

Break The Cycle

CalvaryBC11.08.15 SW10-15-00am(O)

1 John 3:21-24 NIV:

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

The NKJV puts 1 John 3:24 in this way:

Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

The Amplified Bible gives us a little more insight into this **verse 24**:

The one who *habitually* keeps His commandments [obeying His word and following His precepts, abides and] remains in Him, and He in him. By this we know *and* have the proof that He [really] abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us [as a gift].

I. The sad thing about that is that so many Christians really are not keeping the commandments of Christ.

1. We know what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount and we know that most Christians don't live like Jesus says we ought to live.

(1. In fact, polls have revealed that those claiming to be Christians are not much different from non-Christians where the rubber hits the road in actually living life.

2. Why? Most of the time it is the “**besetting sin**” or the “**ensnaring sin**” or “**sin that entangles**” as is talked about in **Hebrews 12:1** that gets us.

Hebrews 12:1 NKJV: “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

3. What is the “**ensnaring sin**” or “**sin that entangles**”? It is the habitual sin that has become engrained, embedded into our lives.

(1. Instead of living habitually according to God’s commands as the apostle John says we ought to live abiding in God, we live habitually for our “**ensnaring sin.**”

4. Here are some examples:

1. An addiction to something such as: alcohol, drugs, or pornography.
2. Lying can be an ensnaring sin (exp). Some people prefer to tell lies instead of the truth and it is a habitual thing in their lives.
3. Pride can be an ensnaring sin.
4. Anger can be an ensnaring sin.
5. Selfishness can be an ensnaring sin.
6. Overeating/gluttony can be an ensnaring sin.
7. Lust can be an ensnaring sin.

(2. There's a whole list in **Galatians 5:19-21**, "**The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like....**"

5. Did you hear the one about idolatry? And, an idol is what? An idol is anything we put before God.

(1. So, if we are putting basketball, or football, or baseball before God it has become an idol.

(2. If we are putting our work before God it has become an idol.

(4. I think you get the idea. **Matthew 6:33 NKJV**, "**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**"

(5. And, if we habitually have problems with any of these things they have become an "**ensnaring sin.**"

4. Now, you may be thinking "so what does it matter if nearly every Christian has one of these problems?"

5. It matters because we're stuck in life short of obtaining the **Abundant Life** which Jesus said He came to give us.

(1. We can never have, never truly experience the **Abundant Life** when we have an "**ensnaring sin.**"

II. Have any of you ever watched the movie *Groundhog Day*?

1. It is a different kind of movie. What would you do if you had to repeat the same day over and over again?

2. In the movie "Groundhog Day" that is what happens to Phil Connors (Bill Murray).

(1. Phil Connors is a weatherman for a TV station in Pittsburgh.

1. He is also arrogant, prideful, selfish and would rate a 10 plus on each of those on a scale of 1 to 10.

(2. Phil is sent with a news crew to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to do a story on the annual Groundhog Day festivities.

(3. Phil finds himself repeating the same day over and over and over again.

(4. Things go from bad to worse until he decides to take advantage of the time instead of wasting it.

(5. Phil spent months learning the art of flicking a card into a hat perfectly each time.

3. But Phil's heart begins to change until he is no longer arrogant, prideful and selfish.

(1. Instead he has become kind, considerate, and selfless, unselfish.

(2. And eventually the day arrives when it is no longer Groundhog Day, but it has become tomorrow.

4. Phil Connors was in a cycle constantly repeating the same day over and over and over again until he finally got it right.

5. In the Book of Judges the Children of Israel have their own Groundhog Day.

(1. No, it is not the same day repeating over and over, but it is the same cycle of life repeating itself over and over.

6. After the death of Joshua the Israelites had abandoned the worship of the One True God and instead served the false God of Baal. **Judges 2:10-13 NIV: After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. ¹¹ Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. ¹² They forsook the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They aroused the LORD's anger ¹³ because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.**

7. When the people sinned God would allow their enemies to defeat them.

(1. Then, in their torment, in their pain the people would cry out to God for help.

(2. Each time this happened God would send a leader, who was called a judge to deliver them.

(3. This cycle of sin, torment, repentance, and deliverance was repeated over and over again.

1. Sin, torment, repentance, deliverance.

(4. They never seemed to learn their lesson and the cycle repeated over and over again.

8. This painful cycle of sin, pain, repentance, deliverance occurs in our lives as well.

(1. Sometimes it is called a test. We never really fail a test.

(2. It's just that if we don't pass the test, we have to repeat the test over and over and over again.

9. Until we learn the lesson and break the cycle by walking in obedience to God

(1. we are doomed to go through that cycle over and over again.

10. We will never fully experience the abundant life until we break out of this cycle.

(1. Phil Connors eventually learned his lesson. But will we learn ours?

III. And even if we want to break out of the cycle, how can we? How can we ever be free of these ensnaring, habitual sins?

1. The easy answer is to say "only through the power of God."

2. Paul says in **Philippians 4:13 NKJV** "**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**" and if Paul can we can too.

