

LifeWay Bible Studies for Life

Series for July 8: Victorious

June 26, 2012

Have you ever given thought to the number of temptations people struggle with every day?

Some of these temptations seem so mundane and common that we dismiss them as being no big deal. In that classification would be the temptation to hit the snooze on the alarm rather than immediately jumping out of bed. Likewise, sneaking that one bite of dessert doesn't seem like too big a deal to most of us. As long as these are occasional and do not escalate to become a deterrent to getting to work on time or result in a weight gain that causes a health issue to develop, we really are not concerned about them.

However, we also recognize some temptations are so powerful and strong in the lives of some people, the result becomes an addiction. One way many people choose to deal with their addictions is through joining a 12-step program that focuses on their particular addiction.

While these programs may differ slightly, they share one common thread. Through various means, they encourage their members to stand firm and resist their particular temptation.

One of the most effective methods to offer encouragement is through the assignment of a sponsor to another member. The member may contact his or her sponsor at any time to ask for help when the temptation is becoming too strong. The help may come in the form of words over the phone or a face-to-face meeting.

When Jesus was crucified and then resurrected, he set believers free from

the eternal penalties of sin. But the power of sin still has a very active role in the lives of believers today. In our lesson last week, Jesus said he was going away. As he returned to heaven, his promise was he would send the Holy Spirit to be alongside us in our daily living.

If you are willing to apply the analogy, the Holy Spirit fulfills a similar role in our lives as a sponsor does in the 12-step programs. The difference is the Holy Spirit is not subject to the same struggles and temptations the sponsor is. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Triune God, and he is willing to guide us perfectly if we will rely upon him.

As Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome in Romans 7:20-25, he described a war raging within his life. The battle was between his mind and knowing what God would have him to do and his flesh that desired to yield to Satan's temptations.

The truth is, we all struggle with this internal war on a regular basis. One of my battlefields exists at mealtimes. My mind knows that to be able to continue to faithfully serve my Lord and fulfill the ministry he has entrusted to me, I must lose weight to become more healthy. My flesh cries out, "it tastes so good, have a second helping."

For thought: It would be impossible to list as examples all our temptations and struggles. What are yours? Are you trying to handle these on your own, or are you calling upon the Holy Spirit to give you help in obeying God and subduing the flesh?

Moving into Romans 8:1-4, the Apostle Paul reminds us the Holy Spirit helps us find victory over the power of sin. Apparently some were doubtful this really might be true. So, Paul recounts what God already has done. In sending his Son, Jesus, into our world, God has defeated Satan on Satan's home court. He has paid the price for the sin of man and destroyed the penalty of sin for all believers and all who will call upon his name in faith.

Now he is giving his followers a way to walk or live according to God's plan through the work of the Holy Spirit.

For thought: As you examine the sin in your life Christ has forgiven, is there any reason why you would not believe God's desire for you is that you would live each day in his will? If this is true, why do each of us often rely upon ourselves rather than calling upon the Holy Spirit for guidance?

Romans 8:5-9 always has been one of those eye-opening passages of Scripture for me. In speaking to believers, Paul states "since the Spirit of God lives in you" (Romans 8:9). It is powerful to realize the Holy Spirit is not just "hanging around somewhere near" but rather he indwells the life of a believer.

In this same set of verses, Paul said those outside of Christ think only about the things of the flesh that control their lives. But believers, those in Christ, concentrate their minds upon the things of God. The Holy Spirit helps us stay on track.

For thought: Back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I had Jack MacGorman for Greek at Southwestern Seminary. He always said the best commentary on Romans was Galatians, and the best commentary on Galatians was Romans. To understand this passage in Romans 8:5-9 better, read Galatians 5:19-23. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you as you compare the Romans' passage with the Galatians' passage?