



OVERCOMING YOUR ADDICTIONS

In our lives we embrace things which make us feel good to later find out that we are addicted to them – we cannot live our lives without them. The outcomes these things produce are mostly contradictory to the Word of God for our lives. Therefore, we need to work at reversing the addiction consequences.

"31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? 34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. 35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

- John 8:31-36

Overcoming Your Addictions

Many of God's children are spiritual POWs, prisoners of war, trapped in a sin that they have been unable to break. Trapped in a situation that is contrary to the will and word of God from which they have not been able to escape. Whether it is alcoholism, or drugs, or pornography, or gluttony, or profanity, whether it is lashing out in anger and wrath and inability to control one's temper, they find themselves caught and unable to get out.

There is a whole addiction industry today to help people get out of the vice grip that is holding them illegitimately hostage. And what many are discovering is that going to church hasn't solved their problem. Praying hasn't released them from it.

I want to discuss the consequence of addiction that shreds minds, ruins souls, kills relationships, because you find yourself caught. And even if that's not you, there is somebody in your circle of influence who finds themselves addicted. The biblical word for what the world calls addiction is stronghold because the biblical word stronghold is referring to the spiritual nature of the addiction.

A stronghold is a spiritually based addiction, which means if you try to fix an addiction, which is really a stronghold, without the right spiritual connection, you can't be released from it because you haven't dealt with the core issue that's behind it. So, you just deal with the thing itself. In your kitchen, whether you have a refrigerator, or stove, or an electric can opener, or a toaster, or whatever appliance you have, all of them are different, but they all find their power from the same source, electricity.

Regardless of your addictions, it would take us forever to talk about this addiction, and that addiction, and this addiction, and that addiction, and this other addiction, because they come in by the dozens. But I would like to submit to you that they all emanate from a common source. So, if we can get to the common source, we can apply that source to the uniqueness of the particular spiritual addiction slash stronghold that needs to be addressed.

We're living in a time when people find themselves stuck. Now my concern is not for the person who's stuck and wants to be, because I can't help you. If you're in an addiction and you want to stay addicted, all the facts, and figures, and truth, and Bible can't change something you are pursuing.

But I am speaking to those who are, or who know someone who is, caught in a sin, know they are caught, doesn't want to be caught, but doesn't know how to get out. They are trapped in some scenario for which they cannot find release. And so, this issue of illegitimate bondage must have a spiritual understanding underpinning it for full release to occur.

Let us review again what we are referring to as we move forward. We're referring to a spiritually based trap in some category of life that has been inculcated with negative patterns of thought that, like a snake, has wrapped itself around the mind, making something seem impossible to break or to fix because you feel handcuffed to it or it feels handcuffed to you. It is seeing something as unchangeable that is outside of the will and the Word of God.

Most people have run into something in their lives, sometimes they're big, sometimes they are small, that is of less consequence, but yet addictions have a way of growing. They have built into them gateway potential, the capacity to expand themselves in our lives and in our circumstances. When you are in an addiction or better yet a spiritual addiction or stronghold, you feel like you're in a tomb, a prison, and somebody has thrown away the key.

What many people seek to do with this stronghold that they're battling is to accept it as an inevitable reality and the best they hope to do with it is to decorate their self. Since it's never going to change, at least let me make my addiction as pleasant as possible. Other people settle for what we might call sin management.

Since I'm never going to get rid of it, let me do like a trash masher, let me just press it down and pretend it's not there, which only creates room for more trash, and so they just try to manage it the best way they can. But today I want to try to give a biblical mechanism for deliverance predicated on an understanding that Christians can find themselves in strongholds like non-Christians. You don't have to be saved for long to know that when you got saved your flesh didn't disappear.

Some of our flesh was so well trained when we weren't saved that when we got saved the flesh looked at that as a new opportunity to show how strong it really is. Even the most spiritual person in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul, struggled with something he couldn't shake. In Romans 7:14-24, Paul says he was doing things he did not want to do.

He said he told himself you shouldn't do it. He said the will was there. I was really serious, but the ability to pull it off wasn't. I kept promising God I'm not going to do it again. I kept promising God. I struggled between my flesh and my salvation, and the two were not getting along.

“14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

- Romans 7:14-24

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and gave him life, the Bible says he came up from his tomb tied up in his hands and his feet. Just because he had life didn't mean he was free. Jesus had to say y'all got to loose him and let him go.

