

God's Word & Our Temptation

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Date: 21 September 2014

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Sometimes I just wish that there was an easier way to victory. Sometimes I just feel so worn down. I feel so vulnerable to temptation in my battles.

My battles against pride or against anger or bitterness. Or my battles against worry or doubt or fear. Sometimes I just wish that I had a secret weapon of some sort that would give me instantaneous victory over sin.

A silver bullet of sorts. A nuclear option. An easy button of some sort. And, you know, I think that all of us can probably relate to that. And so my question for you is, if the battle against sin seems so hard, if the battle against our sin seems so impossible, then how do we gain victory over sin?

[1 : 52] Can we gain victory over sin? If we look to God's word, if we look for examples within God's word of battling temptation, probably the most common example that may come to your mind is Christ's own temptation.

When he was battling temptation when he was fasting in the wilderness. We see accounts of that in the Gospels, Matthew 4, Luke 4. And you're probably familiar with this.

But first off, Satan comes to Jesus and he tempts him. He tempts Jesus to turn a stone into bread. Here Jesus was fasting, focusing upon God and prayer.

And Satan tempted him to turn this bread, this stone into bread. So what did Jesus do? What was Jesus' response? Well, Jesus quoted scripture to Satan.

And he said, man shall not live by what? By bread alone, right? And yet again, Satan tempts Jesus to worship him, to worship Satan.

[2 : 53] And he offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. And again, Jesus quotes scripture. He says to Satan, you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.

The third and final temptation that Jesus faced, Satan tempted Jesus to leap from the pinnacle of the temple and to be rescued by angels.

And once again, Jesus, well, he quotes scripture. And he says, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. So if we look at that particular example, if we look at Jesus' response to temptation, we may be tempted to wrongly conclude that it's the words that we say that can battle the temptations that we face.

You know, we may misunderstand. We may get the wrong idea of exactly how is it that we're supposed to use scripture. God gives us scripture. And this summer we're doing a sermon series through Psalm 119 upon God's word.

But the question is, how do we use God's word in relation to our sin? How do we relate God's word to our temptation, to our battle?

[4 : 14] And, you know, I'm not trying to be funny or even irreverent by making this analogy. But, you know, sometimes I think that people, when they read the account of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, they almost see this as some sort of a Harry Potter-like magical wizard's duel between Satan and Jesus.

And Satan casts his evil spell toward Jesus and Jesus counters it with his scripture spell. And then Satan again comes at him with another evil spell of temptation.

And Jesus waves the wand of God's word and deflects the temptation. Sometimes I think we may think that that's what's happening. But in reality, if we really look at what God's word has to say about God's word and about our temptation and fighting sin, it's not the words that we say that fight off temptation, but it's the truth behind those words.

You know, if we just think that memorizing scripture, filling our brains with words off of a page, if we just think that rattling off and quoting scripture in certain circumstances or instances is enough to give us victory over sin, then we're going to be sadly mistaken.

We can rattle off all the verses we want. We can fill our brains with all the words of the scripture that we can. But that in and of itself is not alone to rescue us, to save us from the bondage that we have toward our sin.

[5 : 45] It's not knowing God's word. It's not quoting God's word. Rather, it's trusting and obeying God's word that is the key to victory over sin.

You know, of course, it is important to know God's truth. If we don't know God's truth, we can't trust it. We can't believe it. If we don't know God's truth, then we can't follow it and obey it.

Of course, it's important to know the truth of God. That's not at all what I'm saying. I'm not at all trying to discourage us from memorizing or learning or even quoting scripture. But we must then, by faith, trust in the truth of God's word.

Trust in the truth that is behind those words. And by God's grace, we then can step out and obey the instructions, the truths that we find in God's word.

You see, it wasn't simply the words that Jesus quoted that gave Jesus the victory over Satan.

Excuse me. It was the truth behind those words. By faith, Jesus believed the truth of those words of God.

[6 : 50] And by God's grace, Jesus obeyed the instructions of the words of God. You see, it's trusting and it's obeying God's word that is the key to victory over sin in our lives.

God's word gives us the truth to believe and to practice. But God's word is not a magical spell that we can recite to ward off temptation. God's word is not a magical wand that we can wave to instantly transform difficult circumstances.

No, instead, when we find ourselves in difficult situations, when we find ourselves in the midst of battle, when we look around us and the world appears to be fuzzy and unclear, and we don't know where to go or what to do, God's word, God's word is the, it's the lens.

It's the lens that brings everything into focus. It's the lens through which we must view our lives. It's not just the words in and of themselves. It is a worldview. It is a new perspective.

