

THE STRUGGLE WITH HABIT



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1. We are told to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Phil. 2:12.
2. Christians must indeed fight the fight of Faith. 1 Tim. 6:12.
3. We do not fight with sin, we fight against sin. Heb. 12:4.
4. This is so, because the justified man has been made sinless, there is no sin in him. Rom. 6:6,7,11; 1 Jn. 3:5,9.
5. It is only if he sins again that sin comes in him. (1 Jn. 2:1; Jn. 8:34).
6. It is infirmities that we have to fight against, to ensure they does not cause us to sin again. Rom. 8:26; Heb. 4:15.
7. Part of our bodily infirmities is the inclinations or leanings towards wrong things, it is the liabilities to follow a certain course of action that may not be right. This is the foundation of what we call “habit”. Rom. 6:19.
8. What is a habit? It is psychological, mental, emotional and actions conditioning towards certain ends. The dictionary tells us:

“habit ... ordinary course of behaviour; tendency to perform certain actions; custom; familiarity; bodily constitution; ... and addiction to a drug, etc.” **The Wordsworth Concise English Dictionary, pg. 432.**

“habit... A disposition or involuntary tendency to act constantly in a certain manner, usually acquired by frequent repetition; an addiction or usage; as, the habit of smoking, habit of fault finding; a customary condition, constitution or characteristic trait;...” **The Lexicon Webster Dictionary Vol. 1, pg. 433.**

9. Thus in summary, the dictionary tells us that habit is:
 - a. Ordinary course of behaviour.
 - b. The tendency to perform certain actions.
 - c. A disposition to act constantly in a certain manner, that is acquired by repeated actions.
 - d. A customary trait.
 - e. An addiction.
10. For clarity sake, we shall now look at some words that relate to habit.
 - a. Tendency: “... a trend, drift, inclination; proneness.” The Wordsworth Concise English Dictionary, pg. 1026.

“... A natural or prevailing disposition to move, proceed, or act in some direction or toward some point, end, or result... an inclination, bent, or predisposition to something; drift or trend...” The Lexicon Webster Dictionary, Vol. 2, pg. 1012.

- b. Disposition: “... natural tendency; temper; a giving over to another...” The Wordsworth Concise English Dictionary, pg. 276.

“... natural fitness or tendency; temper or emotional constitution of the mind; inclination; propensity.” The Lexicon Webster Dictionary, Vol. 1, pg. 289.

- c. Inclination: “... Tendency; disposition of mind; natural aptness...” The Wordsworth Concise English Dictionary, pg. 487.

“... A disposition more favorable to one thing or person than to another; propensity; preference... tendency, esp. of the mind or will.” The Lexicon Webster Dictionary, Vol. 1, pg. 485.

- d. Propensity: “... inclination of mind; tendency to good or evil.” The Wordsworth Concise English Dictionary, pg. 792.

“... Natural inclination, tendency, or disposition.” The Lexicon Webster Dictionary, Vol. 2, pg. 764.

11. Since Habit refers to the mental conditioning towards a pan be used to refer to habit in following ways:

- a. A habit is a tendency to act in some direction or some bent towards a particular thing.
- b. A habit is a disposition of the mind to give over to something it holds as valuable.
- c. A habit is an inclination of the mind favorable to, or in preference to choose a certain mode of action.
- d. A habit is a propensity of the mind toward good or evil.

12. All this means that habit deals with the training of the mind to be disposed to, or familiar to a certain course of action. This training is accomplished by repeating actions towards some idol-values.

“One neglect, often repeated, forms habit. One wrong act prepares the way for another. That act, repeated, forms habit.” Ellen G. White, Mind Character, and Personality, Vol. 2, pg. 599.

“Repeated acts in a given course becomes habits.” Ibid, pg. 599.

13. Thus idols, often recourse to is the foundation of bad habits. (Hos. 4:17; Isa. 1:4,5); Gen. 6:5. “Bad habits are more easily formed than good ones, and are given up with more difficulty.” **Ibid, pg. 599.**

14. Thus, at this point we can say that a habit is:

- a. A mental liability towards a certain action.
- b. A bodily liability to lean in some course of action.
- c. A cultivated proneness to some certain action, cause so by repetition.

15. The idea of having habits is not sin even though the habit may be bad. The sin is when the habit is yielded to and not resisted, when it is a bad habit.

“One safeguard removed from conscience, the indulgence of one evil habit, a single neglect of the high claims of duty, may be the beginning of a course of deception that will pass you into the ranks of those who are serving Satan, while you are all the time professing to love God and His cause.” **Ellen G. White, Mind, Character, and Personality, Vol. 1, pg. 35.**

16. Habits that are bad must be dealt with for growth or sanctification in one’s spiritual existence.

17. Since habits are the disposition of the mind formed by repeated actions upon certain things, or since habits are learned liabilities, the first need of the person is the conversion of the mind, spirit of the mind, or thoughts. Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22-24; Acts. 8:21,22.

18. By the removal of the idols or-values through justification or the new birth, and the gift of God the Spirit within the mind, God removes the source of the creation of sinful habits, and makes the person sinless. (Eze. 36:25-27; Rom. 6:6,7; Gal. 3:7-9,14; 1 Jn. 4:4).

