

YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH AND THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

Some of the most famous words of Jesus Christ are found in **John 8:32** if you would like to turn there with me. Here in **John 8:32** Jesus said: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." What did He mean by the truth setting us free?

One possible answer is that of the true path to eternal life that will free us from the penalty of death earned by our sins. This includes accepting Jesus Christ as our Saviour for the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus went on to say a few verses later to say: "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

Another angle that some people have applied to this phrase is in the context of owning up to what we've done wrong when we're in trouble and accepting responsibility for our mistakes. We see this played out in TV shows and movies when people cover up their mistakes with lies and then finally come clean with the truth. A weight comes off their shoulders and they are free from the terrible burden of a guilty conscience, even though they may have to pay the price for their mistakes. I remember a humorous twist that was applied to this biblical verse in a school diary that I once had back in high school which said the following in one of its thoughts for the day – "The truth shall set you free but first it will make you miserable."

Today I'd like to look at another application of this verse. When we fall victim to sin we do so because we basically believe certain lies that accompany those sins. In the sermonette today I would like to look at how can we use truth to be free from sin. How can we defeat the lies of sin with the truth?

There are a whole host of different lies and different lines that Satan uses on us to lure us into sin. Today we'll look at two of the most common lies as we explore how we can counter the lies of sin with the truth.

Those two lies are 1) Sin is good for me and 2) I can't myself. Let's have a look now at the first one – Sin is good for me.

William Backus and Marie Chapien in their book "Why Do I Do What I Don't Want To Do?" make these very fine comments on identifying and defeating the lies of sin with the truth of God. They write:

"Sin depends upon and grows out of the believing of certain lies. The genesis of sin is untruth. The genesis of neuroses is also untruth. It is the root of drunkenness as well as depression, the root of stealing as well as overeating.

"There are...common lies with which you may be familiar. The first is "X" is good for me. Sin results from the misbelief that something contrary to the Word of God is good for you.

"X" can be stealing from a department store ('I deserve to have...'); or hitting the kid next door ('I can't control myself'); or skipping school when you're not supposed to ('It's good for me to do exactly as I please'); or lying to your wife ('I must be right. I must please people at all times'); or innumerable other sins. Sin may seem like something good for you because it will pamper you in some way, make you feel good, save you from trouble or embarrassment, flatter you or promote you. If it promotes you, how can God say it isn't good for you? Certainly God must not understand how tough things are for you.

“Possibly you tell yourself a particular sin is good for you because you ‘need’ it in your life—you can’t do without it, it is fundamental to your happiness. So you steal that record from the record department, you lie on your time sheet at work or cheat on your income tax because you believe ‘it’s good for me’...

“So “X” looks good for today. You’re only human, after all. And you just don’t have any resistance; surely God can understand that. (You really don’t want resistance because you’d rather believe “X” is good for you.)

“This is how sin deceives. And according to **Romans 7:11**, sin kills. “X” is not good for you. “X” is lethal. It kills. Jesus met “X” with the truth. The devil came to Him and said, ‘Making bread out of stones is good for you. It will prove you’re the Son of God. No one will doubt you after that.’ Satan also tried to convince Jesus that jumping off the temple’s pinnacle [and worshipping him] was good for Him. He told Him, ‘It will prove to the people you really are the Messiah. What can it hurt? It will be good for you because then I’ll give you the kingdom without the cross.’

“Jesus met every temptation by challenging its accompanying lie. He said in effect, ‘That isn’t true, Satan. The truth is, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’ Jesus demonstrated by His example that we should live only by the words that proceed out of the mouth of God. We can take the first step toward defeating temptation by refusing to put ourselves into a place where we listen to Satan’s lies” (p.29-31).

Let’s a look at a classic example from the Bible of someone who fell for Satan’s big lie that sin is good for me. Please turn with me to **Genesis 3** and we’ll read from verse one.

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (**verses 1-6**).

Notice what Eve was telling herself. 1) She reasoned it was good for food. 2) Hey, it looked good. 3) It could make one wise. Wow, it has to be good. Result: she ate the food as did Adam and they were banished from the Garden of Eden and mankind would suffer for the next 6 000 years.

