

PARABLES

Bringing Hidden Things to Light



Psalms 78:2-4
I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Welcome to Parables Bookshelf!

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Each issue of the Parables Bookshelf will contain writings from Bible teacher Joseph Herrin. These teachings are shared with an international audience through the Internet, and are now being made available to men and women in prisons, jails, and various detention facilities.

The books and teachings that others have enjoyed online are also being made available to residents at Rescue Missions, and those in recovery programs. Through the printed medium of the Parables Bookshelf, these teachings are now available to all who desire to read them in printed form.

This issue begins with the teaching titled *Overcoming Addiction by the Spirit of*

Christ. This book reveals the plan of God for all men to live a victorious life in Christ. Whether you consider yourself to have an addiction, or not, this book reveals the pathway to a life of victory over all sinful desires.

As in all of the teachings in the Parables Bookshelf, *Overcoming Addiction* looks at the Scriptures as a book of parables, where many historical accounts are unveiled to reveal the spiritual truth hidden in them.

For example, the journey of the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt, their forty years in the wilderness, and their long warfare to conquer the Land of Canaan, is revealed to be a grand parable of the path all men and women must take to establish their lives as a king-

dom of righteousness and peace.

The history of the people of Israel is a parable of the journey of all mankind. We all begin our lives as slaves to sin, dominated by a cruel master who will not let us go. At the right time, God heard the groaning of mankind, and sent a deliverer to set His people free.

Although the Parables Newsletter begins with foundational truths, it will quickly progress to deeper teachings. It will be a challenging task to keep up, but if you will seek daily the help of the Lord, and apply yourself to growing in obedience and truth, I am hopeful that you will do well.

Joseph Herrin

PARABLES PRECEPT

The back page of each issue of the Parables Bookshelf will contain a short teaching on some topic leading to a better understanding of the Bible. This precept is provided to assist you in your knowledge of the Scriptures and to aid you in becoming a skilled student of the Word of God.



Scripture Memory

I Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

Parables Newsletter

- Series 1.1.1
- *Overcoming Addiction by the Spirit of Christ* (Chapter 1)
- Forward; Introduction; Chapters 1-2

Overcoming Addiction by the Spirit of Christ

FOREWORD

For those unfamiliar with the names Yahshua and Yahweh, a brief note is necessary at the opening of this book. Yahshua is the Hebrew name of the Son of God, Who is commonly referred to in English as Jesus. Yahweh is similarly the name of God the Father. Some years back I felt it would be helpful and instructive to begin using these names, for they convey specific meaning. Many of the types and shadows of the Old Testament that point forward to Christ are associated with these names. The types and shadows are obscured when other names are substituted.

Yahshua literally means "Yah's salvation," or "Yah saves."

For example Joshua, the leader of Israel who led the Israelites in to take possession of the land of promise, is a type and shadow of Yahshua. The Hebrew

language does not include a letter corresponding to the English 'J,' and Joshua would have been pronounced as Yoshua, or Yahshua. This name literally means "Yah's salvation," or "Yah saves."

Forty-nine times in the Old Testament the name Yah occurs. Another 6,828 times it appears in the longer form Yahweh. This is the name of God the Father, and it was given as His memorial name for all generations (Exodus 3:15). Every time a person says the word "Hallelujah" they are declaring this name. Hallel is a Hebrew word denoting praise, therefore hallelujah literally means "Praise Yah."

I will not write further here on the types and shadows that are brought to light from the Old Testament through the use of these names. I have written of many of them in other writings. This should serve to clear up any questions the reader should have as they encounter these names in this book.

INTRODUCTION

The Son of God spent most of His time upon this earth ministering to those whom the religious crowd sought to avoid. He did not go to the rich and powerful. He rarely was found in the homes of esteemed members of society. No, the Son of God went to the outcasts. He spent time with the prostitutes, the impoverished, with those enslaved to sin. Those who were religious criticized Him for this, but His answer reveals that their hearts were not aligned with the heart of God.

Matthew 9:10-13

And it happened that as He was reclining at the table in the house, behold many tax-gatherers and sinners came and were dining with Yahshua and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax-gatherers and sinners?" But when He heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

The church is referred to as "the body of Christ." In effect, those born again of the Spirit of Christ become His hands, His feet, His mouth, His ears, etc.. As His body, these individual members are to continue the work that Christ began when He walked in bodily form on this earth. He still walks this earth, continuing His ministry through His sons and daughters.

A tragic thing has occurred in the churches of God. Christ's body has lost its connection to its Head. It has largely become self-directed, and due to this it is failing to act as Christ desires. Rather than reaching out to the lost, rather than going to the sick and the sinners, she has turned her focus upon her own entertainment and a pursuit of worldly success. Just visit any Christian bookstore today and observe how many of the best selling Christians books are focused upon 'Becoming a Better You,' or 'Achieving Success, Prosperity, Health and Blessings.' Then look as hard as you will and see if

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you can find a best selling Christian book on ministering to sinners, and healing the morally and spiritually sick of society.

There are some in the church who realize that the body of Christ has strayed from the will of her Savior and Lord. Some are convicted as they read the Gospels and the Acts of the apostles, noting that the church today is not reaching out to the despised and rejected members of society as Yahshua and His disciples did. I was often convicted of this as a young man growing up in the church. I remember thinking upon this on a number of occasions.

Like a great number of those raised in the Church in the West today, I was brought up in a good home in a middle income family. I grew up in the suburbs. My friends, and those I associated with, had similar lives. I did not rub shoulders with prostitutes, alcoholics, drug addicts, the homeless and poor. Because I did not know any people like this, I adopted a mindset of fear toward them.