When the world around us is corrupt and dirty and polluted, God's word is the filter that we must funnel our lives through. When things around us aren't turning out how we expected them to or how we wanted them to, God's word is the standard by which we must measure our lives.

[8 : 12] And against which we must judge our expectations. God's word is our lens, our filter, our standard. It's a light unto our path. And so that brings us then to our question.

As we're going through the Psalm 119 series this summer, what does God's word have to say about God's word and our, God's word and our sin? How is it that we can have victory over sin in our lives?

Well, I can assure you that we are not the first people to ask those types of questions. So let me invite you, if you would please, to turn in your Bibles to the book of Psalms.

Psalm 119. If you're using one of the Pew Bibles, I believe it's page 957. And the book of Psalms, it's located almost exactly in the middle of our Bibles.

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter there. And this morning, we're going to be looking at the second paragraph of this chapter, verses 9 through 16, and especially honing in on verse 11.

[9 : 21] We started off this sermon series. Mike opened up last week, this last month, this series on God's word as our treasure. Something that we can value above all else.

Something that is more valuable than everything else. And we looked at God's word and our praise. And Ben led us in a study through God's word and how that affects and interacts with our praise, our response to God.

Samir led us in a message through God's word and our path. God's word is a lamp unto our feet. It's a light unto our path, our lifestyle, our way of living.

And then last week, we were reminded that even if we are children of God, even if you are a believer, affliction is not going to be a stranger. We looked at the fact that God's word has something to say about our struggles, about our hardships, about our afflictions.

And so the overarching theme, all throughout this longest chapter of the Bible, Psalm 119, and therefore the overarching theme of our summer series, is God's word and how it affects our everyday lives.

[10:32] God's word and how it affects every aspect of our lives. And so throughout Psalm 119, the psalm writer uses about eight different words, eight different terms, eight different descriptions to refer to God's word.

We see the word law. We see the word word. We see the word laws and statute and command and decrees and precepts and promise.

And notice that not all of these terms referring to God's word are rule-related. They're not all laws or commands, which we may tend to react to and think, ooh, that sounds negative.

But some of these terms are referring to God's truths and God's promises to his people. And so we should find great encouragement in the truths of God's word.

God's word is both a rebuke and it is an encouragement at the same time. And so our main passage today, Psalm 119, verses 9 through 16, and our main verse today is going to be verse 11.

[11:37] So what does Psalm 119 have to say about God's word and our sin? How is it that we can have victory over sin in our lives? What is our relationship to sin?

Well, let's begin reading in verse 9. Psalm 119, verse 9. How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you.

Let me not wander from your commandments. I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord. Teach me your statutes.

With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight, as much as in all riches. I will meditate upon your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

I will delight in your statutes. I will not forget your word. Trusting and obeying God's word is the key to victory over sin in our lives.

[12:40] And so our plan for the rest of the morning here together is we're just going to look at two simple truths today. And then we're going to close with a little bit of very practical, down-to-earth application.

How can we take those two truths and apply them to our everyday lives? So we're going to look at the fact that we need to trust God's word and we need to obey God's word.

So the first truth is that we see here in scripture that by faith we must trust, we must believe, we must put our faith in the truths of God's word.

Now if we look at that opening verse of this paragraph, verse 9, it says, How can a young man keep his way pure? So that being said, let me just encourage you, if you don't consider yourself young, this verse still applies to you.

If you are not a man, this verse still applies to you. So this isn't just for 25% of the people in the room here. This paragraph, these truths are for all of us.

[13:39] And we're actually going to be looking at verse 9 in more detail, God's word and our purity, in a couple of weeks here. We're looking forward to doing that. But that being said, that verse sets up this paragraph, asks the question, How can we, we could really understand that phrase, young man, as being, how can we as students of God's word, as apprentices of God, as disciples or followers of God, how can we learn the lessons that God wants us to learn?

How can we live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God? And so if you're somebody who's asking the question, what does God's word have to say about my sin?

Then this passage, these truths are for you, whether you're a young man or not. And so the first reality that we need to keep in mind is that what we, that we trust in the things that we value.

The things that are important to us, those are the things that we value. The things that we enjoy, those are the things that we put an emphasis upon.

And so let's look here at our key verse today, verse 11. And the psalmist says, I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

[14:55] In other words, the psalmist here recognizes that God's word is vitally important. He stores it up. He gathers it like a farmer piling up produce in the barn and in the silo.

He stockpiles it away like somebody would precious metals or jewels in a vault. The Bible here says, the psalmist here says, that he has stored up God's word in his heart.

He values it. He recognizes it as being important. He hid it. He treasured it. And therefore, the things that he valued influence the way that he lives.