I gave him life, but he needs freedom. So, it is possible to have come to Christ, have eternal life, and still not yet be free from whatever the stronghold or spiritual addiction happens to be. And so, this thing called stronghold, spiritual addictions, is spiritual slavery in some category of life, which is why he calls it, in verse 14, a slave to sin.

If you are a slave, that means you have a master. He calls the master sin. He doesn't call it a bad habit.

He doesn't call it a mistake. He doesn't call it something that you know you need to just get over. He calls it something that is in antithesis to the will and Word of God.

So, let's call the addiction, whatever category it is, what it is. No, you don't just have a struggle. You got a sin master.

No, you didn't just make a mistake over and over and over again. You had a master called sin because if you don't know who your master is, then you won't address it for what it is. He calls it slavery being under the whip of an entity that he calls sin.

How does this stronghold or spiritual addiction, whatever category it is, occur? Because understanding the cause will lead us to the cure. When you're sick and you go to the doctor, he's going to try to find the cause so he can give you the right cure. Many of us are trying to cure the wrong cause.

So, we're medicating something that's not the problem and wonder why we're not getting healthier spiritually. To understand this, stay with me here, I want you to follow me to 2nd Corinthians 10. And we all need this either for ourselves or for someone else and so it is critical that you understand this.

“2But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”

- 2 Corinthians 10:2-5

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. And we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. The problem of addiction, a sin that has mastered you or us or me, the problem of addiction has to do with a lofty thing.

Okay, you see that phrase? He says this lofty thing in verse 5 has been raised up against the knowledge of God. So let me define the lofty thing. The Greek word lofty, a synonym for it is partition.

You go to a room; in one of my college's classes, we had classrooms that have a partition down the middle. You can open it, or you can close it. If we want to have two classrooms in the same space, we close the partition. This partition is lofty. It goes from the floor to the ceiling, and we close it to divide the room so that we can have two separate classes as opposed to having one bigger class. So, we divide it through a lofty thing.

Now the reason we divide the room is so the information in this half of the room doesn't cross over to the meeting in that half of the room. We want the content to be separated so that one room is not interfering with another room. What Paul is saying is the reason why we stay defeated is because of our partition in the mind.

There is a blockage in the mind. He says speculations and thoughts raised up, petitioned out against the knowledge of God. So, what the enemy does is he sets up a partition in the mind so that the truth of God can't get through.

And because he partials off your thinking, your speculation, and your thoughts, no matter how many sermons you hear, it can't cross over to the other room because the other room is filled with contradictory information that the enemy doesn't want the knowledge of God to cross over into. He calls this other information in the other half of the room, your partial off mind, he calls that information knowledge and speculation against the knowledge of God. So, the lofty thing is contradicting what God says, what God thinks, so that it doesn't go all the way through.

What happens is that the enemy is able to keep the truth of God from fully infiltrating your thought patterns so that you have victory one moment and defeat another moment. This blocking through a lofty thing keeps what he calls in verse 4 the fortress, prison, or tomb operating. The moment you think you're getting out, you find out you're still in because it didn't cross over.

The partition made sure it didn't cross over. Now the biblical word for this lofty thing is double mindedness. Double to mind-thought, thinking in two different directions at the same time. Partition. It is the job of Satan to keep you thinking in two ways at the same time.

He doesn't mind you getting God's thoughts on Sunday as long as in the other room you have his thoughts on Monday, because if he can get you to have God's thoughts on Sunday but get his thoughts on Monday, he can keep God's thoughts from penetrating the whole of you. Therefore, God's thoughts don't last long because they're in competition. It's like if you go to sweet Georgia Browns because you want some soul food, you go to sweet Georgia Browns, you come to the end of the line and order a Diet Coke hoping that somehow that will cancel out all the sugar and grease at sweet Georgia Browns.

You just feel better because you ordered a Diet Coke after greens and fried chicken and fried ribs and mac and cheese and potato salad and sweet potato pie but give me a Diet Coke. What a lot of folks think is having Diet Church on Sunday after having incorporated the other worldview all week long, somehow that diet worship will override and give you victory. He says no, you're operating with a partition, and that partition cancels out the knowledge of God, making it incapable of your mind being able to take every thought captive to the obedience to Christ.

So, the prison, the fortress, doesn't get dismantled, and after a while we get too tired of trying to dismantle it. We get too tired of trying to get it. I'm too tired of fighting this thing, so the best I can do is put pictures on the wall of my cell.

