



When the Gates of Hell Prevail

By Steve Gallagher

You were doing well. Your life in God was growing. You were becoming increasingly separated from the world. It had been months since you had fallen into sin. For the first time in years you were feeling as though it was behind you. It seemed as though you were emerging from a long, dark tunnel. Your prospects looked bright. God's hand was blessing. Hope filled your heart. All of this pointed to the fact that you had crossed a line: you had finally surrendered your life to God.

Then suddenly, when you least expected it, you were bushwhacked by the enemy. Perhaps you were innocently writing emails when a pornographic email showed up in your "In Box." You were temporarily bewitched by it and found yourself opening it before you could even gather your defenses against the assault. The pull was tremendous. After it was over you felt devastated.

Or maybe an old boyfriend suddenly showed up when you were in a particularly weak state of mind. You had just been thinking how much you wish there was someone to love you, to hold you... Then your phone rang and you heard that familiar voice. The bad memories and the reasons you had cut off the relationship seemed to evaporate. "Someone to hold you..." The words seemed to echo in your mind. Before you knew what had happened, you were leaving a hotel room, so disgusted with yourself that you were physically sick.

Whatever the case may be, you need to be reminded of a few things.

First, you need to know that Jesus Christ broke the power of the enemy on the Cross. This means that as a born again believer, sin will not and cannot hold you. You may have your struggles for a time, but your victory is assured. You have the Spirit of the living God indwelling you. You will find that as your relationship with Christ grows so too will your determination and strength to resist temptation.

Just to cement this reality into your mind, consider the fact that Jesus' victory over Satan at Calvary was so overwhelming that He paraded the vanquished villain before all the powers of heaven and hell. In ancient times, it was customary for a conquering king to return home from a war with a long line of captives following in chains. The greatest

trophy was the defeated king who, bound in chains, was forced to march along in shame and humiliation before the citizens of the conquering nation.

This is precisely what Jesus did at Calvary. “...*He gallantly strode into Heaven to celebrate His victory and the defeat of Satan and his forces. As part of His triumphal process, He flaunted the spoils seized from the hand of the enemy. Yet the greatest spectacle of all occurred when the enemy himself was openly put on display as bound, disgraced, disabled, humiliated, and stripped bare...*” (Colossians 2:15 Renner)ⁱ

Once a person truly repents of his sin and submits to the lordship of Jesus Christ, Satan can no longer hold him in sin. The power of sin is broken. The best the devil can hope to do now is to try to lure him back through temptation. I pointed out his limitations in my book, *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*:

“Demons are restricted in their level of influence. I will use the Marines who were involved in espionage in Moscow in the eighties, as an illustration. The only thing these embassy guards had to worry about was allowing themselves to be duped into telling secrets. Russian agents were confined to operate within certain boundaries. They could not use torture to force the Marines to pass along military information. They could not threaten their lives or even yell at them. The only possible way they could obtain secrets was through the process of seduction. That is precisely what they did. The Russians used a beautiful woman as their ploy to entice a Marine into revealing secrets. This Marine did not place his country above himself. He may have been willing to die for his country on a battlefield, but he was unwilling to die to his own desires. He lost the biggest battle he would ever face. It was not a battle involving bullets; it was a battle with temptation.

“In the same way, when the enemy determines to plot the downfall of a believer, he can only work within the boundaries set forth by God. As Paul pointed out, ‘No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.’ (I Corinthians 10:13) The veteran apostle does not promise a life free of temptations, but rather that God will keep them within His limits and always provide a way of escape in order that the believer may continue to stand.”

Finally, you need to be reminded that failure is not final. Someone once said, “Failure is not falling down; it is remaining there when you have fallen.” That is so true! Every single believer I have ever known who has gained the victory over sexual sin did so after many defeats.

The way it typically happens is like this: The person begins to feel a growing sense of being fed up with the consequences of his sin. He is tired of being a hypocrite. At some point, in utter exacerbation with his condition, a surrender to God occurs in his heart. An emotional experience may or may not accompany this pivotal spiritual decision. From

that day forth, he begins to grow in strength. His failures become more seldom. Before long, victories outnumber defeats. It is not unusual for him to walk in freedom for a time, only to fall once again to some temptation. For the true believer, this final spiritual fall is usually the last. Failure is not final; it is often only the door into a life of victory. Nevertheless, you can be assured that some lying devil will do its utmost to remind you of your past string of failures so that you won't look with hope to the certain victory that is yours.

Yes, we are in a war on this planet earth. The devil rages all around us. And although the city of Satan may open its gates and vomit every vile spirit of hell against us, in the end, their failure is assured. And the next time you are feeling wearied by the battle or discouraged by some failure, remember the words spoken by the Captain of the host: "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18 KJV)

ⁱ Rick Renner, *Sparkling Gems from the Greek*, Teach All Nations, 2003, p. 75.

Steve Gallagher is the founder and president of Pure Life Ministries. He has dedicated his life to helping men find freedom from sexual sin and the abundant life in God that comes through deep repentance.

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