The things that we, the things that we trust in are the things that we value. And so what was this psalmist, what was the writer here trusting in, in order to have victory over the struggles that he had with sin in his life?

He was trusting in, he was relying upon, not simply filling his brain with the words off of a page, but upon the truths behind those words. He was filling his life.

[16:03] He was filtering his perspective. He was bringing everything into perspective through the lens of God's word. I've stored your word up in my heart.

Why? That I might not sin against you. The truths we must trust in, we must follow, we must put our faith in, by faith, putting our trust in the truths and the promises of God's word.

Now, when the psalmist was writing this, he wasn't just writing in abstract terms here. He wasn't just coming up with poetic language about filling up his heart with these words.

But he was referencing back to other well-known passages. One that comes to mind is Jeremiah 31. And this is God speaking. And it says, Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant.

In other words, God says, I am going to make a new covenant, a new promise with my people, for my people, to my people. Skipping down a little bit further, God says, I will put my law within them.

[17:11] I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God. They shall be my people. And down at the end of that paragraph in Jeremiah 31, God says, I will forgive their iniquity, their sin, and I will remember their sin no more.

So what we've started off looking at here is we must trust in the truths of God's word. And so one of the vital truths here of God's word is, as we've been looking throughout this summer series, is that God's word is valuable.

God's word is precious. God's word is our way of life. It's our path. It is the light to our path. God's word transforms our response to God so that we have a heart of praise.

God's word transforms our perspective when we're facing adversity and difficulty and discouragement. We must trust in, by faith, put our trust in the truths of God's word.

And God says, I will make a new promise, a new covenant with my people. I will not just write words on a page, but I will take those truths. I will write them upon the hearts of my people.

[18:22] It will be their way of life. It will transform who they are and what they do and how they live. And God says, and I will forgive them their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.

So our first point this morning is that by faith we must trust, we must believe the truths of God. So my question for you is, do you believe that? Are you a child of God?

And do you believe that if you're a child of God, that God has given you a new heart? He has done a divine heart transplant. He has given you his law upon your heart.

He has transformed your perspective. He has forgiven you already your iniquity. And he says, I will remember your sin no more. You know, so often, even those of us that are believers can wallow in our discouragement.

We can be disappointed. We can become frustrated with our failures and with our struggles. So let me encourage you to, by faith, trust in the truths of God's word.

[19:26] And specifically, trust in the fact that God, if you are a child of his, has forgiven you all of your iniquities. And he will remember your sin no more.

Two simple truths today. By faith, we must trust. We must believe the truths of God. And by trusting in the truths of God, that directly leads us to our second truth today.

That by God's grace, we must obey. We must follow the truths of God's word. So first, we have to put our faith in, our trust in, and then we have to step out by God's grace and act upon the truths of God's word.

The psalmist here says in our text, verse 11, I have stored up your word in my heart. Why? Why did he do that? So that he'd have a bunch of fun facts to know and share?

So that he could win in his sword drills and things like that in his Sunday school class? No, the reason that he stored up God's word in his heart was so that he would not sin against God.

[20:28] His perspective, his outlook on life, was transformed by God's word so that he could live in a way that was pleasing to God.

But here's what I want to remind us of. And this is a very key point. This is a very important point. We obey God's word as a result of our salvation.

We don't obey God's word in any way in order to earn our salvation. We don't start cleaning up our lives and getting our act together so that God will save us.

Quite the opposite. As a result of God's saving work in our lives, we therefore, in response to that, step out by God's grace and obey as a result of our salvation.

I'm not just playing word games here and switching around the order of things. The order is crucially important. It is a significant difference between us obeying to earn salvation or us obeying as a result of God's salvation in our lives.

[21 : 36] Let's think back to that Jeremiah 31 passage that I referenced a few minutes ago. And God says, Here's that wonderful, life-transforming perspective, that promise that God gives us, that new promise to his people.

God says, I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. By faith, how is it that we're supposed to have victory over sin?

How does God give us victory over sin? What is the relationship between God's word and our sin? Well, by faith, we must trust in, believe in the truths of God's word.

And by God's grace, we must step out and obey and follow and act upon the truths and promises and commands of God's word. So those are our two teaching points today.

But it may leave you wondering, what does that mean for me? How can I take those truths, trusting in God's word, obeying God's word? How can I take those truths and apply them to our everyday lives?

[23 : 01] Let me ask you to turn to the book of Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 4. Before our summer series in Psalms, we were studying through the book of Ephesians and most recently looking in chapter 4.

And so I want to turn once again to the book of Ephesians, look at chapter 4, and let's just pull out two examples, two very practical, real-life applications of these lessons of trusting, putting our faith in, and by God's grace, obeying the truths of God.

