

Sabbath School Today **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

Jesus Wept: The Bible and Human Emotions **Lesson 11: "Freedom From Addictions"**

I am an addict and a sinner saved by grace through faith.

One of the strangest aspects of an addicted life is doing the same thing over and over while each time hoping for a better or different outcome. When I finally get tired of this, I blame someone else for the reason things aren't going the way I want them to go. I feel entitled, as if because I know so much and I am me, "Don't you know!" There can't be anything greater than me!

The common perception most people have about addicts is that they are using needles with drugs or are alcoholics stumbling about and blurring their speech! However, addictions are far more common than these narrow perceptions. One can be addicted to having to be right, or addicted to a person or relationship that is unhealthy. One can also be addicted to false ideas or beliefs! These all come under the heading of "Mind-Altering." Whichever one you are familiar with there is a good chance that holding to this belief, relationship, or activity genders within some the feeling of being special, unique, and superior—usually toward others. Reality is their worst enemy. We will do whatever it takes to appear perfect, and to look "good" on the outside no matter the chaos erupting on the inside. Addiction is all about self and pride—all about us feeling better in the moment, no matter the cost or who is hurt in the process. Family, children, careers, marriages, homes, property, and reputation are sacrificed outright for our own selfishness.

I was raised in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and had a long history with methamphetamines and then crack. I wanted to stop. I would pray, "God help me to stop!" but nothing would happen and for a good reason. I was the problem—self and pride were the true addiction. God requires all glory; helping me would be inconsistent with me dying to self.

Finally one day as I was smoking a large quantity of crack in a desert wash, I began to cry, then to weep, and then it was like a prayer was squeezed from my lungs. "O God, this is me at my best—me using my best thinking! My best efforts will be to get more crack. I am powerless and weaker than weak—O God, have mercy on me! You know that I cannot stop, but you can come right through this crack smoke and deliver me."

He did. If any man tries to tell you that Jesus is too pure to be with a sinner smoking crack, never believe him again—he is a liar and illiterate in the things pertaining to God.

Because I was still smoking, I avoided the verse in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17 which says, "Surely you know that you are God's temple, where the Spirit of God dwells. Anyone

who destroys God's temple will himself be destroyed by God, because the temple of God is holy; and you are that temple" (REB). It condemned me, and so by avoiding it "I wasn't condemned any more"!

One of the greatest principles that came from the 1888 messengers, A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, and E. G. White, was to take the Bible as it reads and to depend wholly upon the Word to accomplish that which it says. So let us explore a few statements and texts.

"Faith does not make facts. It only lays hold of them. There is not a single soul that is bowed down with the weight of sin, which Satan has bound on him, whom Christ does not lift up. Freedom is his. He has only to make use of it. Let the message be sounded far and wide. Let every soul hear it, that *Christ has given deliverance to every captive*" (*The Glad Tidings*, p. 107; *emphasis added*). Our part is to say with the psalmist, "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; ... Thou hast loosed my bonds" (Psalm 116:16).

Don't argue with the Lord, and say that you cannot walk straight. He says that you are loosed, and that is enough! Faith can lay hold of this fact and make it a reality in your life—whatever your bond may be! Faith is a heart-melting appreciation of what it cost the Son of God to literally go to hell for us. The love of God forgives the sinner and motivates true faith. This faith (seeing the message of the cross) which works by love (Gal 5:6) involves repentance—a turning from sin.

God did not need Abraham's help to fulfill His promise to give him a son; and God does not need our help to remove the bonds that hold us. In both cases we are only to believe the promise of God - nothing more. Our fingerprints must be off of all of God's work—remember Uzzah—he tried to stabilize the ark from falling, and upon touching it, he was struck dead. Keep your fingerprints off of things! Remember that our best effort to change our own lives has been, is, and will ever be but our best failure.

The Word declares: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt [sin], out of the house of bondage [your addictions]" (Ex. 20:2). Here is another wonderful fact—God has already delivered you from your sin [addiction] if you will but say "Amen" to this.

"Conversion does not put new flesh upon the old spirit; but a new Spirit within the old flesh. It does not propose to bring new flesh to the old mind, but a new mind to the old flesh. Deliverance and victory are not gained by having the human nature taken away; but by receiving the *divine nature* to subdue and have dominion over the human,—not by the taking away of our sinful flesh, but by the sending in of the *sinless Spirit* to conquer and condemn sin in the flesh" (A. T. Jones, *The Bible Echo*).

Thus we have shown that God has already set us free from all sin and addiction; we have identified broadly the thinking of the addiction as being that of self and pride (grandiosity); now we make one last connection between self and pride being the addiction: "*Pride is intoxication*. Just as alcohol stimulates a man without building him

up, and finally deprives him of reason, so a man, to use a common expression, 'loses his head' when he gets to hunting for the good traits in his character. And withal pride, like alcohol, furnishes no nourishment with which to build the man up" (E. J. Waggoner, "Faith and Humility," *The Signs of the Times*, June 2, 1889).

The Lord in His great mercy has removed my drug, alcohol, and tobacco addictions—just as He promised He would! Today I have been working as an Alcohol and Drug Counselor for over 15 years. I can honestly say, "I never quit doing drugs or smoking—God took them from me because He loved me!"

All addictions are an attempt to fill the void in one's life that sees nothing to love. Addictions to drugs, pornography, alcohol, pride, appetite, etc., are manifestations of loving a false idol. The allurements of sexual passion can easily become idolatry. And idolatry is the substitution of some *thing* or some *one* for Jesus Christ. It is fellowship with Him, not with the idol, that the human heart truly yearns for; but the idol-worship (in whatever form it takes) deceives us with a trinket instead of the genuine. And deception is sin, says Paul. With many, the addiction is pornography, fantasizing—it's all "lust." People can go to church and even wave their Bible in the air and still be addicts. Does the true gospel have power to deliver us from this addictive obsession? We have to answer yes, or the world and the church are in hopeless ruin.

But the gospel is the Good News of what Jesus accomplished in His incarnation. Did He truly conquer this sin in the "likeness of sinful flesh"? Or did He sidestep the real issue by taking upon Himself a different nature than what we are saddled with? When He inspired the Bible, did He employ cunning rhetorical evasion to make us think that "in all points He was tempted like as we are, yet without sin," while in reality He excused Himself from facing and conquering the *real* temptation that plagues us all? The true gospel *is* the power of God unto salvation from sexual sin to everyone who believes (see Rom. 1:16). So, everything depends on understanding what it means to believe!

The message to the Church of the Laodiceans is a message to addicts—addicted to self and pride, avoiding reality at all costs. We say we are rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing. We say we have "the truth," but adultery, child abuse, divorce, and alcohol and drug use are increasing even among church people. This cannot be the result of believing the truth of the gospel] but is the result of having the love of the world in our hearts.

For the most part "we" did not see God's message of identifying with Jesus' cross in our denominational history. If we had accepted the message of righteousness by faith that God sent to His people in 1888, and accepted the Word as the power of God, today we would not have to say with humility that "we" are delaying the second coming of Christ. It is our pride, intoxication, and self-satisfaction that is manifest by our Laodicean apathy.

Will the message of the cross be in vain for us? God's good news does away with sin, along with addictions and the love of the world. It is time for us Laodiceans to study just

what this 'truth of the gospel' is and learn how to believe it.

—*Daniel H. Peters*