We might believe in our minds that sin is not good for us but do we believe it in our hearts or do we believe that the benefits of a certain sins will outweigh the hurt it will produce? When we are tempted what are our choices telling us about whether we believe a certain sin is good for us or not?

We need to call on God’s help to see through the lie that our wrong actions are good for us and call on His help to be more and more convicted that only His way is the right way to go when we are sorely tempted to try it our own way instead of God’s way.

The second big lie I’d like to look at today is “I can’t help myself.” This lie says, “I’ve got to do it. I am helpless to stop myself. The temptation is bigger than I am.” This is a lie that is particularly potent with those who have addictive behaviours. It’s often accompanied by another lie – “Just one more time and then I’ll repent good and proper.”

Oscar Wilde once jokingly said, “I can resist everything but temptation.” For me, I can resist everything but chocolate. Some people who have tried to give up smoking and started again have

told themselves, "I can't make it. I'm too weak to be able to quit cigarettes." Many people with besetting sins often find themselves believing the same lie but what does the Bible say?

First of all, let's turn to **1 Corinthians 10:13**. In this verse Paul writes the following: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*." God won't give us more than we can bear with the help of His spirit. The temptation is not too big for us to resist.

For those of us with besetting sins and addictive behaviours there are times when we do try our heart and make some progress but there are other times if we are honest with ourselves when we are too soft and we are lazy. There are times when we are just tired of fighting the sin because we have been fighting it for so long. We are emotionally weary.

Please turn with me now to **Philippians 4:13**. Here the Apostle Paul wrote: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Paul says I can do all things through Jesus – NOT I can't help myself. Now God is ready and willing to help us if we commit to following His lead and not giving up regardless of the besetting problem we might be fighting whether it's anger, sexual lust, gluttony, smoking, alcoholism or whatever. If we want to win and beat the sin then we simply have no other choice but to endure and keep on seeking God's help and fighting the sin.

I remember when I was having a very difficult time with an addiction that I was battling I was encouraged by a couple of stories that I'd just like to quickly share with you on this point of not giving up.

In his book "The Friendship Factor" Alan Loy McGuiness writes: "In friendship, as in anything else, you will succeed if you are undeterred by failures and disappointments, and keep trying. It is seldom noted that Babe Ruth missed and missed and missed the ball. In fact, he struck out 1330 times, a record in futility unapproached by any other player in the history of the game. But what people remember is that he hit 714 home runs, a record unequalled for 40 years. Someone once asked him the secret of his success at the plate. 'I just keep going up there and swinging at them,' he replied" (p.187).

The other story is one I have had the opportunity to witness personally. The cricket team of my home state back in Australia, Queensland, entered the national Sheffield Shield competition way back in 1926. It took a very long 69 years for Queensland to win its first ever Sheffield Shield, which finally happened in 1994/95. We had come second a heartbreaking total of 14 times up to then.

So often we made a great start but would fade away at the end of the season when we were always scheduled with away games. Queensland would often just miss out on the final or have to play the final away from home because we finished second. It became this incredible psychological barrier to win at the latter end of the competition because we were scheduled with so many away games at the end of the season.

One player once said that it was the time of year when the monkey on Queensland's back becomes a gorilla. There was also the joke around that Buck Rogers' first question when he woke up in the 25th century was "Has Queensland won the Sheffield Shield yet?" Even I would find myself looking up into the heavens and saying, "Oh God, I dearly want to see us win the Shield just once before I die."

Well, in the end, we finally pushed through that barrier of winning away from home and finished at the top of the table in 1994/95. Not only did we host the final for the first time but we won it by an absolutely huge margin. Only a mere two years later we won our second title and we did it by

actually winning the final away from home. Since we finally broke through we have now won six more times after taking 69 years to win the first one.

The lesson from that is that it can take just one good victory to break the drought and completely transform any situation once a person's confidence is recharged by a good win.

In conclusion, to be set free from sin we need to find out what lies we are telling ourselves and counter those with the truth of God's word. The plain truth is that sin is not good for us and we can overcome sin through Jesus Christ who strengthens us and can set us free.