I'm in this, I'm going to die like this, it's going to always be like this, so I'm just going to do the best I can or manage it the best I can. So, in order for the penetration of God's truth to bring victory in the area of the stronghold due to the vice grip of sin that has been amplified by Satan and demons, in order for that to be overcome, that wall must be taken down in order that the fortress, the prison might be destroyed, not remodeled. And the tricky part of this, the tricky part, is that the other part of the room, the part that's not from God, feels right a
Matthew 16:21, Jesus is telling the disciples, look, he says, look, I got to go die, rise from the dead.

Peter says, come here, come here Jesus, you and I got to have a conversation. Peter takes Jesus to the side and says, God forbid it, Lord. What you just said, Jesus, you all wrong, you off. And you're off, watch this, in the name of God. He says, I'm going to use God on you, Jesus. You really got to be good to use God on Jesus.

I'm going to use God on you. God forbid what you just said. What you just said is not going to happen, and just keep it spiritual, Lord.

What you just said is not going to happen, Lord. Jesus said, get thee behind me, Satan. Wait a minute, how can you just call Peter Satan when he used God's name? So just because you use God's name, says God bless you, say hallelujah, praise the Lord, does not make it legit.

Does not make it legit. He says, get thee behind me, devil. Now what was devilish about his statement? He meant well.

He was trying to keep Jesus from the cross. He was trying to keep Jesus from being killed. He meant well. He even used God's name in it. He called Jesus Lord. He meant well, but Jesus says, no, your mind is on man's view, not on God's view, because you didn't like the view.

See, the reason why satan can keep us track is when we don't like what God wants and come to some logical conclusion about it that we can toss a little Jesus name on top of it, we think that then it must be okay when it's the devil controlling the other side of the room of our minds. When we understand this and grasp this, it becomes a transforming truth that, wait a minute, I have a divided mind and that's why it doesn't stick. It stays there for a day or a week, but it doesn't stick and even when it comes back, I don't have victory over it, it has victory over me.

So, if that's the problem, how do we do this? How do we do this? How do we begin now to remove the petition so there is no longer a division in the mind, so that now God's knowledge flows through and the fortress is destroyed and all the speculation that's holding me hostage. Back to our original passage, John 8. He says in John 8:31-32, if you continue in my word then you will know, then you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free. You only are going to be freed by the truth, okay? Now nobody will disagree with that, so let me say it another way.

“31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

-John 8:31-32

You will only be freed by the truth, not what you believe to be true. We got folk running around here talking about, I know my truth. Yeah, and where has your truth gotten you? No, no, no. It's not what you believe to be true. He's not talking about a truth, some truth, your truth. He's talking about the truth.

The truth refers to an absolute standard by which reality is measured. It is an absolute standard by which reality is measured and the truth always sits outside of you. Look, one in one is two, one in one has always been two, and one in one will always be two because it is a mathematical truth.

Now you can feel three-ish all you want. You can be in the one in one being three all day long, but because it is a fact that sits outside of you, you have to adjust yourself to one in one being two, no matter how many people tell you it's three, no matter how deeply you feel it's three, no matter how much you want it to be three, you must conform to the truth, not turn it into your truth. And one of the reasons people stay in strongholds is because they're living on a truth, or their truth, or some TV program's truth, or some cultural truth, and not the truth.

The absolute standard by which reality is revealed. Here is one of the biggest falsehoods that keep us in custody and locked up spiritually in a stronghold of spiritual addiction, and that is trying to get the flesh to fix the flesh. Paul said in the scripture we just read in 2 Corinthians 10, we do not war according to the flesh.

The flesh can't fix the flesh. You can try to manage it, you can try to force it down, you can try to make a New Year's resolution, you can promise you're never going to do it again, you can talk to yourself, you can go to the counselor, you can take medication, but if it's a spiritual sin issue, what we do is go to the thing that's the problem to fix the problem. He says no, what you must do first and foremost is continue in my truth.

Look, you remember your grandmother, great-grandmother, when she was washing clothes, used the washing board, you know, she'd push the washing board, and she's putting out a lot

of energy to clean them clothes. I mean, arms get tired, have to take a break for a while, come back and do it again, and then you got a lot of clothes, you know, it takes days to do it. A lot of hard work to clean those clothes with the washing board, but lo and behold, technology, a washing machine.

