

“The Psychology of Sin”

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Scriptural Foundation: James 1:12-18, ESV

Testing of Your Faith

¹² Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸ Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Big Bill loved donuts. Every day on his way to work he passed by his favorite bakery and the smell of freshly baked donuts was too much for him to resist. He would stop his car and buy a dozen every morning. He would justify the purchase by sharing them with his co-workers, but he would usually down three or four of them himself. He made this his habit for years until Bill's doctor gravely warned Bill that if he did not do something about his diet, Bill would not live a long life. So, Bill decided to make some changes. The donuts were the first to go. He realized that he needed to change the route that he traveled to work in the morning. It was just too tempting to smell the donuts from blocks away and then to pass by that donut shop while looking through the windows at those beautiful, wonderful, tasty treats. For one whole year Bill successfully avoided those donuts by traveling another route to work. His co-workers marveled at Bill's strong resolve. They were really proud of him.

You can imagine his co-workers disappointment when Bill came in to work with two dozen donuts in his hand and some donut dust on his moustache. "What happened, Bill?" Bill, smiled and said, "It's OK. The Lord made this possible." "What do you mean?" "Well, as I was getting in my car to go to work today, I thought to myself, 'I should drive my old route to work just for old time's sake. I won't buy any donuts. I have will power now, but I would like to see the old place one more time.' About a block away from the donut shop, I caught that delicious aroma of those donuts and immediately my thoughts began to settle on the soft Bavarian crème filling the center of my favorite donut. As I drove in the direction of the store, I asked God for a sign if He wanted me to stop in and buy some donuts. I knew that the bakery was on a very busy road so I didn't want to make it an easy sign. That would be cheating. So I said, 'Lord, if you want me to buy two dozen donuts this morning, then have the parking space right in front of the donut shop absolutely open for me to park in.'" He looked at his co-workers and he said, "And would you believe it! On the sixth time around the block (laughter) that very space opened up for me!"

This cute story introduces a subject to us that is deadly serious. This story illustrates the psychology of sin as presented in James 1:12-18. Sin habits begin innocently enough. They first appear so docile and so innocuous, but these will take our very lives from us if we do not successfully put them to death.

The philosopher Seneca cried, "Oh that a hand would come down from Heaven and deliver me from my besetting sin!" Have you ever wished for that same miracle; that a hand would come down and deliver you from a besetting sin?

Remember the Apostle Paul cried out in Romans 7:24,

²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of (sin)?

We will learn today that God offers us deliverance and He offers us true freedom. This freedom is found in His Son Jesus. You and I will not gain freedom from sin by remaining passive. God calls us to be active in our fight against sin. God provides the resources. God wins the victory, but He calls us to fight.

In this study we are going to look at three aspects of sin and temptation. We are first going to consider the presence of temptation. Then we will consider the process of sin and follow through a four phase process that sin works its way in our lives. Finally, we are going to consider the prevention to sin.

James introduces us to the design of God behind the various trials that we encounter. In the first twelve verses James has considered how we are to respond in the midst of painful circumstances. James' theme throughout this letter is genuine faith versus dead faith. There are two kinds of faith within the church. There is a faith that is real and authentic. Then there is a faith that is imitation and a faith that is dead. He begins his letter by explaining that real Christian faith is patient in the midst of trials; it endures through hardship. He calls us to consider it "all joy" when we encounter external trials of various kinds. James teaches us that God designs for these painful trials to mature us in our faith and to actually bless us so that we become more like Jesus. In Verse 12, James summarizes:

¹² Blessed (happy, glad, joyful) is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

There is a future joy for the one who holds onto God in faith and in belief; who endures through trial, and this future joy, this crown of life, is promised to all those who love God. At this point, James shifts his focus slightly. He has been talking about how a believer is to respond when God sends an external difficulty or a painful circumstance into their life, but now he shifts focus, ever so slightly, to talk about internal temptation, the temptations that believers face in life to sin against God, to rebel against Him. The question that is asked is: how does genuine faith respond when we face temptation toward sin? Trials and temptations are linked in that a painful circumstance on the outside of our life can become a temptation to sin on the inside of our life. The same event that God intends to use to help us grow in faith and to bring greater joy in worship can become an event that produces a solicitation to sin.

