

THE WORD OF

TRUTH

Bible Study Course

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:32

7

WHEN A CHRISTIAN SINS

When God says that we can stop sinning, does that mean NOW, or in heaven? Or is it progressive? Do sinful acts become less frequent and righteous acts have an ever increasing ascendancy to the point where we commit no more sins and obey Him one hundred percent?

Lessons 4, 5 and 6 clearly show that we have all the power of heaven at our command for the removal of every sin out of our lives and victory is assured. God even goes so far as to say that he who is born of God does not sin (1 John 3:9). Then what does it mean when a Christian does fall and makes a misstep and he has sinned? Does it mean that he is not in Christ and Christ is not in him and therefore lost?

In this lesson, we will observe that when a Christian sins he is learning about his true self and how he may avoid that sin the next time he is tempted on that point. The converted Christian goes on to become stronger, more victorious and ultimately invincible. The nominal Christian mistakenly believes that the righteousness of Christ will cover him, while he makes a feeble effort to forsake his sin.

1. If the righteous man falls and commits a sin, what happens to him?

Proverbs 24:16a. _____

Note: "Seven times" is not imposing a limit, but is a Hebrew way of expressing "all", "total", or "as many times as it may happen". Compare Matthew 18:21-22

2. Alternatively, when the wicked fall, what happens to them?

Proverbs 24:16b. _____

Note: (i) "Mischief" is wickedness, evil practices (Psalms 7:14; 28:3).
 (ii) When the righteous man falls, he is in heavy sorrow. With weeping he repents, seeks the Lord for strength and forgiveness and sets his feet again on the highway. But when the unconverted man sins, he has no regard for it and continues in his sin (mischief). The unconverted, yet professing "Christian", also will not be greatly distressed by his breach of God's requirements and does not seek the Lord with his whole heart. He is as lost as the open sinner.

3. What provision has God made for the earnest follower of Christ who may stumble along the way?

1John 2:1,2 _____

4. Our enemy, Satan, may cause us to fall. Notice Christ's work to reclaim the struggling soul. Micah 7:8,9.

V.8. The fallen one is said to sit in _____

V.8. But the Lord shall be _____

V.9. And He shall plead _____ and execute _____

V.9. The Lord shall bring me to _____ I shall behold _____

5. What does this light reveal?

John 3:19-21 (compare John 8:12) _____

Note: The true Christian will speedily turn to the Lord in repentance, lest his darkness destroy him. See lesson 4 page 3 for more detail.

6. What light reveals our path, that we may walk in the steps of Jesus?

Psalms 119:105 (compare John 5:39) _____

Note: If it is Himself and the Bible, that Jesus our great High Priest brings us back to when we fall, to be indifferent to the Word of God and neglect prayer is to play right into the hands of Satan!

7. If we sin against the Lord, what are we to bear?

Micah 7:9 _____

Note: "Indignation" is the sense of violation of the right, or strong displeasure at a breach of the holy, or what is thought to be holy (Hebrews 10:38; Luke 13:14). Sometimes the offence may precipitate discipline (Hebrews 12:5-11; Proverbs 13:24; 23:13-14; Job 34:31; Jeremiah 30:11; Genesis 4:8-13). It is evident that when we deliberately choose to sin (as opposed to making a misstep or miscalculation), we bring trouble upon our own heads.

8. While God has an indignation toward our sin, of what is He aware concerning us?

Psalms 103:14 _____

9. How then does God deal with a truly dedicated Christian when he may make an error of judgement, then repents and seeks forgiveness?

Psalms 103:10,13 _____

10. Who are the people that receive this mercy and compassion?

Psalms 103:17,18; Proverbs 28:13 _____

11. When we recognise our transgression and have true repentance, becoming deeply sorry that we have soiled our robes of righteousness and hurt our gracious Saviour, what effect does this have upon the one who truly loves God?

2Corinthians 7:9-11 _____

Note: (i) Notice that one of the responses felt by the offender, is a sense of indignation toward his own sin. The sin is loathsome to the Christian and he pleads for its removal from his life. Conscious that he has offended and hurt the Saviour whom he loves so dearly, he turns with tears of shame and remorse to Him and longs for the compassionate arms of Jesus to again enfold him.

