



Tripping Up

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Along with many others, have you asked, “Why do I want to go back to my old ways, when I accepted Jesus as my Savior for forgiveness of my sins and my desire is to walk in unison with the righteous and holy God who made me.”

Former ways, even if not the best for us, become our comfort zone. Everyone likes comfortable, familiar feelings. It may take time to feel comfortable or accepting of new ways, even if we know it is a much better way. Here is another consideration; What happens when we don't use our muscles or exercise? We become flabby. We exercise to be stronger and healthier. In the same way, the more we say “no” to sin's ways and “yes” to God's ways, the stronger our spiritual muscles become.

Choices make up our lives. We can choose to change ways that are contrary to God's, or choose to stay the same. If we decide to follow God's way, the Holy Spirit will help us. It's important to realize we don't have to do it alone. Our heavenly Father gave us the Holy Spirit to help us:

“So, dear brothers, you have no obligations whatever to your old sinful nature to do what it begs you to do. For if you keep on following it you are lost and will perish, but if through the power of the Holy Spirit you crush it and its evil deeds, you shall live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Romans 8:12-14 TLB

Perhaps you said to yourself, “I don't want to give this up, even though I know it's wrong in God's eyes, because I like doing it.” Or, have you thought, “Maybe God made a mistake to include this in his list of things that aren't good for us to do.” Sorry, that was a nice try, but God doesn't make mistakes. Of course, some of these things may seem pleasurable for a season. Why else would we get caught up in doing the things we know are harmful in the long run – to ourselves or to others? We can't take this lightly. The Word says:

“Don't you know...you are slaves to the one whom you obey – whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness.” Romans 6:16

Recently, I heard the Lord say, “This world flounders like a fish out of water, but I have given them my instructions to lead to a good life and glorious living. But what do they do? Ignore me and the Word that I sent.”

I recently watched an awesome video about the creation of the universe that was narrated by Lee Strobel. There isn't anything more amazing to me, than seeing the details of the handiwork of Almighty God. Yet, despite his greatness, he willingly came down to us to say, “I love you.”

So why let a tobacco leaf that grows in the ground control you? Why let the fermented juice of a fruit overtake you? Some things are fine in moderation, but become harmful when overused. Why let any habit, fruit, plant or seed control you to the point of harm to yourself and/or others? Or what about letting harmful desires or emotions fester until they take control, instead of saying no to them from the start and replacing them with more appropriate thoughts. There comes a point when even our attitudes and passions need to come under our control. It helps when we keep tabs on our thoughts and what we are seeing and hearing. That's why Philippians 4:8 says:

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

It's not a matter of giving something up. It's replacing sinful or wrongful acts, or thoughts, with righteous ones. Accepting Christ enhances our lives. His blessings and favor start popping up all around. We come out from under the control of those things that were controlling us all along. We take back control of our own lives! Sometimes when this happens, we will find a burden lifted from us that we didn't even realize was there. We'll notice a sense of peace, freedom and thanksgiving. 1 John 2:17 says, “The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”

You may say, “But I've tried and I keep falling back into my old ways.” Although some people find immediate changes take place in their lives, without even trying or thinking about it, when they accept Jesus, others tend to struggle. It can be hard making changes on your own. The good news is you don't have to. God's specialty is the impossible. Agree with Paul when he said, “I can do everything through him [Christ] who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13). Yes, we have strength through Christ.

Learning to be like Christ and being the best representative of God's love that we can be is a lifelong process, no doubt about that. But God is on our side, and his love is awesome and forever.

I heard the Lord say, “Now is the time to see. Now is the time to hear. Now is the time to call upon me. I will answer, for I see and I hear the heart of all my people. Some slip into ways of old, but I didn't ordain it to be so. Live with me. Live for me. It is a new life, a life of freedom from sin, from hate and all things evil. Lay down your will and pick up my staff and I will lead you. I will guide you. Love is the centerpiece. Let love grow and expand until it encompasses all the world. Seek me and you will find me.”

Remember Jesus took the punishment for our sins, and on top of that added his righteousness to us. You are now righteous through Christ. Let him do the work for you. Instead of thinking about the sin, think about your gift of righteousness.

When Christ lives in us by the Holy Spirit, then we can and do have the victory. Why? Because Christ has already overcome the world. John tells us, “for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith,” (1 John 5:4). And who is our faith in? Jesus!

Do you understand? By faith we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior for forgiveness of our sins. In addition, we received the Holy Spirit to help, guide and teach us. It is called being

born of God or born again. God now accepts us as His children and becomes our heavenly Father. The nature of Jesus is added to ours through the Holy Spirit. Think about it: God's DNA soaring through our bloodstream! Through Him we become winners, overcomers and conquerors. He deserves our praise!!!

One evening I heard the Lord ask, "Where are my people without spot or wrinkle? I am coming for a people without spot or wrinkle."

I said, "But Lord, aren't we covered with the righteousness of Jesus?"

He answered, "My people take lightly what my Son has done for them. It is not all fun and games. It is serious business. My Son suffered for them, do they even care? My Son died for them, do they even care? It is true, my Son is the catalyst for the forgiveness of sin, but my people take it so lightly.

Where is their heart? Where is their appreciation? Where is their thankfulness for what he has done for them? They run to sin. They play with sin. It is a mockery. It makes what my Son did of no affect. They wallow in their sin with no regrets, with no repentance. They ask for no forgiveness and continue in their way. Have I not taught them my way? Have I not offered them a life of abundance filled with my love and acceptance? Where do I find my people, but hidden in the dark doing their own thing.

Come to me my people. Receive my gift of forgiveness for your sins. Then turn from those sins and follow after me with purity of heart, filled with my Holy Spirit to help you, comfort you and strengthen you. Let my love fill your life. Reign in victory. Conquer sin and put it behind you. Live in freedom. Yes, freedom from sin. It may seem pleasurable for a season, but it brings heartache and death in the long run. My way brings life, newness of life, eternal life. I long for you to experience this new life. I yearn for my people to know my love and walk it out in their own lives.

Oh, my people. See me as the God that loves you so. I'm coming back for a people without spot or wrinkle. When you accept my love, you walk in love towards others. My love flows through my Son to you and from you to others. My love is never ending."

In Romans 8:37-39, Paul wrote:

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."