I think of Job. God allowed and indeed God designed deep pain for Job so that Job would receive the crown of life as he endured through that suffering. After losing his wealth, after losing his children, and after losing his health he was tempted to rebel against God. You remember that Job's wife came to him and said, in Job 2:9,

⁹ "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!"

Undoubtedly, the solicitation toward evil produced a pressure upon Job's heart. "Curse God and die. It only makes sense," Job's wife said. "It is foolish to hold on to your integrity. Why would you after what God has done to you?" Job responded, in Verse 10,

¹⁰ But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

That is a great answer because he didn't say, "You are a foolish woman!" He was a wise husband. Job endured, through his trial, and he overcame the temptation that was presented at his doorstep as a result of the trial, and by God's grace, you and I can overcome as well.

James first asks us to consider the presence of temptation in our life, as we see in Verse 13,

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

In this fallen world everyone is tempted to do evil. No one is exempt. Temptation is not merely a possibility in the life of a believer. Temptation is an absolute certainty for everyone – the most godly, the most holy, the most righteous, all the way down to the very least. Temptation is the common experience of every human being. How we deal with, or respond to, temptation will reveal what we really are. Everyone looks good apart from the enticement of sin. Everybody can follow God when there is no enticement working inside of us to lure us away, but what happens to our faith and to our Christianity when we are lured by temptation to resist God's will and God's design?

Warren Wiersbe defines temptation this way: "It is an opportunity to accomplish a good thing in a bad way." For instance, it is a good thing to receive a high mark on a final exam in school, but temptation entices us to cheat in order to accomplish it. It is a good thing to enjoy food that God has given for the strength of our body, but temptation entices us to gorge ourselves on it. It is a good thing to enjoy intimacy in the context of marriage, but temptation entices us to

find sexual pleasure outside of the marriage covenant. Temptation is often an opportunity to accomplish a good thing in a bad way.

Friends, I wish I could shield us all from temptation, but you will be tempted and we will be tempted strongly. Temptation is always personal and varied. Temptation is suited to our own personal weaknesses, to our own personal habits, to our own pleasures. What tempts you may not tempt me. What tempts me may not tempt you. The kinds of temptations we experience will change with the circumstances of life. What tempts us at age twenty will not tempt us at age ten. What tempts us at age eighty will not tempt us at age forty, but we will be tempted every day we live in this fallen world; expect it, anticipate it, prepare for it, and fight against it. Sometimes we can begin to think that the temptations we face are different from the temptations which other people face and that they are much stronger. No they are not. Listen to the New Living Translation of 1 Corinthians 10:13, which is a key passage and one I encourage you to memorize,

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful.

So, let us not give ourselves a pass to cave in to temptation because we believe that our temptations are somehow unique. James continues in Verse 13 by warning us not to blame God for our temptations when he says,

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

Unlike the Roman gods of the pantheon, of the pagan world of James’ day, God, the True God, is not vulnerable to temptation and He does not bring temptation to the earth. God, by nature, is perfectly and infinitely Holy. Temptation has no affect upon Him. Let us not relieve ourselves of the responsibility to obey God in the midst of temptation by thinking that somehow God is culpable for bringing temptation to us and that God is somehow culpable even for our own sin. God is not culpable at all in the midst of our temptation. God does design trials, these external and painful circumstance, to test our faith and to build us up so that we will become more mature and more pure in our worship, and indeed even more joyful in our intimacy with Him. God brings trials to strengthen our faith, but God never brings a temptation to sully our faith and to dirty it.