If you have made mistakes, you certainly gain a victory if you see these mistakes and regard them as beacons of warning. Thus you turn defeat into victory, disappointing the enemy and honouring your Redeemer. E.G.White, Christ's Object Lessons p. 332

(ii) The clean robes of righteousness are by the cleansing of every sin (Revelation 7:14; 1 John 1:7, see also lesson 5, Q.6.).

12. What does God promise to do with the sins of the penitent.

Psalms 103:11,12 _____

Micah 7:18,19 _____

13. How does God react when we sin unwittingly?

Acts 17:30a. _____

14. When we become aware of the point on which we faltered and our sin is revealed, what does God now require us to do in the light of our expanding knowledge concerning our sinful character?

Acts 17:30b. _____

1Peter 1:14-16 _____

15. What was Paul's understanding of his position in regard to his growing into the character of Jesus Christ?

Philippians 3:12,13 _____

16. How does Paul express his objective and determination concerning this matter?

Philippians 3:14 _____

17. Looking at this example of Paul, we are admonished to be of the same mind. Where we are deficient in striving for the attainment of the character of Christ (see vv. 7-10), what will God do for us?

Philippians 3:15 _____

Job 34:32(a) _____

18. To the point we have already attained, or know and understand God's will for us, what does He require us to do with this knowledge?

Philippians 3:16 _____

Job 34:32(b), compare John 8:11 _____

19. So then, to what extent does God expect us to obey and serve Him?

1Kings 8:61 _____

Note: "As at this day" is a term that means "current", or "as it exists today" (e.g. Jeremiah 44:2,6). In other words, God only requires us to live up to the knowledge and light that we have today. Tomorrow, we will understand God's plan and direction for our lives a little better. Thus with our growing knowledge of what God deems to be righteousness and by walking according to that rule, we are made after His likeness and image (Colossians 3:10, 2Corinthians 3:18).

It may now be appreciated that our growing up into the image of Christ is progressive, it is the work of a lifetime. As long as we live, we shall be

co-operating with the Spirit of Christ for the eradication of every sinful trait of character. Yet, at every point along the way, while ever we are allowing Christ to work in us, to will and to do of His good pleasure, we are working out our salvation (Philip.2:12,13). This is surrendering to Christ in every respect that we know and God counts us as perfect or righteous (Philip.3:15; 1Kings 8:61). What we lack in knowledge and experience, the righteousness of Christ supplies, should we die at any point along the way, we are "in Christ" and assured of a home in His kingdom. But this blessing is not for the sluggard (2Peter 1:5-11; Mark 13:37).

When God reveals to the Christian some point in which he is a transgressor, the Christian despises his sin. The revelation reminds him that he needs a Saviour. With weeping he seeks forgiveness, that the vileness he sees in himself will be cleansed in the blood of Jesus. O how he loves his Redeemer.

20. State one example of an individual who died in Christ, not having the opportunity to live a full life and practice the conquering of all his cultivated and inherited sinful characteristics and yet was saved?

Luke 23:39-43 _____

Note: If this man had been given a full pardon and released, he would have lived a changed life and forsaken his old ways, because his heart was changed.

WILFUL IGNORANCE

If we adopt an attitude such as, "if I do not know, then I do not have to do it!" and so minimise our study of God's teaching, it means only one thing --- we love sin more than we love God! There is not one text in all the Bible that offers salvation to such half hearted "Christians" (Jeremiah.29:13; Proverbs.1:22-33). Cleanse your hands ye sinners and purify your hearts ye double minded (James 4:8).

21. How does Jesus view the worship practices and the religion of those who give lip service and not heart surrender?

Matthew 15:7-9 _____

Compare Luke 6:46-49 and Proverbs 28:9 _____

22. What instrument does Christ use, that we may grow up into Christ, begotten, as sons and daughters of God?

James 1:18 _____

John 6:53,63 _____

1Peter 2:2 _____

Note: To be begotten of God is to be adopted as a child of God (Galatians 4:5; Romans 8:14,15; 1Corinthians 4:15).