(1. I like the way the Amplified Bible puts this verse in **Philippians 4:13, I can do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens *and* empowers me [to fulfill His purpose—I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace.]**

3. But how? What is the practical nuts and bolts of this?

(1. You may have tried before. Maybe you've prayed about it.

(2. Or you have read your Bible more or maybe you've even had others pray for you or you've gone to counseling.

1. But it's still there.

STEP # 1 - Knowledge. You have to understand that you are in this continuing cycle of Sin, torment, repentance, deliverance.

(1. How do you come to understand that?

1. It may be that today through this sermon you have gained understanding. It may be through a godly friend who enlightens you.

(1. One time for me, as I have shared with you, it was through an anonymous letter that came from a person that didn't even know me.

2. Once we have this understanding, this knowledge. At this point we have no excuse before God.

(1. We know that God is testing us, and God knows that we know.

STEP # 2 - What will we do with the knowledge?

1. We can know we are in this cycle but continue on just as we had before. That's one choice.

(1. To choose to do nothing is still a choice.

2. Or, we can decide in our hearts that we want to break out of this cycle.

(1. We can commit ourselves to change.
To throwing off this yoke of ensnaring sin.

3. To change, to break out of the cycle we must make a commitment.

(1. A decision of the heart must be made that we want to change.

STEP # 3 - Let God know that you want to change and that you want His help.

1. You have had the problem for a while. You've tried to do something about it for a while.

(1. In order to change you are going to have to do something different, even radical.

(2. Do you remember Albert Einstein's definition of insanity?

1. "Doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results."

(3. There's another old saying that I heard recently which applies here too: "You can ignore reality, but you can't ignore the consequences of ignoring reality."

2. Most ensnaring sins are of the flesh but they are demonically facilitated.

(1. And when we engage in them the Bible makes it clear we are having fellowship with demons.

3. In **Mark 9** we have this incident in Jesus' ministry:

¹⁷ Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. ¹⁸ And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."

²⁵ When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" ²⁶ Then *the spirit* cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead,

so that many said, “He is dead.” ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

²⁸ And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?”

²⁹ So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

4. After the disciples tried to cast demons out but failed Jesus was asked why they couldn't. His answer?

(1. His answer was that some demons would not go out except through prayer and fasting.

5. Let me make it clear. I am not saying that you are possessed by demons.

(1. However, the sad fact is that many Christians are influenced by demons.

(2. Whether we like it or not, the spiritual reality is that there is a spiritual war be fought all around us

1. and we are right in the middle of it.

6. Perhaps the most effective way of letting God know that you mean business and you want His help and your freedom from the demonic influence -

(1. Is by declaring a fast. Come before God in prayer. Share with Him that you want to change and that you want His help.

(2. Not only that, but you are fasting for a certain number of days (a week) to show that you are serious about this commitment and truly want His help.

(3. Charles Stanley tells of a man with an addiction to pornography who came into his one day. Dr. Stanley told him that he should pray and fast for three days. The addiction was broken and never returned.

STEP # 4 Staying free/Staying out of the cycle.

1. Sadly Jesus also tells the story of a person who has been freed of the demons.

(1. But the person apparently doesn't change and the demon brings with him many of his demon friends to attack this person.

Matthew 12:43-45 NIV: ⁴³ “When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. ⁴⁴ Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first.

(2. And so, the sad situation is that the person ends up in far worse shape than they were to begin with.

2. You don't want to be free and then just be enslaved more so than ever before.

3. So, you want to do what you know you need to do. God has provided the resources for you to stay free.

(1. Pray

(2. Read, Study, Meditate, and Memorize God's Word

(3. You've got to keep assembling with other believers

4. I think a quick review of the seven promises of a promise keeper might be helpful. To stay free from the cycle of sin we must be committed Christians.

5. The Promise Keepers organization was founded by Bill McCartney in 1990 while he was the head football coach at the University of Colorado.

(1. The organization is still going but has faded from the prominence that it once had.

(2. But regardless of how the Promise Keepers organization is viewed,

1. The seven promises of a promise keeper would be helpful commitments for both men and women to make.

(3. So, I want to share them with you.

PROMISE # 1: A Promise Keeper is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

PROMISE # 2: A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.

(1. This is not just true of men but of women as well. Women will do well to seek out other women of faith.

PROMISE # 3: A Promise Keeper is committed to practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity.

PROMISE # 4: A Promise Keeper is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values.

PROMISE # 5: A Promise Keeper is committed to supporting the mission of his church by honoring and praying for his pastor, and by actively giving his time and resources.

PROMISE # 6: A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.

PROMISE # 7: A Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

My suggestion is that you take these promises home with you pray about them and make these promises to God. Sign and date it and keep it where you can find it.

IV. Romans 12:1-2: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

1. I believe God is testing you again today.

(1. Will you be conformed to this world or will you transformed by the power of God

(2. committing yourself totally, completely to Him so that you may see God’s good and acceptable perfect will fulfilled in your life?

2. Jesus says in **John 12:21, “My Father will honor the one who serves me.”**

3. Commit yourself to go beyond where you have been before.

(1. Commit yourself to break out of the cycle of sin, pain, repentance and deliverance.

4. Throw off the yoke of the ensnaring sin. Break the cycle.