James says, “Let no one say . . .” He says that because it is tempting to say exactly that. In the midst of our temptations, we talk to ourselves and sometimes we tell ourselves the truth. That is a good thing, but sometimes we tell ourselves lies and that only makes us more vulnerable.

James says, “Let no one say . . ., don’t speak this lie to your heart, because if you speak this lie to your heart you become so weakened by it and so vulnerable to the temptation.”

Satan would love to deceive us into thinking that God is somehow behind our temptations. If we start thinking that way then the downward logic follows: “Well, Lord, I would not sin if You Lord had not put me in this tough spot; if you would not have brought this temptation right in my face. It is Your fault too!” Or, “God, You made me with these strong inner drives and with these strong desires. If You had not made me with these strong drives I would not have given myself to them. If you really wanted to keep me from sin, You would have kept me from these desires. You made me this way!”

James is very explicit, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God. Do not put the blame on God in any way when you are facing temptation and an enticement toward evil.’” God is too pure to be tempted with evil and He will in no way tempt anyone with sin.

Paul adds that the only part that God has in the midst of our temptation is the part of protection; it is the part of provision. God promises, in the midst of our temptations, to protect us in such a way so that while we will experience temptations we will never experience the kind of temptation that overwhelms us and that is impossible to withstand, and furthermore, in the midst of that temptation, God is going to provide a way of escape; He is going to provide a way out. Listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:13,

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

We are very prone to blame God for our temptations and to blame God for our sin. “If God would not have put us in an unhappy marriage, then...”, or, “If God would have given us success in our work, we would not be experiencing these pressures, then...”, or, “If God had not given us so much success in our work and so much increase, then...”, or, a thousand other “Ifs”. We love to shirk the responsibility of our own sin and lay the fault somehow at God’s feet.

You remember that is how our first parents did it. They established this pattern in the Garden when Satan tempted them and they ate the fruit of The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In Genesis 3:9-13, we read, that the Lord called to Adam in the midst of the Garden, after he had sinned, and Adam was hiding from Him. He was used to talking with Adam in the cool of the day and walking with him in fellowship, but Adam was hiding,

⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

Now God called that question out, not because He couldn’t find Adam, but because He wanted to confront Adam. Adam replied,

¹⁰ “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? (You didn’t have the knowledge of good and evil prior to this day. Who told you that you were naked?) Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

Adam is absolutely caught, because the effect of being ashamed of his nakedness was the effect of eating the fruit. He couldn’t deny that he ate the fruit, so what did Adam do? He said,

¹² “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”

Do you notice what Adam did? First, he passed the buck onto his wife, but he didn’t stop there and neither do you and I as we shift the blame. He said, “The woman whom you gave me, if you wouldn’t have made this woman for me I would never had been tempted. I would have been obedient to you all of my life, God.”

Eve did the same thing when God confronted Eve.

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Underlying that is a subtlety, more implicit blame against God, “The serpent whom You created and whom You put in this Garden.” Both Adam and Eve were claiming to be victims and that is something we must not do in our fight against sin; don’t ever claim to be the victim of some overwhelming temptation. When we claim to be a victim, it may make us feel better about our sin, but it will rob us of the ability to ever overcome it. It robs us of the ability to ever enjoy true freedom. James urges us away from the victim mentality that will weaken our resolve in our fight against sin. He does so by describing for us the process by which a sin takes hold in a life and then produces death.

James describes a four-step process that we must understand so that we might be better prepared to fight against it in our lives. The first phase is the phase of desire that draws us, as we see in Verse 14,

¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Underline the words “by his own desire”. The enemy we fight is us! The desire to sin is rooted inside of us. By nature we are attracted to sin and to disobedience. The root problem of our sin starts not with God. God is only good. The root problem does not even begin with this rebellious world that pressures us and squeezes us into its mold, or with the Devil himself. The root problem of sin is our own flesh and it is our own desires; desires that are inside of us and that are a part of us, and desires that we are culpable for and responsible for.

