

“WHERE DO WE TURN FOR HELP?”

Sinning Like A Christian #9

Romans 8:1-11, I Peter 4:1-6, Titus 2:1-14

October 30 & 31, 2021

A young woman named Sally took a seminary class taught by Professor Smith, who was known for his elaborate object lessons. One day Sally walked into class to find a large target placed on the wall, with several darts resting on a nearby table. Professor Smith told the students to draw a picture of someone they disliked or someone who had made them angry—and he would allow them to throw darts at the person's picture.

Sally's friend (on her right), drew a picture of another woman who had stolen her boyfriend. Another friend (on her left), drew a picture of his younger brother. Sally drew a picture of Professor Smith, putting a great deal of detail into her drawing, even drawing pimples on his face! She was quite pleased at the overall effect she'd achieved.

The class lined up and began throwing darts amidst much laughter. Some of the students threw with such force that they ripped apart their targets. But Sally, looking forward to her turn, was filled with disappointment when Professor Smith asked the students to return to their seats so he could begin his lecture. As Sally fumed about missing her chance to throw the darts, the professor began removing the target from the wall.

Underneath the target was a picture of Jesus. A hush fell over the room as each student viewed the mangled image of their Savior—holes and jagged marks covered his face. His eyes were virtually pierced out.

Professor Smith said only these words, "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*" [Matthew 25:40, KJV].<sup>1</sup>

For the last eight weeks, we've been looking at the Seven Deadly Sins affecting all of humanity. Each one of us is guilty of committing sins against God and against one another, yet we rarely take the time to acknowledge those sins, much less confess them in order to seek forgiveness for them. And we

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<sup>1</sup> (PreachingToday.com, *Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2002] pg.

live in a society today that works hard to glorify these Seven to the detriment of our nation and even our world. We have come to accept them as a natural part of our lives as humans and rarely think of what they do, not only to us, but to those around us. So we hurt others as much as we hurt Jesus Christ.

**But God saw our condition, each one of us falling prey to the sins of Pride, Envy, Anger, Greed, Sloth, Gluttony, and Lust.** And *“if (by some chance) we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us”* (I John 1:8). In fact, *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make a liar out of God, and His word is not in us”* (I John 1:10), for we are told in Scripture that *“all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

But having seen our condition, and knowing that we are separated from Him and from one another by our sin, God provided a way for us to become reconciled and forgiven. He provided His own Sacrifice for us, to take away our sins and pay the penalty for those sins and to bring redemption to us.

And we heard that Good News in Romans 8. Paul tells us, *“There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit, which brings us life in union with Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death. What the Law could not do, because human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin in human nature by sending His own Son, who came with a nature like man’s sinful nature, to do away with sin. God did this so that the righteous demands of the Law might be fully satisfied in us who live according to the Spirit, and not according to human nature”* (8:1-4).

**We, on our own, cannot find forgiveness for our sins.** On our own we suffer the penalty of the Seven Deadly sins. Even if we were to try to give up Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Greed, Gluttony and Lust, we would still be separated from God because of our sinful human nature. You see, *“to be controlled by human nature results in death...”* (8:6), and on our own there is no escape from the result of sin. But God is gracious to us as we give ourselves over to the remedy of sin, Jesus Christ our Savior. He has already paid the price for our sin, so when we come to Him and claim Him as the One who has taken our penalty upon Him, we see that He *“saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but*

*because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7). **We are able to receive forgiveness of our sins and find cleansing from all our unrighteousness only because of what Jesus has already done for us.***

But if we continue to live according to the ways of this world, living according to our human nature, we cannot obey the Laws of God because we are His enemies (Rom. 8: 7). And as long as we live according to the ways of this world, we can do nothing to please God and gain His blessing (Rom. 8:8). Embracing the Seven Deadly Sins into our own lives and accommodating to the ways of our society, does not bring us life, but death.

Yet, when we give up the things of this world and turn to the things of God, we give up our dependence of things of this world and we begin to depend upon the ways of the Holy Spirit, who guides us and empowers us to live according to the ways of God. **And as the Spirit of God lives in us, we become His children, cherished and beloved of God.** Yes, we are all God’s creation. Yes, God loves us all very much and desires that we turn to Him to find life, but we are not children of God until we claim the work of Salvation that Jesus has done for us and give our lives over to Him. Only then can we become the children of God. *“Those who are led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons [and daughters]. For the Spirit that God has given you does not make you slaves and cause you to be afraid; instead, the Spirit makes you God’s children...”* (Rom. 8:14-15). If, however, we do not have the Spirit of God in us, we do not belong to God, and we are not considered His children, since we live as His enemies and follow our own human nature instead of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9). Only as children of God, having the Spirit of God living in us after we claim Jesus as our Savior, do we find it possible to have forgiveness and grace provided through Christ.