All right, I mentioned in my opening that oftentimes I become discouraged and frustrated and feel like I wish I could have greater victory in a variety of areas that I struggle.

One of those being pride. And I think that pride is something that takes different shapes and forms and has different flavors, but I think if we're all honest with ourselves, pride is something that each and every one of us struggle with.

And so let's take that example of one sin of pride and let's see how can we take those two truths, trusting in the truth of God's word, obeying by God's grace the commands of God's word, how can we apply that to our lives from the book of Ephesians?

[24 : 20] All right, so if we're thinking, if we're wrongly thinking, that simply memorizing a verse and quoting it as needed, throwing that out at a specific situation, if we think that that is going to give us victory over our sin, then we might look at Ephesians chapter 4, verse 2.

And we might say, oh, that says, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bear with one another in love. Okay, so I need to memorize that. With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bear with one another in love.

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bear with one another in love. And when I become, when I start to feel pride rising up inside of me, I may wrongly think that if I can simply memorize and spit that verse out at that moment in time, that I will instantaneously have victory.

Got my wand of God's word, my scripture spell, in order to give me victory over that temptation. But the fact of the matter is, if we just look at verse 2 in and of itself, we're cutting ourselves off from the rest of the truth of God's word.

We're cutting ourselves off from the grace that we so desperately need in order to fulfill God's word. And so let's actually look at verses 1 through 5 and see how does verse 2 fit within there.

[25 : 40] Yes, we are supposed to be humble. Yes, we are supposed to be gentle and patient. And we are supposed to bear with each other in love. But how can we do that? Verse 1 of Ephesians chapter 4, Paul says, I therefore, a prisoner for God, urge you to walk, and here's the key, in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

So Paul here is writing to believers. Paul here is writing to people who have had that divine heart transplant. Paul is writing to people saying, live out the reality in your lives that has already occurred in your heart.

Live in a way that reflects what God has already done in your lives. So he doesn't just say, try harder. He doesn't just say, keep trying to be better.

But he says, live out the reality that has already occurred in your life. I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy, walk in a way that reflects the calling to which you've been called.

If you're a child of God, you have been called, you have been called from a life of sin to a life of victory and freedom in Christ. And then verse two says, with all humility and gentleness, with patient, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

[27 : 05] Verse four, why? What is our motivation? What is the truth of God's word that we by faith must cling to if we're going to have victory in the area of our pride?

Verse four, there is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who's over all and through all and in all.

And so if you this morning came in here and you were looking around and you were battling thoughts of pride, if you were looking down upon other people because they look differently or act differently or sing differently or smell differently or talk differently than you do, if you were looking around here this morning and in pride, looking down upon other people, scripture here says the truth that we need to by faith cling to, by faith trust in, says we're all part of one body.

If we are, if you are a child of God, we are all part of the family of God and we have all been called by the same faith, the same hope. It's all by God's grace that we are what we are.

It's by God's grace that we are who we are. And so it's connecting the reality of the gospel that apart from God's saving faith in our lives, apart from that, we have nothing to be proud of.

[28 : 30] We have nothing to think so highly of ourselves or to look downly upon other people. But it's only the gospel, that one calling, that one Lord, that one faith, that one baptism, it's God's saving grace in our lives that even gives us the opportunity to be who we are and to do what we do.

So we have absolutely no reason for pride at all. So do you see how much more effective that is? Do you see how much more helpful that is? I hope that's a lot more encouraging to you than simply thinking, I need to memorize this verse and I need to spit it out word for word.

I need to memorize this verse and I need to say it when I'm being tempted. Instead, connect the reality, connect the truth that's behind those words that I'm no longer in bondage to sin.

God has freed me from that sin and God has done that to everybody else within the family of God, within the household of God. And I'm no better, I'm no different than anybody else here.

We're connecting the reality of the gospel to the sins that we are struggling with. We are trusting in the truths of God's word. And then we are stepping out by God's grace and we are acting upon the reality that God has already done in our lives.

[29 : 47] We trust God's truths and we step out by faith and by God's grace and we obey the truths of God's word. All right, so let's take another very practical example from the book of Ephesians here as we conclude our lesson this morning.

Anybody ever struggle with anger or irritation maybe? Maybe a little bit better sounding of a word, right? Or frustration. Oh, I'm just so frustrated.

What about bitterness? Something that anger and irritation and frustration can lead to. You know, I think that if we're honest, once again, just like pride is one of those universal sins that affects all of us, anger and irritation and frustration and resulting bitterness is something that all of us struggle with.