As believers, we are given a new nature when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, a new heart that loves God and wants to follow Him, but while we are living in this fallen world we also have another principle inside of us that contradicts this new nature that wants to love God and follow Him and do His will. The Apostle Paul calls this “the law of sin”, which is described as being “indwelling sin”. He describes it this way in Romans 7:21-23,

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

Paul is a believer and that is why he says, “I want to do what is right.” Only a believer says that with full, genuine faith.

²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

This law of sin attempts to push us around all day long. It seeks to settle down in us and make us live with it peaceably and without a fight. This law of sin wants to make peace and it wants to have tea and crumpets with us, but the peace that this indwelling sin offers is the peace of surrender. If we yield ourselves over to it, then this indwelling sin will have no problem in our lives, but this indwelling sin, this law of sin, must be considered as a terrorist which has no place in this sphere and no authority; a terrorist which must be put away.

I like what G. K. Chesterton wrote: “If a rhinoceros were to enter this restaurant now, there is no denying he would have great power here. But I should be the first to rise and assure him that he had no authority whatever.” That is a great word picture. This indwelling sin is our rhinoceros, and if you saw a rhinoceros walking through this sanctuary, you would realize that it has great power here and would rightly so be frightened of it, but we will also say that we are going to do everything in our power to keep this rhinoceros outside of the building. It has no place here and no authority and it does not belong. That is the way indwelling sin is in regard to our lives. It tries to bully us and push us around, but it has no authority because Jesus Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords has taken residence in our hearts.

Be careful, this fleshly desire to put our interests above God’s is so much a part of us that we might not be aware of its presence, but it is always present and always active. Sin starts, James teaches us, with the passions, these desires inside of us, to pursue our joy outside of God and we are always responsible for those desires.

The second phase is that enticement deceives us. Again, we look to Verse 14,

¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

After our internal, fleshly passions become active, we then are “lured and enticed” by them. The term “lured” is a hunting term. It references an animal being drawn away by bait that is placed in a trap. So, we have a trap and we have an animal that is being drawn to the bait, but it is a trap that seeks to take this animal’s life. My son, Alexander, several years ago wrote a poem that I thought was pretty good. It is entitled, “Peanut Butter Checkmate” and it has sort of a rap feel to it.

Now there once was a mouse
Who lived in a house
And then one day
I think it was in May
He saw a piece of peanut butter

It sat on a little piece of wood
He went over there and there he stood
It looked great
But it was only bait
The trap snapped
And now he's in a checkmate
A peanut butter checkmate

Alexander is not Robert Frost, but this poem communicates the idea that James is teaching us. First, there is a desire inside, then some bait on the outside that attracts us toward sin.

James also uses the term, “enticed”. This term is also familiar to outdoorsmen, but this time to fishermen rather than hunters. The picture is of a fish being lured toward a hook by some attractive worm or fly upon it. The purpose of bait is to make the situation for the fish seem like it is something that it is not. It seems like a free meal, but that is what it is not. It makes to seem like something it is not so that the fish will do something that they otherwise would not do. The smart fish will not typically bite down on a bare hook. You have to present the hook with something attractive and something winsome so that the fish thinks that the hook is really a free, juicy worm for the taking then that fish will

swallow the bait and the hook as well. This is the second phase of sin! It is a phase in which some circumstance seems to us to be something that it is really not so that we would do that which we otherwise would not.

Sin never starts with the bait. It starts with a desire. If the fish had no taste for worms, then worms would not attract fish. We have a taste for various kinds of sin and that is where sin begins. Temptation presents some bait to us that our natural man finds attractive. What is bait to you might not be bait to me, but the temptation also conceals the fact that there is a hook underneath; that there is a snare. Temptation always promises to give us something we want in exchange for our lives so that is the reason why sin is such a foolish exchange. If we only could see clearly enough, we would never bite down on the bait because we would know that it is just simply not worth it.