So as we find ourselves living according to the ways of this world, we become overwhelmed by the Seven Deadly Sins, and our only hope for real life is to turn from the things of this world and turn to

Jesus Christ. **Only He gives us real life as we trust in Him and claim His sacrifice paid for our sins.**

Redemption happens as we let Jesus Christ transform our life by the power of His redeeming grace. That means that we turn away from our trust in this world and let Jesus guide our hearts and minds, so that we no longer conform to the ways of this world (Rom. 12:2), but completely change our minds and lives to follow the commands of Jesus.

I Peter 4:1-6 describes this change that takes place within us as we turn to Jesus Christ as our Savior. **When we surrender our lives to Jesus, God's will becomes our own will, and we strive to please the Lord in all that we do (I Pet. 4:2).** We no longer seek to satisfy our own personal pleasures (Lust); we no longer look at building ourselves up to be better than anyone else (Pride); we no longer view the things of this world as our own to indulge in every delight (Gluttony); we do not seek to amass huge stockpiles of material wealth and possessions (Greed); we no longer compare ourselves with one another (Envy); we no longer rely upon the efforts of others to live, but work hard for the Lord (Sloth); we no longer try to get even when others do us harm or injustice (Anger). The sins of this world evaporate from our lives as we focus on serving Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master.

But when you make those changes in your lives, don't expect the worldly people around you to stand up and applaud your efforts. No, they will be confused by your changes, and many times they will ask "What happened to you?" They will see the difference, but now, because you are no longer conforming to the ways of this world, they will become irritated with you, that you are no longer joining them in the practices of the world (indecent, lust, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and the ... worship of idols) (I Pet. 4:3-4). They will chastise you for not joining along with them anymore. They will belittle you for falling away from their association. They will even turn their backs on you and "unfriend" you. But that's ok! It is only an indicator that you have chosen the better path in your life, to follow Jesus rather than the things of this world. You may even lose all of those you thought were your friends. But those who are also seeking to follow Jesus will truly be your friends, not just party buddies.

Oh, yes, the people around you will notice the difference in you, but the hope is that they will see

the positive differences in your life and they will begin to question you, so that you have the chance to explain the difference that Jesus makes in your life when you come to trust in Him. **As your life demonstrates positive changes, it will be like a blazing lamp in the darkness that surrounds you.** Many will try to turn you away from that light in order to get you to once more conform to the ways of the world, but as you cling to Jesus Christ and allow His Holy Spirit to live in you, you will now become the best advertisement for the cause of Christ.

Your life will become a dazzling witness to the world of the power of Jesus. And in this way *“the Good News [will be] preached also to the dead, to those who had been judged in their physical existence as everyone is judged...”* (I Pet. 4:6). Your life will be a living testimony of what their lives can be too, if they were to receive the Good News of Jesus Christ and allow Him to guide and direct them into Salvation as well.

You see, people are not likely to judge you based upon a sermon. They might not even be very impressed with your personal testimony. **But what they will see the most clearly is the way you live your life in the midst of this world.** And that is what the Apostle Paul instructs his *“true son in the faith,”* Titus (Titus 1:4). Listen to how Paul guides Titus. This is Titus 2:1-15. (READ Titus 2:1-15).

**What an outstanding call for each one of us in our own lives.** We are told, *“...As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him”* (Colossians 2:6) in such a way that others can only see Jesus through you. It will not be easy for you, because most folks today walk according to the ways of this world and are ignorant of the things of God. You will be living in stark contrast to our culture, but as you come to know Jesus as Lord of your life, you will be able to demonstrate the difference between the things of this world and the things of God. Then you will be able to stand up against the injustices and errors of this world, not only by what you say, but most essentially by what you do.

Titus is charged with teaching those around him to be different than the world. **He is to *“instruct the older men to be sober, sensible, and self-controlled; to be sound in their faith, love, and endurance”* (2:2).** You think that would be a good idea for our own world today? Yes, of course. Do

you think it would be an easy thing to do in our world today? Not at all, because so many are accustomed to following their own human nature that they have given up the things of God.

However, the older men of the church are the ones who have the greatest influence in our society today. If we were to live following God's standards, rejecting the Seven Deadly Sins in our own life and following the commands of Jesus, what a complete difference our cities, our states, our nation and our world would see. Just think what life would be like if the older men would stand up for the ways of the Lord?

However, that's the easy part of Titus' work. The harder part in our society today is the training of the older women "*to behave as women should who live a holy life. They must not be slanderers or slaves to wine. They must teach what is good, in order to train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, and to be good housewives who submit themselves to their husbands, so that no one will speak evil of the message that comes from God*" (Titus 2:3-5). That's not because women are worse than men, but that our society sees things differently.