23. What warning does God give to His people concerning the non-acquisition of knowledge?

Hosea 4:6 (a) _____

Acts 3:22,23 _____

Note: (i) This instruction is equally valid in the realm of temporal things, as well as in spiritual things. If we put as much effort into securing our salvation as we do into gaining some earthly objective, or career, we should not fail of attaining everlasting life (Colossians 3:17,23; Ephesians 4:1).

(ii) "That prophet" whom we should hear and obey is Jesus Christ (Deuteronomy 18:18,19; John 4:19,25,26).

24. If men choose to ignore or reject the things that God has given unto them for their salvation, what did God say He would do with them and their children?

Hosea 4:6 (b) _____

1Corinthians 14:37,38 _____

Note: The Greek word AGNOEO translated "ignorant", means by implication, to ignore through disinclination. The ignorant miss out on much and ignorance will not spare hardship. For example--

smoking causes cancer. Ignorance of the fact will not prevent the smoker developing the disease.

25. State God's counsel concerning our opportunity and privilege to learn.

Proverbs 22:17-21 _____

26. If we wilfully neglect the guidelines and warnings that God has graciously given us, what is sure to follow? Notice the attitude of the people and results of that attitude concerning the antediluvian world (before the flood of Noah's day).

2Peter 3:3-7 _____

27. If we want God to be very near to us, what must be our determination and conscientious undertaking?

James 4:8 _____

2Chronicles 15:2 _____

28. Job was given counsel concerning his relationship with God. What was recommended to him as a means of making that relationship all that it can be?

Job 22:21-26 _____

Note: The story of Job is an account of a true saint who was sorely tried for his faith. Though misunderstood by other people, he maintained his integrity and was finally delivered, by God, through his trial to be triumphant (Compare Luke 22:31,32).

29. How did God describe the character of Job?

Job 1:8 (b) _____

30. What was Job's state of mind and conduct?

Job 1:8 (c) _____

Note: To "eschew" is to shun or abstain from.

Ask yourself the question -- Would Job have received this high appraisal of God through being indolent concerning his knowledge of God's word, or by being indifferent toward knowing God? (Notice Job 34:32)... YES / NO

31. Though a faithful Christian, did Job regard himself as faultless?

Job 9:20,21 _____

Note: If Job considered that he had finally arrived at overcoming all of his sin, known and unknown, this alone would prove him deluded, self-righteous and corrupt. Compare Q.14,15.

Hence, while we may not indulge any known sin, we realise our efforts in righteousness are of poor quality. However, Christ helps us and strengthens us to grow and become stronger in righteousness. What we lack in holiness, the righteousness of Christ makes up, in our reconciliation before God (Colossians 2:10 also see lesson 5 page 2,3.). But the righteousness of Christ will never be placed over a defiled character (Zechariah 3:4). Christ's character in the life is not a veneer that we put on show, but the very centre of our thinking.

32. What does the Bible say about the growth of the righteous, those who have clean hands?

Job 17:9 _____

Psalms 24:3-6 _____

Isaiah 40:31 _____

THE REWARDS OF DILIGENCE

33. In what proportion do we receive the blessing of God?

Matthew 9:29 _____

Psalms 18:20-24 _____

34. Our faith enables us to seek God and to please Him. What blessing does this bring with it?

Hebrews 11:6 _____

35. How do we develop faith?

Romans 10:17 ; 1Peter 2:2 _____

Note: The diligence is in searching God's word and applying what it says, while ignorance and slothfulness will find their own reward --- the loss of the kingdom of God.

When the true Christian sins, he is learning more about himself and the areas of his life where he sees defects of character and the need to seek special help from Christ, that such defects will be removed and not recur. As these victories are gained daily, he finds his walk with God purer and sweeter and there is born within a love for God and a love for the holy life.

If the random sins of the Christian are allowed to continue unchecked and he seeks not the Lord with tears of true repentance, they will be his destruction. Holding on to one known sin, leaves us open to the attacks of Satan and brings untold misery and failure.