A washing-machine. What would you say if you purchased a washing machine for your grandmother and she was using a washing board? You would say, mama, grandma, you don't get it. You don't need that when you have this.

All you're doing is the best you can, breaking your neck, getting tired, when there has been another provision that's much better than you at getting stuff clean. What many people want to do is get out of their addiction by their own scrubbing effort, and for a while it looks like it's clean, but when they look it up, it isn't that clean, and they try again, they try again. When God says, no, no, no, what you must do, watch this, verse 31, he says, I want you to continue in my truth, and you will know the truth.

The word continue means to hang out, abide, stay there, to loiter. That's what to continue or abide is. You must abide in the truth. Stay with me here. We don't abide in the truth, we visit it. We've come, we're listening to the Word of God.

Most of us won't know next Sunday what we heard this Sunday, okay, because we don't abide in it, we visit it. No, he says, no, no, no, no, no, to have victory over the master of sin, you must abide in the truth. So, if you are battling something in your life, and you're a Christian, if you're not a Christian, that's a whole other ball game because you don't have the Spirit to help you, but if you are a Christian, you have the Spirit, but the Spirit is the Spirit of truth, so you've got to abide in the truth.

So, here's what I want you to do this week. Every day, I want you to read Romans 6, 7, and 8, those three chapters, Romans 6, 7, and 8. Why? Because Romans 6, 7, and 8 is going to tell you the truth about the master called sin, whatever that sin is. In chapter 6, Paul is going to tell you about your new identity in Christ.

He's going to tell you, you've been baptized with Christ, and you are not who you used to be because you were buried with him in baptism, raised with him into a new life, so that sin is

lying to you. When you go to a 12-step program, guess what they're going to tell you? They're going to tell you to stand up and give your name. Hello, my name is Bill, and I am an alcoholic.

That's what they're going to tell you to say. The Bible's going to disagree with that. Paul's going to say in Romans 6, that's not who you are. That may be what you're doing, but that's not who you are. You are a blood-bought, completely converted son or daughter of the living God that has a problem with alcohol. Paul's going to tell you to shift your identification in your newness in Christ, and therefore, verse 11 of chapter 6, consider your old person dead.

That's not who you are. My name is Bob, and I am gay. No, that's how you feel.

He's going to tell you, you must now identify yourself as Jesus Christ identifies you, because the more you tell yourself you're that, you're telling the flesh to be at home with the sin. Then he's going to come to chapter 7, and he's going to, Paul's going to tell you, I struggled like you struggle. I had some things in my life.

He doesn't tell us what it is, which is good, because then you can put your stuff in that chapter. He says that I struggled, and the things I didn't want to do, the things I did, and I didn't want it, and it kept coming back, and I resisted it, but it showed up again until I got to chapter 8, and understood the power of the Holy Spirit, and that the law of the Spirit is greater than the law of sin and death, so that in verse 13, he says, therefore, I have no longer any obligation to the flesh. When I understood that I got this supernatural peace when it's tied to the truth, and you will know the truth.

Now I know what some of you are saying. You're saying, well, I may know it, but a lot of that Bible stuff, I'm reading it, but I don't understand it. I don't understand it.

Okay. Do you take medicine you don't understand? You go to the doctor, you say, I'm hurting. He writes a prescription. You don't know what he wrote. In fact, if you can read what he wrote, he isn't a real doctor. They got scribble stuff going, you don't know what that says.

You go to the pharmacist, you get the medicine, you don't know all the stuff that's in that medicine, but what you do is you ingest it, you take it, you swallow it, and it does its work

even when you don't understand it. Now sure, we are to seek to understand the Word of God, but while you are taking the time to seek it, if you just keep taking it in and continue it, it has the ability to do its work if you continue in it. So, if you are struggling with something, if you are a believer, every day for this week, read chapter 6, 7, and 8 of the Book of Romans over and over again, and let the medicine seep down and abide in you, because when you continue in my Word, you will then know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

It becomes part of your soul. It's been ingested, and we don't do that. We listen to a sermon on Sunday. That's diet church. Today we live in a world of information, but little truth. We appeal to our feelings, which are changing all the time, our reasons, which is uncertain, and our moral instincts, which are different from person to person.

