



A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: MARCH 2022 by Lee Shipp

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13).

The battle against sin is daily! The need for believers is daily!

Sin is never our friend. It is our greatest enemy. Sin is ferociously vicious ... its power alone can destroy and annihilate. The Lord told Cain that sin lies at the door and its desire is for him. This was not simply a truth for Cain, it is the truth for all people. Sin is crouching, waiting, and strategizing to overthrow all people. There is no power or opponent on earth its equal. Counseling will not overcome sin. Will-power will not overcome sin. Reparations cannot atone for sins. Not even the intercession of the Church can remove sins. There is nothing of earth that is a worthy adversary of sin's great power.

Oh, but there is a worthy adversary in Heaven! There, upon the mercy seat of God, is the Lamb's blood! Yes, there before the throne of God is the Lamb of God presenting His own blood as the payment for our transgressions. Jesus, our High Priest, applies His own blood on our behalf. Jesus ... our mighty deliverer and savior ... is sin's destroyer!

Sin is not even a worthy opponent of the blood of the Lamb! Our Lord Jesus triumphed over sin through the cross. The blood that He has shed has not only broken the power of sin upon our imprisoned lives, but it has also canceled all our sins! All our sins: past, present, and future are atoned for and forever removed by the blood of the Lamb!

To avail ourselves of the blood's work in heaven, believers are called upon to assist one another lest the deceitfulness of sin hardens our hearts. Believers are called to rely upon one another daily to keep one's hearts tender toward God.

Sin is a daily battle. It will not let up. It does not sleep. It does not compromise. It does not draw up a peace treaty. Sin is determined to corrupt your heart. Sin is determined to harden you. Sin does not approach you as the enemy; rather, it approaches you as a friend. It promises to give you what it convinces you that you need. Sin comes with promises and provisions. That is why sin is deceitful. Just like Eve was deceived in the garden by the incarnation of sin. So, Satan continues to woo her sons and daughters to a state of hardness.

We are called to seek out the fellowship of believers daily for the purpose of being exhorted against sin's deceitfulness. The deceitfulness of sin can harden the believer's heart. A hardened heart becomes obstinate or stubborn. Sin's desire in hardening the believer's heart is to somehow make him or her throw away their confidence in Christ: "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3:14).

Sin wants to convince a believer that they are no longer in Christ or that Jesus is unable to deliver them. Sin wants to convince a believer that not even the grace of God, working through the Lamb's blood, can bring deliverance; therefore, the believer should no longer believe. Give up instead. Quit following God. Quit hoping for freedom - it will never come.

HELP EACH OTHER

Believers are called upon to help one another, "... exhort one another daily ..." What is this exhortation? Revelation 12:11 teaches us that believers can deliver one another from Satan's fierce condemnation: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Do you see beloved? They overcame him. Believers must help one another press through and defeat the lies of sin. We must not destroy the believer who sins; rather, we must seek to preserve his heart from becoming obstinate or hardened and giving up on the grace of God that can save him.

Paul exhorted the Corinthians to do this very thing to a young man they had previously excommunicated from their church. Having been excommunicated and disciplined by the church, the man was graciously brought to repentance. The man was seeking restoration with God and the church. However, the Corinthians were uncertain what to do; therefore, Paul exhorted them to deliver this repentant man from the sorrows of sin. Paul instructed the Corinthians to comfort him lest he is swallowed up with much sorrow. Furthermore, he urged them to confirm their love for him, to comfort him, and to forgive him. A failure to do this would not only bring jeopardy to the young man seeking restoration but Satan would actually gain an advantage over the whole church. Therefore, it is pertinent that we as Christians not only protect the individual believer who is struggling with sin, we must realize that our failure to exhort one another will give Satan the upper hand and he will have the advantage in the congregation of the Lord.

Many believers are good at judging but lack the ability to exhort. We need to fight for one another, not against one another. We need to fight Satan and sin, not the believer. We must exhort the believer to continue in the faith, partaking of Christ, lest they throw away their faith.

We exhort one another with three essential things. Again Revelation 12:11 reveals that our success against Satan and sin in a believer's life is the blood of Jesus, our testimony and that we love not our lives to the death.

A quick word about our testimony. Our testimony is the gospel of Jesus. It is the doctrinal truth of salvation and sanctification by faith; we are saved by grace through faith. Our salvation and our sanctification are the work of Jesus. Our testimony is not barking out to the crushed sin-ridden believer how we overcame our addiction to smoking. Our testimony is not how we stopped sinning; therefore, do what I did and stop living in this evil behavior. No! Our testimony is the gospel. By the grace of God, I am what I am. God delivered me. God saved me. God is sanctifying me. Therefore, we assure other believers that God is the One who loves you and will deliver you: trust God; believe God. If you fall seven times, get back up and believe God. If you sin, ask God's forgiveness - He will forgive you seventy times seven times. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7).