So again, if we're simply looking for a quick fix approach, to have victory over temptation, we may turn to verse 26 of Ephesians chapter 4.

Look at verse 26 if you would, Ephesians chapter 4. Paul says, Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

[30 : 57] And so we could keep repeating that over and over and over again. Be angry and do not sin. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Do not let the sun go down upon your anger. But simply saying those words in isolation from the truth of God's word, simply filling our minds and filling our mouths with these words is not enough to give us the victory that we need.

We need to connect the reality of those truths to our standing in Christ. So let's look at verse 26 and then we'll skip down a couple of verses and read verses 30 through 32.

So again, Paul says, Be angry and do not sin. Is that true? Yes, absolutely it's true. Is this a good verse to memorize? Absolutely it is. These are wonderful truths.

These are precious truths. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Is that a valuable, is that a valuable truth for us to follow? Is that a command that we should put into place in our lives?

Yes, it is. But let's connect those commands to the gospel. Let's put our faith, our trust in the truths of God's word and by God's grace, let's step out and live in the reality of those truths.

[32 : 13] So look at verse 30. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Again, Paul's writing to believers here and he says, If you are a child of God, then the Holy Spirit has put his seal upon you. The Holy Spirit has sealed you and called you and is preserving you for the day of redemption.

And therefore, because of that reality that has already occurred in your life, because God has done this work of sovereign grace in your life, and because the Holy Spirit is doing the continuing work of empowering you and growing you and enlightening you to the truths of God's word, because those things are a reality, verse 31.

Now you can let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.

Well, that first half of verse 32, that might be another one that we're tempted to just memorize and use in isolation, but do not cut yourself off from the grace of God. Do not ignore the second half of that verse.

[33 : 28] Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. If you are a child of God, then you have experienced the transforming grace of God in your life.

Do not cut yourself off from the power of the gospel. Allow the reality of that divine heart transplant to be lived out in the way that we interact with those around us.

And so, why are we kind to each other? Why are we tenderhearted? Why do we forgive others? Because that's exactly what God has done for us. We do it to the extent that God has done it for us. God has forgiven us everything. If you are a child of God, you are forgiven, you are free, and you no longer are in bondage to sin. And so, first of all, put your trust in, your faith in, the reality of that truth.

You are free from the bondage of sin. And then secondly, by God's grace, live out the reality of that truth. That you are free from the bondage of sin, and therefore, you can live and interact with others in a way that is pleasing to God.

[34 : 42] All right, so there are two people, two types of people in this room. And verse 9 talks about a young man. I'm not talking about young people and not-so-young people. I'm not talking about men and women. But there are really only two types of people in this room.

Either you are a Christian, either you are a child of God, you've placed your faith in God, and you've placed your trust in Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins.

Either that describes you, or you are not a Christian, you are not a child of God, and you're trusting in something other than, or you're trusting in something in addition to Christ for the forgiveness of your sin.

The reality, the truth of God's word speaks to both groups of people in this room today. And so, if you are a believer, if you are a Christian, let me encourage you that there is hope for you today. You can have victory over sin by faith, trusting, and believing in the truths of God's word. You can, by God's grace, obey the truths of God's word.

[35 : 50] By God's grace, you can have victory over your sin. By God's grace, you have already been forgiven for your sin. There's no condemnation.

By God's grace, live out the reality of the gospel transformation that has already happened in your life. Obey, because you have been forgiven by God.

Be free, because you have already been freed from the slavery of sin. Be encouraged, believer, that God's word speaks to you that you can be free, that you are free, that you can be forgiven, that you are forgiven by God's grace.

Well, what about for those that are not Christians? What about for those that are not believers? What about those here? What if you are not trusting in Christ alone? What if the idea of doing good things as a result of your relationship to God as opposed to doing good things to build or earn a relationship with God?

What if that is a better description of how you've been living your life? Let me tell you that there is hope for you today as well. You, by faith, can place your trust in Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins.

[37 : 09] And by God's grace, he will save you. The Bible promises that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

So what does the Bible have to say about sin, about our sin and God's word? The Bible says that we should trust in the truths of God's word and by God's grace, we should live out the truths of God's word.

The psalmist says, I have stored up your word in my heart by faith trusting in the truths of God that I might not sin against you by God's grace living out God's truths.

Trust and obey the truths of God's word and find the victory and the forgiveness that you are looking for today. Let's pray. God, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for the truths and the promises in your word about our sin. And we thank you for the grace and the forgiveness in your word for our sin.

[38 : 17] God, I just pray that you would encourage our hearts with these truths today. I ask that you by your spirit would empower us to trust you by faith and to obey you by grace.

And we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.