

# **DESPERATE FOR CHANGE**

**By  
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One of the great truths of the Gospel is that Jesus purchased humanity with His own blood so they could walk triumphantly over the power of sin. Tragically though, there are many who never overcome habitual sin because they get stuck in a rut of apathy and hopelessness. The truth is that they won't put away their sin until they become so serious about their relationship with Jesus that they will do whatever it takes to walk holy. People must come to the point of desperation before they will be willing to recklessly abandon themselves to God.

While pastoring in Detroit I ministered to alcoholics, prostitutes, junkies and drug dealers. These people had been devastated by sin; they had lost everything in life. One would expect to see a single-minded determination to break free from the stranglehold of sin, but amazingly, most of them seemed unwilling to change. They lacked the desperation that is always present in a person's life that finds true victory from the power of sin.

## **THE LAW**

The struggling believer is in a much better position than the unsaved drug addict out on the street. Sin may be controlling his life but at least he has the knowledge of God's law that is constantly reminding him of the wrongness of his transgressions. Nevertheless, the law can never bring liberty to the sinner.

Imagine if a person wrote the entire dos and don'ts of the Mosaic Law (moral laws) on the walls of his home. They would not make him more holy, only guiltier. These laws would point accusingly at him because every human being breaks those laws on a constant basis. The law only kills and damns people because it reveals that they are actually lawbreakers.

Though the moral law manifests a person's guilt before God as a lawbreaker, it is powerless to change him or give him the desire to do so. The law screams, "Stop lusting! Stop fornicating! Stop the homosexuality! Stop gossiping! Stop gambling! Stop sinning!" Yet the desire and power to break the chains of sin are not there. There must be something more, a love more powerful than the person's love of sin and self.

The law was never meant to bring liberty; it was only meant to show people their great need for Someone who could save them from the power of sin. The law cannot make a person want to change because the knowledge of sin is not enough. Even though a person knows he should quit his sinful behavior, he is locked into a terrible pattern of spiritual bondage and despair. There must be something greater than his sin and if he doesn't grab hold of the greater he will never have the desperation to change that is needed.

When a man grows desperate for God he becomes willing to do whatever it takes to overcome sin. His heart begins to change and a cry wells up from within, "God, I can't break these chains. They are too strong for me. Please help me!" This is the point of desperation where God visits His people and sets them free. Only a hunger for God that seizes the soul will produce the driving passion needed for holiness.

### **THE POWER OF SURRENDER**

One of the greatest obstacles people face in their pursuit of victory is the matter of control. Most people want to be free from the chains of sin, but they want to do it while maintaining control over their lives. "If I can just do this one particular thing, I will find freedom," they tell themselves. Nevertheless, as long as they believe there is a solution outside of abandonment to Christ, they will remain a captive to sin. Their efforts to win the battle by their own methods and strength are doomed to failure as long as they remain in control.

The power to overcome sin will never be found in a person's own determination or wisdom. Freedom from the bondage of sin only comes through surrender to God. The man must come to the point where he falls unreservedly at the feet of Jesus and cries out, "Oh God, I'm weary of my sin! I can't overcome it without you. You are my only hope!" It is at this point of helplessness that the man is closest to victory.

General William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army said, "The greatness of a man's power is the measure of his surrender." People who have done tremendous exploits for God did not possess great abilities in themselves but were people who completely abandoned themselves to the Lord of miracles.

So it is with the battle with sin. The victory is not found in self-effort but in self-abandonment. Oswald Chambers put it this way: "What is needed in spiritual matters is reckless abandonment to the Lord Jesus Christ, reckless and uncalculating abandonment, with no reserve anywhere about it."

### **THE FOCUS OF ONE'S AFFECTIONS**

Acquiring a relentless determination to live in victory will not happen through one's own willpower but through one's affections. To put it simply, it is a matter of love. People become addicted to some particular

besetting sin because it is what the flesh loves. And what's more, the flesh will always love it and there is no amount of effort on a person's part that can bring to an end his love of sin and self.

His only hope of overcoming habitual sin is to replace his love for sin with a consuming love for God. Until this love seizes the soul the person will never experience a driving passion for holiness. Only when he looks into Christ's lovely face will he find a love that will eclipse his love of sin and self.

So herein lies the answer. It is to see Jesus, to fall in love with "The Lover of My Soul." This is why the Psalmist declared, "My eyes are fixed on you, oh, Sovereign Lord." (Psalm 141:8) Every time a man falls into sin it's because he has taken his eyes off of Christ's lovely face. In other words, he abandons his first or principle love. That is why the devil and the world are relentlessly trying to get believers to take their eyes off of Jesus. But godly men and women have learned the secret of making Jesus the focus of their entire life.

The power for holiness comes through intimacy. Look at Jesus, and His love will burn in your heart. When He says, "Change," you will say, "Yes Lord." Smith Wigglesworth once said, "No man can see God and live. That's Scripture. That is why we all need to see Jesus that we might cease to be and that He might live through us." The greatest victory and joy you will ever know will be yours as you recklessly abandon yourself to Christ.

I will share one final quote in closing. Robert Murray McCheyne said, "Let the Holy Spirit fill every chamber of your heart so that there will be no room for folly or the world or Satan or the flesh." If you lack this kind of infilling of the Holy Spirit, get on your face before God and cry out for it. Ask the Lord to help you grow desperate you for Him. Ask Him to bring you to a place of absolute surrender. It is there—in complete despair of being able to find the answer in your own abilities and strength—that you will find the One who can set you free from the power of sin.

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