"BELIEVERS MUST HELP ONE ANOTHER PRESS THROUGH AND DEFEAT THE LIES OF SIN"

FORSAKE SIN

We should forsake sin. Sin is dangerous. Sin is our enemy. Sin is against God. Sin leads to death. Sin is destructive. Sin is deceitful.

Therefore, we should forsake sin because:

- 1) We can.
2) To sin is an insult to God and He does not deserve it.
3) To sin brings reproach upon Christ and ruins your testimony.
4) Jesus is coming soon to rapture His church; we must be ready.
5) To sin destroys others.
6) To sin deceives and never gives what it promises.
7) Because we love Jesus.

Jesus never tasted one of the pleasures of sin and His happiness was complete. You could no more convince me there is lasting pleasure or reward in sin than persuading me that a vat of acid is a good place for a swim! The redeemed, through all eternity, will never taste the pleasures of sin, yet their happiness is complete. Every temptation to sin is enticing me to pursue something that is leading me away from my greatest enjoyment. Without ceasing, the devil tries to make me forget this or not believe it. He says, "Why should you not enjoy this pleasure as much as Solomon?"

But, to "sin" is never a choice as to what I "want." It is always and forever a choice between God and Satan. That is the only choice we can ever make - Satan's plan for our lives or God's plan for our lives.

If we considered sin in that context, it would decrease - but we don't. We prefer to think we have the power to make choices according to our likes and dislikes without affecting our relationship with God or anyone else. However, if we would think about sin correctly, then the things we are wrestling with would sooner end. And consider this. What good shall the forgiveness of my sins do me, if I am not delivered from the love of my sins? This is what we need - deliverance from the love of sin. What good is it, if God has made the harsh master of sin leave us if we still love that master?

A remarkable thing happened to me on one of my mission trips. In the sermon, the Holy Spirit directed me to preach on the woman at the well. As I ministered this word, the Holy Spirit began to deal with a specific individual in that service. We will call her name Sally. God gripped my heart and began to plead with her to surrender to Him. Following the service, a group met at the pastor's house for

coffee. A lady approached me. She knelt beside me and began to tell me that she was that woman at the well. She told me that God dealt with her whole life that night through the sermon and she could really sense the passion of God for her.

As we talked, I told her, "Do you realize that Jesus went out of His way by passing through Samaria, but He did it for that one woman bound in sin? And do you realize that God has sent me 5000 miles to do the same thing for you?" Trembling, she began to tell me that though she believed in God and His righteous judgment, she loved her sin more!

Men have the idea that if one came from the dead to tell the horrors of the damned that would constrain us to live a holy life. This is just not the case. Suffering and addiction are all around us. We see the tragedy of ruined lives. Still, every day multitudes of people become addicts.

If God were to unveil the secrets of the dead, where hope never comes, where hell is one eternal night of misery, still men would be deceived by sin. Even if God would allow the living to feel the pain of the dead, people would still pursue the lies that sin offers. Even if someone were brought back from hell to live on the earth, they would run back to their sin. Only the grace of God can teach us to live and love God. Only the grace of God can transform our human hearts. Only the grace of God can teach us how to deny ungodliness and live godly in this present world.

Many become religious in an effort to live more pleasing to God. They try to reform their old nature, hoping they can live pleasing to God. Paul said to the Galatians that some make a fair show in the flesh. Throughout history, numbers of men and women have appeared to live a holy life. This also is the deceitfulness of sin. For the righteousness of man is filthy rags to God. Jesus said to the people that if their righteousness did not exceed that of the religious leaders of their day then they would not be able to inherit the kingdom of God.

You can quit drinking. Many have joined AA or other self-help groups to control their addiction. Many actually live in soberness. But this also is the deceitfulness of sin. Unless a man is born again and trusting in Jesus for his righteousness then he is still in his sin. Good living, charitable works, consideration of the needy, even painful sacrifices will not make a person right with God. Many live this way but still do not love God. Sin keeps men from loving God. Sin is the enemy of love.

Sin is so very deceitful. If we spent a night in hell and then returned to our life on earth, I think most of us would run like the rest of the godless into the same indulgence of sin – knowing we are wrong, and God's wrath is being stirred up against us. But this is what we love and what we want.

How many people have faced horrors in life, some even seeing the devil himself, and for a brief period of their life showed signs of righteous living? Many have been scared, but few have been scared into loving God!

Sally told me she was a backslider and trembled before the wrath of God while she wept saying, "I know I am in sin with this man, but I love my sin."

FEAR AND LOVE

Fear might turn you to God but only love will keep you. There is no other remedy but the love of Christ. God will provide no other solution, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

And how do we come to love God with all our hearts? By letting Him love us! Even today, God loves the people of the world, yet so many will not even acknowledge God's love. Not even church people! Every day His mercy is fresh and new. He has not dealt with us according to our sins. Like the nation of Israel, we are so glad a God is protecting us, but we never see that this God wants to love us! Oh, that we would be like Moses! That we would consider why God is so gracious to us and stop what we are doing and go to God and pray, "If I have found grace in your sight, show me your way!"

