoyment of fellowship with Him. He cannot be satisfied with mere outward appearances without an inward heart reality (II Corinthians 5:12).

Hypocrites, like the proverbial sow, can go back happily to wallowing in the mire (II Peter 2:22), but God’s redeemed, the sheep of His pasture, will always be miserable in the filth of sin.

So how do you deal with sin in your life? How do you overcome sinful habits and live in true holiness?

First

Be willing to see sin as the Lord sees it and describes it in His Word. Do not excuse it as a mere genetic, psychological, or social problem. It is sin and must be confessed as such. It is “the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4).

Second

Recognize that while you are in the flesh you will have a bitter warfare against sin: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Galatians 5:17). This passage makes it clear that Christians still have to battle the flesh. But the last clause holds the key to victory. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit indwelling him. The Spirit opposes the flesh and keeps the believer back from slavery to it. The more you yield to the control of the Holy Spirit, the more you will overcome sin.



Third

Receive God's promise that Christ saves from the power of sin as well as its guilt: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8). "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Romans 6:14). This victory is enjoyed by faith in Christ: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

Fourth

"walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). It is vain to pray for forgiveness and victory if you are unwilling in your heart to turn from the sin in question, or if you continue to make provision for it — for example, by the company you keep, the programmes you watch, or the literature you read.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).

Again, the Scripture plainly commands,

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14).

Fifth

If you do sin, confess it honestly, knowing that Christ intercedes for you and will restore you to fellowship:

"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1).

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

It is wonderful beyond words to be a Christian. The Holy Spirit produces spiritual fruit in God's people that ensures a life of a kind that unsaved people can never understand or enjoy:

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22,23).

It is God's will that His people live that life to the full. Christ is real. The gospel is real. The fulness that it promises us is real. Do not settle for anything less than being a complete Christian.

"His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3).

We have everything we need already provided for us in Christ. We have all spiritual blessings in Him (Ephesians 1:3).

Being made rich toward God through Him, let us not live like spiritual paupers.