
Words of Truth

What Is The Biggest Obstacle We Must Overcome?

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We know it is not easy to be saved and remain in that state (I Peter 4:17-19). We have many things that get in the way of our salvation (Acts 14:22). Sometimes our family members stand in our path and try to hinder us from our salvation (Matthew 10:34-37). Sometimes our friendships become roadblocks we have to overcome (Micah 7:5). Sometimes erring brethren become obstacles in our spiritual lives (I Timothy 1:19-20). We could create a rather significant list of obstacles we have to overcome from civil authorities (Acts 16:16-23) to the world in general (John 16:33).

Having said all of that, what do you think is the biggest obstacle we have to overcome? In considering this question we have to also consider that all of us have different challenges in life we face. A single man, such as the Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 7:6-8), does not have a wife and children that could stand in his way. A wealthy Christian faces different struggles than a poor brother or sister in Christ (I Timothy 6:6-10, I Timothy 6:17, and James 2:1-9). Again, we could list many ways in which different Christians face different challenges.

With the above facts easy to see, how could anyone say we all have one common obstacle to overcome? I ask you to ask yourself, what is that one obstacle we all have to overcome? Now, I know sin might be on your mind. Sin is a result of failing to overcome obstacles rather than an obstacle in itself (James 1:13-16). Sin cannot happen in your life without YOU being involved in what leads to sin. Now, there is a reason I capitalized YOU. The reason I did that is the one common obstacle we all share is simple. YOU [ME] are the common obstacle we must all overcome to be saved and remain in that state.

Overcoming The Obstacle Of Self

Consider this: *"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works"* (Matthew 16:21-27).

The inspired Apostle Paul wrote this: *"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they*

which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (II Corinthians 5:14-15).

Jesus said we have to deny ourselves. Paul said we cannot live unto ourselves, but must live unto Christ. Why did they teach these things? It is simple to understand why they taught self-denial. We can easily stand in our own way of salvation. How does sin occur in my life if I am not serving my own pleasures? My wants lead me to do what I want not what God wants. What is burning inside of me will come out in actions (Mark 7:21-23). If I have no desire to lie, steal, fornicate, get drunk, murder, believe something false, etc.; I won't do those things.

Aren't we supposed to live unto the pleasure of God (Revelation 4:11)? How can I be tempted if I first ask what is pleasing to God rather than pleasing unto myself (Ephesians 5:10)? Faithful Christians are not self-serving individuals. Not only do we put the obvious things of God first (Matthew 6:33), but we also put others before ourselves (I Corinthians 10:24 and Galatians 5:13). Our Lord expects us to purge our sinful desires and submit to His righteous will.

Leaving Our Desires Behind

“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:14). Jesus went so far in teaching self-denial that He laid out this extreme: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Matthew 5:27-30).

The things Jesus taught shows that it is the desire of our own flesh, not the temptations of the world we live in, which stand in our way of righteousness. Let me provide you with an illustration most I know personally will understand. The men I know here in El Paso have no sexual desires toward other men. While it is understood that homosexuality is sinful (Romans 1:18-28 and I Corinthians 6:9-10), it is a moot point. None of the men here can be tempted in this way because none of us have that desire. On the other hand, we men have desires toward women. Thus, to rightly satisfy those desires we have/had to find a wife (I Corinthians 6:16-7:5). If I cannot find a lawful wife, I have to curb that desire. I have to find a lawful way to suppress it. While homosexuality and unmarried sexual activity are both fornication, “I” am only able to be tempted wherein “I” have a desire. Thus, homosexuality is not an obstacle.

Conclusion

Sin is often incorrectly treated as an object. Sin is the act of you or I transgressing God's law (I John 3:4). What we have to understand is that sin can only occur wherein I [you] fail to overcome our own sinful desires. Thus, I [you] are the biggest obstacle we have to overcome to be saved. Consider this: *“And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:24).*