36. What is the end of the person who has been a faithful Christian and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ for any period of time and then becomes negligent and indifferent toward seeking God?

Ezekiel 18:24 _____

Hebrews 3:14 _____

Revelation 2:4,5 _____

37. True repentance brings a change in behaviour. How does God regard those who sin and repent, sin and repent, over the same fault day after day?

Jeremiah 15:6,7 _____

Galatians 5:1,13; 1Peter 2:16 _____

Note: God's deliverance for the Christian who may falter, is not a licence to sin, but a safety net for those who truly are working by the power of the Spirit of Christ to remove every sin from their life (1John 2:1,2). The harbouring of one known sin, will undermine every attempt to purify and sanctify the soul in all other areas. If the same sin is continually besetting us, we need to examine ourselves whether we are really in the faith (2Corinthians 13:5; 1John 5:18).

38. When we see that we are beset by a particular sin (habit), what counsel do we receive from God?

Hebrews 12:1 _____

39. And where should we look to make possible, that which we have been attempting and yet failing to do?

Hebrews 12:2 _____

Note: Remember, all of Christ's biddings are enablings

WHY DO WE SIN?

Why does the Christian sin when he has "surrendered" to Christ?

1. Departed from God. Become slack, indifferent, or complacent over Bible study and prayer (Matthew 13:18-23; Luke 21:34-36; Hebrews 3:12).
2. May be retaining some secret sin (James 2:10,11; Psalm 19:12; 66:18).
3. Nurturing unholy thoughts (Proverbs 23:7; Matthew 12:33-35). Linger about temptation. Exposing ourselves needlessly to unholy things (Matthew 6:13). For example: TV program, corrupt company and impure conversation (Philippians 4:8; Proverbs 27:15; Exodus 23:1,2; 1Cor.15:33; Pro.13:20).

4. Weakened through overwork, stress or ill health. Temperance in work and eating is paramount to salvation (1Corinthians 9:25-27; Luke 21:34).

5. Failing to call upon God for deliverance at the moment of temptation (See Lesson 5, pages 7,8; 2Corinthians 12:8,9; Hebrews 4:16; Luke 18:1; Luke 21:36; 1Thessalonians 5:17).

6. Inexperience. When we have learned to call upon God for victory over every sin, Satan knows he is beaten. He then changes his approach and comes again with unfamiliar sophistries. These new methods of Satan may cause us to falter, because we do not recognise the danger and the subtlety (1Peter 5:8). After the event, all is clear and we, with humility and repentance, turn back to God. Now with this new knowledge, we are better able to recognise sin and avoid it. With the next similar temptation, we will call upon God for help and gain the victory, as with other temptations (Hebrews 5:11-14).

7. Pride. We may think we are especially favoured of heaven and cannot fail. Or believe ourselves to be stronger than we really are, having had a few victories over temptation we think we can stand. We imagine we are doing well and walk in our own strength. Feeling self-sufficient we have little sense of our need for the power of God to keep us from falling (1Corinthians 10:12).

TWO CASE STUDIES

a) MOSES

40. What instruction did God give to Moses on an occasion of supplying water to Israel?

Numbers 20:8 _____

41. What did Moses do in carrying out the simple instruction?

Numbers 20:10,11 _____

Note: Neither God nor we can ever excuse sin, regardless of the provocation, or attempts to justify it (Consider the suffering of Christ Hebrews 12:3-4). In this situation Moses was under extreme anxiety over the continual complaining of the Israelite people and their total disregard for what God had done for them (Numbers 20:1-5). While under this distress and notwithstanding that Moses was the meekest man that ever lived (Numbers 12:3), he manifested impatience and failed to draw the people to God as their Deliverer. Though Moses had fallen, it did not defeat him. He rose again to continue to serve his God in obedience, but was yet to suffer the indignation of the Lord.