How can we become wise enough to recognize that temptation hides the trap? When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He relied on God's Word and only as we set the Scriptures constantly before us will we be able to see that the lure and the enticement is really a call to death. We must meditate on God's Word day and night so that we might overcome the enticement of sin. The Bible alone exposes the hook of temptation to us.

The third phase is that sin develops inside of us. We read in Verse 15,

¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin...

James now changes his metaphors from hunting and fishing to the metaphor of the conception of a baby in the womb, the birth of a baby, the growth of that baby, and ultimately the death of that baby. He says that when fleshly desire is fed it eventually will conceive sin and then give birth to it.

How long is there between the encouragement of a sinful desire, the enticement, and the birth of sin itself? Well, in physical terms, for a human baby it is nine months of time separating those two events – the conception that starts off in these desires and in the birth of sin.

Some of you, right now, are feeding a desire and you kind of feel good about feeding that desire because you are saying to yourself, "Well, it has not produced sin. It is okay. I can continue to feed this desire and yet stay away from actual sin." This desire can be fed through friendships, through entertainment, and through various kinds of activities. Friends, let us not be fools. We must know that when a sinful desire is conceived in the heart it is only a matter of time before it gives birth to sin. Just because it has not given birth to sin yet doesn't mean that it won't. It always will. That is the process. That is what James is warning us about, so let us be deeply concerned to take action now so that we put those desires, because if we don't those desires will give birth to sin.

So, we follow this process. First, desire appeals to our emotions and our feelings, and we say, "Oh, that seems like it would feel right!" Then, after we are drawn toward sin by our feelings, we experience the enticement to sin and that appeals to our thinking. It is distorted thinking and deceived thinking, but it is our thinking, "That looks like something that would really benefit me." Then, finally, after our emotions and our thinking are drawn away, then our will is engaged and we give ourselves to sin and we decide to sin.

What is sin? I like this definition: sin is any attitude or desire or action that explicitly breaks a commandment of Scripture, or comes from a heart of unbelief, or is not done for the glory of God.

The fourth phase is the saddest phase,

¹⁵ ...sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Sin always murders the person who invites it home. James is not only talking to non-Christians who sin. He is not just referencing eternal death, though that certainly is in view; being separated from God forever. He is telling us that, whether we are Christian or non-Christian, sin always brings death – all kinds of death. A genuine believer need not fear eternal death – condemnation – but a believer will experience horrible, painful, sad death in so many ways when he or she sins. Sin will bring death to joyful worship, to fellowship with God, to peace of heart, to freedom from the weight of guilt, to human relationships, to intimacy with God, to fruitfulness in service, to eternal reward, to happiness in God, to clarity of vision about life, to the ability to encourage others. So many things so precious are brought to death as a result of sin, but please underline this and mark what James is saying, "Sin will always bring death," so he says in Verse 16,

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

You can almost hear James heart break as he knows that there are so many who have been deceived in exactly the same way and they are about ready to experience death.

How long is it before one is born to the day that one dies? These sinful desires, after they are conceived, give birth to sin, but then there is also a lag of time in this next process. Eventually it brings forth death. Sometimes a person sins and they look around and they say, “Well, nothing happened! I thought the ceiling would cave down upon me the moment I gave myself over to that sin and it didn’t happen. I escaped.” They think that they can continue on, but how long after the birth of a baby before it dies? Sometimes it is immediate and they die the moment they are born. Some sins bring forth death immediately, but not all of them do. Sometimes it is one hundred years later before that death is experienced, but be assured that sin always will bring for death and when it does there will be eternal regret over that.

Now we consider the prevention to sin. How do we stop sin? First, James’ whole presentation of this is to say, “Stop it early!”

I have had a little difficulty with some skin cancers of a couple of different kinds. Recently I saw another spot on my back. What did I do? I thought, “The smartest thing is to call the doctor now. Not a year from now and not two years from now. Let’s call the doctor now.” He got me in the next day and he removed a small piece. He didn’t say, “Let’s wait for a year to see what happens.” No, he said, “Let’s look at this now, because it is really foolish to deal with something that could bring forth death if we delay. Let’s take care of it now. Today is the day. Let’s not wait until tomorrow or next week.” The best time to take care of sin is in the earliest phase.

