

Don't let us fall

Message October – 47



INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH REFORM MOVEMENT Youth Department of the General Conference

My dear youth:

Today we want to meditate on the main objective that each believer should have in his life of faith, and we find it in the form of a prayer in the Lord's Prayer: **“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one...”** Matthew 6:13. Yes, this must be the fundamental goal of those of us who believe and serve God, not to sin. Jesus teaches us to ask God to help us be faithful and not transgress His commandments.

Purity of heart

Possessing a pure character like that of Jesus, our model, should be our constant and permanent aspiration. The idea that we can never stop sinning is very dangerous, because this establishes a conformity to sin. That is, we will always sin because we have a sinful nature, and we cannot change. So where is the biblical teaching that we must be holy and that in Christ we can do everything? Is it possible to overcome our known sins?

Being in harmony with God's Law is compared to being pure: **“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”** 1 John 3:3. This is the work to which God calls us, to seek purity of heart, perfection of character. David put it like this: **“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”** Psalm 51:7. Everything in this life that does not help us to achieve a pure character should be considered as garbage to us, because only the

pure in heart will see God (Matthew 5:8). That is why the apostle John tells us: **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”** 1 John 2:15, 16.

Let us recall the case of Enoch. “For three hundred years Enoch had been seeking purity of soul, that he might be in harmony with Heaven. For three centuries he had walked with God. Day by day he had longed for a closer union; nearer and nearer had grown the communion, until God took him to Himself.... The first from among men to enter there. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pg. 87. This Testimony shows us that Enoch overcame his sins, that he grew spiritually, that he was more and more like God in character and that in the end he reflected in his life the character of his Creator; that is why he was taken to heaven.

Joseph, the son of Jacob, was a very tried man despite his youth. But he resolved in his heart to be pure, faithful to God in whatever circumstance he found himself involved where he went as a slave. And so it was, because when he met his brothers who had hurt him so much, he forgave and loved them, returning good for evil. Joseph becomes, through the life he lived, a prototype of Christ because he managed to reflect His character.

Paul declares what is the will of God: **“For this is the will of God, your sanctification...”** 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Purity of heart is moral perfection, full harmony with the Law of God: “The law of God is the only true standard of moral perfection. That law was practically exemplified in the life of Christ. He says of Himself, ‘I have kept my Father's commandments.’ John 15:10.” *The Sanctified Life*, pg. 80.

“The apostle Paul describes the fruit which the Christian is to bear. He says that it “is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.’ Ephesians 5:9. And again, ‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.’ Galatians 5:22, 23. These precious graces are but the principles of God's law carried out in the life.” *The Sanctified Life*, pg. 80.

Sin and temptation

Sin is moral deficiency, missing the mark, transgression of God's Law. We sin because we fall into temptation. What is temptation? Invitation to sin. There are two fronts by which we are tempted. One is the devil and his angels, they tempt us every day. We could call this kind of temptation “external” because it comes from the devil. The other kind of temptation would be internal, because possessing a sinful nature, we ourselves seek evil out of a natural inclination. **“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?”** James 4:1.

The temptation of the enemy would be used to shape his invitation to sin, the inner element of the human that makes him tend to transgression. That is, to a person who is very attracted to money, lives with this obsession, Satan knows it and will present temptations that go in this direction and that they test it to the fullest. A fairly clear example is found in Judas: “Judas had naturally a strong love for money; but he had not always been corrupt enough to do such a deed as this. He had fostered the

evil spirit of avarice until it had become the ruling motive of his life. The love of mammon overbalanced his love for Christ. Through becoming the slave of one vice he gave himself to Satan, to be driven to any lengths in sin." *The Great Controversy*, pg. 716.

Here we have what we affirmed. Satan knew Judas' attachment to money and took advantage of it; it was something that this treasurer of the group of twelve had fostered, it was by his own will and decisions that this great greed had grown in his heart. Judas decided to cultivate his deadly passion and made no effort to overcome the fatal attraction to money. Do you think he could have overcome his secret sin if he had made the decision to do so? Could he have come to love Christ more than riches? Yes, if only... Why didn't he do it? Because he got carried away, he didn't fight that terrible trend. Had he done so, Jesus would have helped him as He helped the other disciples to overcome their faults.

We are tempted every day in different ways. Being tempted does not mean that we are sinning; temptation is not a sin, it is an invitation to sin, what we decide to do depends on us.

The victory of the christian

The devil cannot force us to sin, he invites us, presses us, insists, but he cannot force us; the decision is always ours. We have to say yes before we sin and this is good news. Resisting the devil and our tendencies is our struggle.

"Nothing short of this obedience will meet the requirements of God's word. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). We cannot plead that we are unable to do this, for we have the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9). As we look into the divine mirror, the law of God, we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and our own lost condition as transgressors. But by repentance and faith we are justified before God, **and through divine grace enabled to render obedience to His commandments.**" *The Sanctified Life*, pg. 80.

In these inspired words we find the key to our victory: divine grace working in the soul. When we place ourselves by faith in the hands of Jesus, He enables us with His divine grace to overcome our tendencies and the power of the enemy's temptations. "The tempter can never compel us to do evil. He cannot control minds unless they are yielded to his control. The will must consent, faith must let go its hold upon Christ, before Satan can exercise his power upon us." *The Desire of Ages*, pg. 125.

This is very encouraging for all of us who fight every day against our inherited and acquired tendencies. Jesus grants us His grace so that we exercise the power of our will in the right direction, so that we develop habits of life that help us to detach ourselves from evil, so that we may find delight in obeying our God and refuse to offend Him with transgression. Joseph expressed it with this statement that he made to an evil woman who wanted to make him sin: "... **How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?**" Genesis 39:9.

Conclusion

It is not an ambiguous and complicated question to understand. We sin because we want to, not because temptation is impossible to resist. We sin because we do not make provision to unite ourselves in such a way to Christ that his grace surrounds us and enables us to resist, as did John, Boanerges, son of thunder, who became the “disciple of love.” We sin because we feed our sinful nature more with the garbage of this life than that of the “inner man who delights in the Law of God.”

“There are few Christians who would not be far more earnest and devoted if they knew that they had but a short time to live, or that the coming of Christ was about to take place.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pg. 84.

Resolve not to offend God. The idea that we cannot stop sinning is dangerous. Alone we cannot overcome a breath of temptation, but with the grace of Christ it is possible to overcome our inherited and acquired tendencies. I wish you the best and God bless you. Amen.

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For reflection:

1. What does the Bible teach that sin is?
2. Can we overcome sin?
3. How has God arranged that we can overcome sin?