19. The next thing is a struggle against wrong or bad habits with varying intensities, this is the struggle against bodily infirmities or liabilities. God helps us in this struggle.

“Besetting sins are to be conquered and evil habits overcome. Wrong dispositions and feelings are to be rooted out and holy tempers and emotions begotten in us by the Spirit of God. Bad habits, when opposed, will offer the most vigorous resistance; but if the warfare is kept up with energy and perseverance, they may be conquered.” Ibid, pg. 601.

“men need to learn that the blessings of obedience, in their fullness, can be theirs only as they receive the grace of Christ. It is His grace that gives Man power to obey the Laws of God. It is this that enables him to break the bondage of evil habit. This is the only power that can make him and keep him steadfast in the right path. Through the power of Christ men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the **profligate** pure. Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have become transformed into the image of God.” *ibid*, pg. 601.

20. Since habits are learned liabilities, the struggle against habits that are bad must begin with the mind. We are to learn to think only pure, holy and good things. Phil. 4:8,9.

21. We are to meditate of the Gospel, which is protracted rationalism or cognition upon the

Truth, thus we may advance spiritually. 1 Tim. 4:15,16.

22. This is the same as keeping the words of Christ or abiding in Him, that He may stay in us as our God in place of the idol-values. (Jn. 14:23, Jn. 15:4,5,7).

23. The thoughts of the mind is to be disciplined by a type of struggle that is called “continuous mental rectitude”. This is a struggle against the infirmity of a weak or undisciplined mind, it is one of persistently choosing the right thoughts, this is forming a new habit of breaking the old habits. 2 Tim. 1:13,14.

“The only security for any soul is in right thinking. As a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). The power of self-restraint strengthens by exercise. That which at first seems difficult, by constant repetition grows easy, and right thoughts and actions becomes habitual.” Ibid, pg. 601.

24. Continuous mental rectitude demands choosing to think only the right thoughts and so create a new habit which constitutes breaking the old habits. 2 Cor. 10:5.

“Many thoughts make up the unwritten history of a single day, and these thoughts have much to do with the formation of character. Our thoughts are to be strictly guarded, for one impure thought makes a deep impression on the soul. An evil thought leaves an evil impress on the mind. If the thoughts are pure and holy, the man is better for having cherished them. By them the spiritual pulse is quickened and the power for doing good is increased.” Ibid, pg. 655.

“The actual discipline of life is made up of the little things. The training of the thoughts is essential. The training of the heart, the control of the thoughts, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, will give control of the words. This is true wisdom, and will ensure quietness of mind, contentment and peace. There will be joy in the contemplation of the riches of the grace of God.” Ibid, pg. 656.

“There is earnest work before each one of us. Right thoughts, pure and holy purposes, do not come to us naturally. We shall have to strive for them.” Ibid, pg. 656.

“If the life is given into its control, the power of the truth is unlimited. The thoughts are brought into captivity to Jesus Christ.” Ibid, pg. 656-657.

“The thoughts must be trained. Gird up the loins of the mind that it shall work in the right direction and after the order of well-formed plans; then every step is one in advance and no effort or time is lost in following vague ideas and random plans... Every day the thoughts should be trained and kept to the point as the compass to the pole... The thoughts must be controlled.” Ibid, pg. 656.

“The youth should begin early to cultivate correct habits of thought. We should discipline the mind to think in a healthful channel and not permit it to dwell upon things that are evil... The thoughts must be bound about, restricted, withdrawn from branching out and

contemplating things that will only weaken and defile the soul. The thoughts must be pure, the meditations of the heart must be clean..." Ibid, pg. 657.

"The mind must engage in the spiritual warfare. Every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. All the habits must be brought under God's control. Let us place our thoughts upon holy things. Let them be pure and true, for the only security for any soul is right thinking. We are to use every means that God has placed within our reach for the government and cultivation of our thoughts. We are to bring our minds into harmony with His mind. His truth will sanctify us, body and soul and spirit, and we shall be enabled to rise above temptations." Ibid, pg. 235.

25. Individual personal effort is necessary to dehabituate by rehabilitating.

"The victims of evil habits must be aroused to the necessity of making an effort for themselves. Others may put forth the most earnest endeavor to uplift them, the grace of God may be freely offered, Christ may entreat, His angels may minister; but all will be in vain unless they themselves are roused to fight the battle in their own behalf..." Ibid, pg. 737.

26. Not only is right thought necessary for forming new habits to substitute the old sinful ones, but the constant repetition of right actions to Faith is necessary. This is called "continuous faith-directed actions." Jam. 2:14,17,18,20-24,26; Heb. 10:38.

27. Finally, in a summary, people with sin within cannot fight sinful habits, conversion to sinlessness is first necessary to discipline the thoughts to break habits that are bad; and actions of obedience to the Law of God needs to be constantly repeated to form the new habits. This clearly shows that the struggle is not a struggle with sin existing in the life, it is a struggle against sin from returning in the life, by struggling with mental infirmities called habits that are bad. (1 Jn. 5:18; Rom. 6:13,17-19,2???)

28. Thus the two things necessary in the struggle with habit are:

- a. Continuous mental rectitude.
- b. Continuous faith-directed actions.

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