James offers one huge principle to prevent this whole process from moving forward and this is what he says in Verse 17,

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

The one, huge principle that James presents to us, to be a help to us in the midst of this process, to prevent it, and to move forward in righteousness is belief in God’s goodness. Sin is always an act of unbelief. Sin causes us to choose to believe something about God that is not true. That is why theology is so immanently practical; we won’t be able to live Godly lives without sound doctrine. James now takes us from a very practical issue, the issue of temptation, and he pushes us deep into the doctrine about God’s character and of His nature.

If we believe that God was good, then we would believe that He gives good gifts and we would want them. Sin whispers to us, “God is not good. His gifts are not good. I have something good for you.” Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and it comes down from the Father of lights and with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. God was good at the beginning. He is good now, and He will be good forever and ever. He will not ever change in His goodness.

When Satan tempted Eve, he said, “If God were good, He would not withhold the knowledge of good and evil from you,” and Eve believed him. When Satan tempted Jesus, He said, “If your Father was good, He would not keep you so hungry in this desert! He would not withhold the kingdom from you. I am willing to give it to you right now!”

Friends, I know that it often seems as though there is goodness to be experienced outside of God’s will, but the truth of the Scripture says that there is not. James makes four statements about God’s goodness. He says, first, God gives only good gifts. Anything that God gives, sometimes it might not seem like it is good at first, but it is good. Trust God that it is good and one day you will thank God for that gift.

Secondly, everything good finds its source in God. There is not another source for anything good.

Third, James says God gives and gives and gives some more. He says that it “comes down”. That is present tense. The idea is that He gives the way Niagara Falls gives water: continuously, generously, without ever ceasing to give.

Fourth, James says that God never changes in His goodness. He is not good one day and then stingy the next day. God is good all the time. All the time God is good!

Sin whispers: “If God were good, we would not be so lonely;” “If God were good, we would not experience such a painful trial;” “If God were good, he would not restrict my pleasures;” “If God were good, I would have more money and a better job.” Satan comes along and he sows these doubts about God’s goodness. Friends, let us root ourselves in the eternal truth of God’s goodness.

The best and clearest illustration of the goodness of God is His Son Jesus. John 3:16 tells us that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son Jesus, and with Jesus He gives the free offer of eternal life. The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus.

You and I cannot become obedient and overcome sin by simply trying harder and being a better person. We need the life of God inside of us transforming our heart and energizing us so that we would be victorious and so that we would be free. It is all by God’s grace and that is all of the act of God’s goodness to us. God’s gives us all of the resources, but we need God. That is why, as Christians, we live a life of total dependence upon Him.

Let me ask you, have you ever received the free gift of eternal life. God offers it to you in Jesus; that if you believe in Jesus you will be forgiven of your sins and you will have eternal life and a changed heart.

Remember Bill and his donuts? What shall we do when we are tempted to drive past the donut shop one more time, to enter the store, and buy a couple dozen? I want you to know that you are not alone in your fight against sin. Your fight is the fight of every Christian. God stands with you and you can win against that sin. You can win, but you must fight.

I close with practical counsel from J.C. Ryle in Thoughts for Young Men: *“For one thing, resolve at once, by God’s help, to break off every known sin, however small. Look within, each of you. Examine your own hearts. Do you see there any habit or custom which you know is wrong in the sight of God? If you do, don’t delay for a moment in attacking it. Resolve at once to lay it aside. Nothing darkens the eyes of the minds so much, and deadens the conscience so surely, as an allowed sin. It may be a little one, but it is not any less dangerous.”*

Can you reflect upon your own soul and seek to follow J.C. Ryle’s sound counsel? Whatever little sin there is, let us set it aside and let us do it right now.