There's something else that if you miss it, you missed a real deal of victory. He just said, if you will continue in my Word, if you hang out there, if you bring the master of sin that you're dealing with, and you lay it before the Word, and you lay it before the Word, Lord, this is what I'm dealing with, but I'm reading your Word, I'm taking this Word, I'm taking this Word, I'm taking that 15 minutes, that 30 minutes every day, and I'm going to get this thing till you get it down in me, and my soul begins to grab hold of it, and wraps itself around it, he says, the truth will make you free. But look at another verse, because when you look at verse 36, if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

Okay, wait a minute, wait a minute, we got a little issue here, because verse 32 says, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free, right? That's what it says. But in verse 36 it says, so if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. In the first one, the truth will make me free, but in the second one, the Son sets me free.

In the first one, I'm free, but in the second one, I'm free indeed. So, what's the difference between being made free and being set free, and what's the difference between being free and free indeed? What's the difference here? If somebody comes and you're in jail, and comes up to you and says, someone has just posted bail for you, you're going to shout, you're going to applaud, somebody has paid what you need to get out, you're going to celebrate, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm free, but you're still in jail. You're free because bail has been posted, but you're not out.

But you are free, because once you post bail that has been accepted, you're free. But then they got to do paperwork. They have to do the paperwork.

So, there is often a gap between legally being free and being out. The Word of God posts bail, but the Son has the key to the lock. The bail makes you free.

The Son sets you free. In other words, it is not merely the knowledge of the Bible, it is the relationship with the author that produces the experience of the freedom that you have. When you spend time in the Word, Hebrews 4:12 says, the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword.

It says it's alive. The book is alive. It's a book.

But it's alive, okay? Now let me tell you what the book does according to Hebrews 4:12. He says in Hebrews 4:12, the Word of God, when taken in, will divide soul and spirit. The reason why we stay trapped in certain things is because the soul and spirit are not divided.

They're all mixed up. They're all intertwined because things have not been separated. So that which is God is God, and that which is not is not.

So, we didn't get it all mixed together. But he says when the Word of God does its cutting, it separates the soul and the spirit so that they become two distinct realities, and you know what's what. See, Paul was struggling with, how can I not want to do this and do it? I'm confused.

I can't make sense of that. He says the Word of God cuts between the two, so the two are segmented. But then after he says that he comes to verse 13, and he says, and all things are laid bare before his eyes.

So, in verse 12, he's talking about the Word of God, but in verse 13, he's talking about his eyes. So, he takes the Word written and God the person, and when the living Word connects with the written Word, in your heart, soul, and mind, not only is Baal posted, but Jesus comes with a key. And when the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.

Guess what indeed is. Luke 24:34 says, when Jesus rose from the dead, they said he has risen indeed. Why did they have to say indeed? Because Jesus Christ never stopped living after he died on the cross.

After Jesus died on the cross, he was very much as alive on Saturday as he was on Friday. In fact, the scripture says that on Saturday he went to Sheol to preach victory to the souls that had died. So, Jesus Christ was as alive on Saturday as he was on Friday, but his body on Saturday was still laying in the tomb.

He was spiritually alive, but he was not physically alive yet. But as the preacher would say, early on Sunday morning, just a little while before day, Jesus got up so that what was already true became visible. What was already real, you could see it.

It's one thing to be in jail and to hear somebody's posted Bail. It's a whole bunch of other stuff when folks see you walk out of the jail house and see that you are free. Jesus made his freedom visible on Sunday morning.

In 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, but folk in Texas and Louisiana and Arkansas didn't find out about it till June 19, 1865. So, there was a gap between legal freedom and there was a gap between the experience of freedom. Not because the proclamation hadn't been signed, it was because folk didn't know about it.

So, one reason you can stay a slave is because nobody told you how to be free. Oh, but there's another way you can stay a slave. Somebody can tell you that you are free, but you've gotten so used to living on the plantation that you don't exercise the freedom that you have.

So, a lot of folks stayed in slavery who had been set free because they had gotten so used to being there, they didn't want to take the risk of freedom. On the cross, Jesus signed your Emancipation Proclamation, and everybody who trusts Christ is redeemed. But satan doesn't want you to know that.

He wants a petition up in your mind so that you don't believe you can walk in freedom. But I'm here to tell you today that he who the Son sets free is free indeed, but only if you continue

in His Word. You continue in His Word, you call on the Son, and then you can declare like a great man a few years ago in 1963 in Washington, DC, free at last, free at last.

I thank God Almighty with my stronghold, I'm free at last.