Imagine the push back that folks get when they begin to instruct these things of God in our United States today? **To have older women living godly lives, conforming to the ways of God, loving their husbands and children in such ways as to encourage them to live as God has called them to live?** It would transform any city, or state or nation. But our nation has a different view of how women are to be. So we've lost the teaching of our younger women to live godly lives. Instead we flaunt the Seven Deadly Sins as worthy things to embrace in our everyday lives.

You see, Paul is inviting Titus to live in such a way as to cause a revival in the very place where he lives. And he is not just to stand up and teach it, but he is to live it, too! Paul says, "*In all things you yourself must be an example of good behavior. Be sincere and serious in your teaching. Use sound words that cannot be criticized, so that your enemies may be put to shame by not having anything bad to say about us*" (Titus 2:7-8). Our teaching comes from our faith in God's Word. And though we are not perfect in our lives, we are to live as best we can so that we are beyond fault or accusation. **It is the call**

**for all of us to choose God's ways over the world's ways** and be so drastically different, that those around us want to have those same characteristics in their life. The world is crying out for something meaningful to live by, but they only have the standards of the world by which to conform. If only we, who are followers of Jesus, will live such different lives than the world, pure and holy before the Lord, it attracts the attention of those who are sick of living the ways they are now living. When we show the world a higher standard in which to live by, they have something greater to aim for. But if we only conform to the things of this world, what more do they expect than what everybody else is doing?

And young men, don't think that you are let off the hook on all of this. **No, you younger men are to be self-controlled in all areas of your life so that you are respectable, courteous, gentle, honorable and trustworthy, hard workers for the Lord.** What a stark difference you will be if all those around you are uncontrolled in every area of their lives? Yes, it is easy to be badgered into following the crowd if you are not strong in your faith, but you are also called upon to be a witness of living outside of the Seven Deadly Sins, and inside the commandments of the Lord our God. Imagine the difference you could make if you were to take upon yourself the ways of God and live them among others around you? What differences could your life make in the lives of your friends or classmates or office workers?

*“For God has revealed His grace for the Salvation of all mankind. That grace instructs us to give up ungodly living and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this world...”* (Titus 2:11-12). That's the purpose of the Church, to encourage all people to clearly see what God has already done for us to forgive us of our sin, and then challenge the peoples to give up the ways of the world and claim the ways of God.

The Church is not an “us versus them” institution meant only for the godly and perfect. None of us is perfect, so none of us would be able to attend if it was only for the perfect. No, **the Church is for sinners in need of God's grace given to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.** The Church is to help us recognize our sinfulness, so that we can begin to do something about that sin in order to strive to follow

the commandments of God better in our lives. The Church is open to all who need their lives to change from the things of this world to the things of God. But the Church is not a place where we are to accommodate the things of the world! We are to be different than the world!

But the Church is also to be the place where God's standards are put out as what should be normal for humanity. **The Church is to be the place where the world can see hope and life and love and forgiveness demonstrated among the people as we all seek to follow Jesus.** When there is no more hope in our life after falling victim to the sins of Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Greed, Gluttony and Lust, the Church is to be the place where everyone can come to find the hope that is in Jesus Christ as they see it demonstrated and lived out in those who are a part of the Church.

Jesus "*gave Himself for us, to rescue us from all wickedness and to make us a pure people who belong to Him alone and are eager to do good*" (Titus 2:14). So we are to look to Him ONLY as our means of Salvation. We are to keep separate the things of the world and the things of God, and we are to engage in the things of God in every part of our lives. **Jesus is the only One we turn to for help out of our sinful practices of the Seven Deadly Sins.** He is the Only One who can transform our lives from evil to good. Jesus Christ is the Only Way to find a restored relationship with God.

Let's pray. Father, it is so easy for us to conform to the ways of this world and follow our own human nature. We are surrounded by a great influence calling us to just follow along and live according to what our society says is good. But You to be in the world but not of the world. For "*we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from You, so that we may know the things freely given to us by You*" (1 Corinthians 2:12). While the Seven Deadly Sins are so alluring to us, their end is only death because they separate us from You and from one another.

Thank You for providing us a means by which we can escape the eternal death that comes from living by the world's standards. Thank You for Jesus Christ, for His willingness to give Himself up as a sacrifice for our sins, so that we might freely be with You again. Keep calling us to You through Your Holy Spirit. Then, when we accept Your great love and mercy provided by the grace of Jesus, give us the heart to live for You every day of our life so that others might come to know You and follow You, too, through our witness to them. Give us the courage to live for You every day of our life. This we pray in Jesus' precious and powerful name. AMEN.