42. What discipline was imposed upon Moses as a result of the indignation of the Lord?

Numbers 20:12 _____

43. Moses rose above his faults and proved to be a faithful servant of the Lord. Placing his sin behind him, he pressed forward to obey God in all that he knew. What commendation did Moses receive from God?

Deuteronomy 34:10 _____

b) ELIJAH**44. Another figure prominent in God's list of prophets was Elijah. How is Elijah described, compared with ourselves?**

James 5:17 _____

45. Did Elijah at any time display a decline in faith?

1Kings 19:1-4 _____

46. What did he do and how did he feel?

1Kings 19:3,4 _____

47. What prompted this reaction?

1Kings 19:1-2 _____

48. It seems clear that Elijah's response to this situation was not what God wanted him to do. With an understanding inquiry, how did God introduce His reasoning with Elijah?

1Kings 19:9 _____

Note: While Elijah was sustained by the food brought to him by the angel (1Kings 19:5-8), God was not feeding him that he should flee. His flight was still motivated by his desire to run for his life. Notice his reply to God's question concerning the incident with Jezebel (1Kings 19:10). He did not say, "because you brought me here", but rather, "I was jealous for you Lord, filled with indignation, I did not like the way the people insulted and offended you (compare Exodus 34:13,14). Now they seek my life, so I fled".

Elijah was stressed and weary and allowed the fear of death to overcome his faith in God. But God did not forsake Elijah and with compassion, demonstrated that He would quietly deliver His servant. The Father also showed that His deliverance was not in the fierce display that He might have sent upon rebellious Israel.

49. What elements did God use to show Elijah that He was not in the devastating display of might?

1Kings 19:11-12 _____

50. How does God reveal Himself to His servants?

1Kings 19:12 _____

Compare Isaiah 30:15,21 _____

Refreshed with restored faith, Elijah received a new commission and returned to God's service. God promised that vengeance would be taken on the unrepentant idolaters in Israel (1 Kings 19:15-17; 1 Kings 21:17-26; 1 Kings 22:37-38; 2 Kings 9:30-37). Elijah was a man of like passion such as we are. He made a mistake and lost his faith for a time, but God loved him still. Elijah turns from his error and again, with renewed strength of faith, believed God and by His power did greater works in the service of his compassionate Saviour.

There are those who have known the pardoning love of Christ, and who really desire to be children of God, yet they realise that their character is imperfect, their life faulty, and they are ready to doubt whether their hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit. To such I would say, Do not draw back in despair. We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes; but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God. No; Christ is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Said the beloved John, "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And do not forget the words of Christ, "The Father Himself loveth you. He desires to restore you to Himself, to see His own purity and holiness, reflected in you,. And if you will yield yourself to Him, He that hath begun a good work in you will carry it forward to the day of Jesus Christ.

Pray more fervently; believe more fully. As we come to distrust our own power, let us trust the power of our Redeemer, and we shall praise Him who is the health of our countenance.

The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that

Satan's delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you.

No deep-seated love for Jesus can dwell in the heart that does not realize its own sinfulness. The soul that is transformed by the grace of Christ will admire His divine character; but if we do not see our own moral deformity, it is unmistakable evidence that we have not had a view of the beauty and excellence of Christ. E.G.White, Steps to Christ page 64-65.

It is significant that it was Moses and Elijah who appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3). Moses was a representation of all the righteous who died in Christ and who will receive of the first resurrection to eternal life (John 5:28,29). Elijah was a representation of all those who are faithful followers of Jesus Christ and are alive at the time of His appearing. They will be translated without seeing death, even as Elijah also was taken up into heaven without having tasted of the death of this body (2Kings 2:1,11). See 1Thessalonians 4:15-17, for the translation of the righteous living and the raising of the righteous dead at the same time, that is, when Jesus comes.

What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus, when men who are like us, can make a mistake, put it behind them and not repeating their old sins, press on to serve God in purity and righteousness, ever growing more like the spotless Saviour they behold (2Corinthians 3:18).

When a Christian sins, he learns from that experience how NOT to do it again. Then, with each passing day, there is seen more perfectly the beautiful image of Him after whom the mind is moulded (Eph. 4:15,21-24).