

“Sin: How to Overcome Evil”

Psalm 51:1-17

6/1/25

Does society corrupt the individual or does the individual corrupt society? It's the most fun chicken or egg question. However, answering the chicken or egg question doesn't answer, "How to live well now?" And that's why we are here: **to live well now**. The answer according to the Psalmist is the individual as we read God's Word in verse 5, "Indeed, I was born guilty; a sinner when my mother conceived me." This is one of the verses to justify the idea of original sin. According to the doctrine, the only two people to have free choice was Adam and Eve. As soon as they sinned, sin is pervasive and negatively affected all things. The rest of us are born into sin and our freedom of choice is an illusion. We have choice but not freedom. Our choice is bound to be self-centered. God's Word teaches us in Romans 6:17, we are slaves to sin before Christ.

The goal of Jesus is to defeat sin and its influence on our lives. Over the summer we talking about spiritual formation. Spiritual formation, first and foremost, is deepening our friendship with Jesus Christ. As we deepen our friendship with Jesus, we realize the point is to become Jesus' presence on earth. Jesus' goal for us is to continue His ministry while being His presence.

Last week we talked about how God desires to live in us and work through us by the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that baptizes Jesus is the same Spirit that Jesus breathes into our souls when at His Ascension Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit."

Jesus wants us to live well and to overcome evil. Spiritual formation encompasses both questions: How do we live well? How do we overcome evil?

The first step to overcome evil and to live well is to acknowledge personal sinfulness according to God's Word in Psalm 51 but also in 1 John 1:8-10, Ephesians 4:30-31, and Colossians 3:12-15.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. America's hymn. Written by John Newton in 1772 years after his conversion to Christianity in 1748. As you knew, John Newton was the captain of a slave ship trying to pay for a wedding, when in 1748, off the coast of North Africa a violent storm erupted, and John Newton cried out to God for mercy. It wasn't until John Newton acknowledged his personal sinfulness that he was able to live well and began the pursuit of the abolition of slavery.

What is your personal sinfulness? What enslaves you? God's Word teaches us that sin is that which separates us from God and each other. We cannot confuse sin with God's good creation. Alcohol is not sin. What we do with alcohol can be sinful when it separates us from God and neighbor. Sexuality is not sin. What we do with sexuality can be sinful when it separates us from God and neighbor.

What you need to confess is between you and the good Lord. As John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, God who is

faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and God's Word is not in us.

That brings us to step 2 in how to overcome evil and to live well: confess sin. I believe the author of Psalm 51 was extremely close to God after praying that prayer. How many people have been brought closer to God by writing Psalm 51? The good news of Jesus Christ is we worship the God who forgives the people who crucify Him. Our sin has real consequence, and God is willing to suffer that consequence. You are never too bad to approach God. Think of the story of the gracious Father who had two sons. The youngest son told his father to drop dead and give him his inheritance. He used his dad's good fortune for evil. Yet, his dad waited for him with arms wide open to forgive and to restore friendship. Whoever are and whatever you have done, our Gracious Parent in Heaven waits for us to confess.

Finally, forgive others to overcome evil and to live well. Resentment is unhealthy. Resentment is sin for it separates us from others. It can lead to mental health disorders but can also lead to physical health ailments like stomach issues, headaches, weakening your immune system, and triggering diabetes, heart issues and autoimmune diseases according to the Cleveland Clinic.¹

How do we let go of resentment? Forgiveness. "A study from 2014 showed people who were able to forgive felt they had [a lighter physical burden](#), increased capacity to jump higher and perceived hills to be less steep when compared to participants who were unforgiving."¹ Practice empathy. Put yourself in the other person's place. Talk to the person. Seek an apology. Practice generosity. Generously give and forgive. Joy and generosity are inseparable. When you are generous, you will experience joy. If you want to experience joy practice generosity.

Let's hear God's Word afresh: Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...

Love,
Pastor Curtis

¹ <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/what-is-resentment>