*I've found a Friend – O, such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him;
And round my heart still closely twine
Those ties which nought can sever;
For I am His and He is mine
Forever and forever. – James G. Small*

God knows our frame and the treachery of our hearts. He knew the only way to sanctify the creature is to win their hearts. Beloved, what has won your heart? Jesus won the hearts of Mary, Peter, John, Paul, and countless others. He can win your heart if you would just open it up to Him. "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man would open the door I will come into him." It was the case with David as he confessed, "Your love is better than life."

It is wonderful that sinners came to Jesus. Every sinner that has run to Jesus is a testimony that only Jesus has true joy and life. Surely, all these would tell us about their lives being full of sin ... their hearts filled with misery and woe. But then, the strong and faithful Jesus changed their lives completely. He put His loving arms

around them and did what no other power could do. He saved their hearts from misery and woe. He led them out of the deceitfulness of sin. He gave them true and lasting life!

No wonder these showed such devotion to the Lord. They did not devote their lives to Jesus so they could get to heaven. They were devoted because Jesus gave them a beautiful new life. That is the reason for Mary washing His feet with her tears! That is the reason Peter is going to be crucified upside down. When you love someone so much, what is an alabaster box of oil? Be extravagant with it, pour it upon the Savior, and give Him your all.

These were not the acts of heroism. These were the acts of love. Even today, that same devotion is being displayed. Every time sin is rejected, you show your love for Jesus! When you no longer cheat on your timecard at work, you show your love for Jesus! When you firmly refuse the adulterous advancement of the man at work, you show your love for Jesus!

We are not loving Jesus when we choose sin. We use Him ... we use His name ... we abuse His word ... we rehearse the confessions of why we are saved ... of how we can repent later and ask Him to forgive us ... and how His blood will erase all the wickedness of our life.

So many, with no love for Jesus and an insatiable love for sin, use the blood of Jesus as a cloak for their wickedness. I do not believe Jesus is fooled. However, many people because they "believe in Jesus," are fooled into thinking that everything is all right with God. Yet God warns us, "Be not deceived ..."

Do you love Jesus with all your heart? Have you fallen to the deceitfulness of sin? Do you guard your heart against coldness and indifference towards God's affections for you? Robert McCheyne gives wonderful advice for all of us to follow. When you consider the protection of your heart as being the most important labor of your life, his spiritual exercises are not too much to ask. Remember, only the grace of God can teach you how to overcome sin. Exercises will not save you. But if you will apply them as a means of grace and faith you might find your heart protected from hardness and indifference.

1) I ought to have a stated day of confession, with fasting – say, once a month. I ought to have a number of scriptures marked, to bring sin to remembrance. I ought to make use of all bodily affliction, domestic trial, frowns of providence on myself, house, parish, church, or country, as calls from God to confess sin. The sins and afflictions of other men should call me to the same.

2) I ought to study Christ as a living Savior more – as a Shepherd, carrying the sheep He finds, as a King, reigning in and over the souls He has redeemed, as a Captain, fighting with those who fight with me (Ps. 35.) – as one who has engaged to bring me through all temptations and trials, however impossible to flesh and blood.

3) To gain entire likeness to Christ, I ought to get a high esteem of the happiness of it. I am persuaded that God's happiness is inseparably linked in with His holiness.

4) Satan often tempts me to go as near to temptations as possible without committing the sin. This is fearful – tempting God and grieving the Holy Ghost. It is a deep-laid plot of Satan. I ought to flee all temptation, according to Prov. 4:15: "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." Entire conformity to Christ – for the whole law to be written on my heart – I ought stately and solemnly to give my heart to God, to surrender my all into His everlasting arms.

5) I ought not to delay parting with sins. Now is God's time. "I made haste and delayed not." I ought not to spare sins because I have long allowed them as infirmities, and others would think it odd if I were to change all at once. What a wretched delusion of Satan that is! Whatever I see to be sin, I ought from this hour to set my whole soul against it, using all scriptural methods to mortify it – as the Scriptures, special prayer for the Spirit, fasting, watching.

6) I ought to mark strictly the occasions when I have fallen and avoid the occasion as much as the sin itself.

7) I ought to meditate often on heaven as a world of holiness, where all are holy, where the joy is holy joy, the work holy work; so that, without personal holiness, I never can be there, I ought to avoid the appearance of evil. God commands me; and I find that Satan has a singular art in linking the appearance and reality together.

8) I ought to pray far more for our Church, for our leading ministers by name, and for my own clear guidance in the right way, that I may not be led aside, or driven aside, from following Christ. Oh, brethren, could you not do more in this way? Could you not give more time to pouring out your heart to Jesus – breaking the box, and filling the room with the odor of your praise? Could you not pray more than you do to be filled with the Spirit?

*I've found a Friend – O, such a Friend!
So kind, and true, and tender;
So wise a counsellor and guide,
So mighty a defender!
From Him who loves me now so well,
What power my soul can sever?
Shall life or death, shall earth or hell?
No; I am His for ever. – James G. Small.*