As a child growing up in church among “good people” I was reminded that “bad company corrupts good morals.” I heard stories about those who used illegal drugs. I was told that people who used crack cocaine, or other commonly abused substances, would turn into demented, violent thieves and murderers who would as soon stab a person as look at them. My only knowledge of these people came from the headlines of the newspaper, and the horrific accounts of the evening newscast.

My isolation, coupled with the stories I heard, served to create a barrier that prevented me from being used of Christ to reach the very ones He came to save. There were occasions when I prayed to the Lord about this matter. I confessed my desire to do His will, while also admitting that I felt woefully unprepared. I lacked familiarity with this portion of society. I did not understand their struggles. Neither did I consider myself knowledgeable about the solution to their problems. I only understood that Christ was God’s solution to man’s slavery to sin, but the actual details of how Christ could help the addict and alcoholic were hard for me to

define.

God is able to prepare His people for service. Christ does not expect us to figure things out for ourselves. He will not give to His children a ministry and expect them to carry it out in their own strength, and according to their own wisdom. Those whom He calls, He will qualify.

I did not anticipate where the Spirit of Christ would lead me in the years since I confessed my desire to be used by Him according to His will. It has truly been an adventure. There have been many trials, sorrows and heartaches along the way, but there has also been an abundance of grace to enable me to stay the course. As I have followed the Good Shepherd I have found myself being prepared to serve as His hands, His mouth, His feet. He has led me to the very ones God has always had compassion upon. He has taught me many things along the way. I have learned the struggles of this segment of mankind, and I have learned the details of Christ’s salvation in such a deep and profound way that explaining it to others now flows from my innermost being as water from a spring.

For the past three years I have found myself living and working at an inner city rescue mission. I did not choose to

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come to this place. The Spirit ordered my steps and brought me to it. And what a profitable experience it has been! Even as Joseph was prepared for a ministry in Egypt as he toiled in Potipher’s house and then in the prisons of Pharaoh, I have found myself being prepared for a ministry. This is not MY ministry. It is CHRIST’s ministry. It is also the ministry of the entire body of Christ.

This book declares the things the Spirit has taught me, and I believe it will be profitable for those who also are hearing the call to be Christ’s body, as well as for those to whom Christ is reaching out, the

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captive, the downtrodden, and misunderstood members of this Adamic race.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding as you read.

Joseph Herrin

“In order to get people saved today, you first have to convince them that they need saving.”

Chapter 1 - Slaves to Sin

A brother in Christ who attended a local Bible Study with me made the following insightful remark. He said, “In order to get people saved today, you first have to convince them that they need saving.” He went on to explain that he had found that most men and women do not understand their sinful condition. They had not come to a place of honesty where they would confess that they were enslaved to desires and impulses that they could not control.

It is necessary in leading you to understand the enormity of what God has done in sending His Son to earth to become the Savior of mankind, to clearly present how desperate man’s condition is. You must come to agree with God’s testimony concerning your condition. You must understand that you are a slave to sin, and without the least hope of being able to break free of this captivity through any human means. Willpower cannot break the bonds of sin. No amount of instruction will set you free. Twelve step programs that proclaim a generic view of God and a works based solution will not loose the bonds of sin. Only Christ can set men free from the bonds of sin.

We must back up a step further, for, in order to understand the salvation that God offers, you must agree with God that your addiction is sin. Many have not admitted even this basic truth. Psychiatry and the medical profession today most often classify addiction as a sickness, or a disease. Yet they cannot tell you how a person contracts this disease, nor how it can be scientifically identified. Neither can they prescribe a cure. They can only suggest a treatment, and this treatment is not promised to cure anything. It must be continued all the days of one’s life.

The reason that the medical profession lacks a clear diagnosis and remedy for addiction, is that it is not actually a sickness at all. At least it is not a physical sickness. Addiction is merely a symptom of man’s sinful condition. Addiction is the fruit of our first ancestor’s transgression of the will of God while in

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the Garden of Eden. The Scriptures declare the following:

Romans 5:12-19

- through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...
- by the transgression of the one the many died...
- the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation...
- by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one...
- through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men...
- through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners...

Let us examine what is said here to be sure that it is understood thoroughly. In the opening book of the Bible we read of God creating the first man and woman. He placed them in a garden that He had planted, and instructed them to tend it. At this point there was no death in the creation, no decay, no sickness. Man would never know death if he continued in this state.

Yahweh told the man and his wife that there was one thing they were not to do. It was forbidden for them to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Nothing else was off limits. There was only this one thing they were not to do. Yahweh warned Adam and Eve that in the day they ate from this tree they would most assuredly die. Death would enter into their beings. Decay and sickness would begin to take hold of them until their bodies finally succumbed and life was no more.

Death is the fruit of sin. It was due to sin that death entered the creation. Sin is departing from the will of God. It was not Yahweh's will that man should eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. To do so would be a departure from God's will, and this is sin. If man ever embraced a path of sin, he

would not be able to depart from it apart from God's help. If man were to choose disobedience to God's will, he would become a slave to disobedience. It was therefore critical that he never start down this path.

Romans 6:16

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

God, through His Holy Spirit, has inspired men to record for us the history of our first ancestors. We are told that there was present with them in the Garden of Eden the serpent. This serpent was none other than Satan, the adversary of God and mankind.

Revelation 12:9

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world...

The serpent first approached the woman in the Garden. Through craftiness and deception he enticed her to eat of the forbidden fruit.

Death is the fruit of sin.

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which Yahweh God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day

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you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Some have concluded that this account is nothing other than a fantastic tale. Mention of talking

The earth is a symbol for mankind.

beasts, and fruit with miraculous powers has led them to conclude that it is merely a fictional account that early man devised to explain the presence of

evil in this world. The Spirit of Christ testifies differently. What is described here actually occurred, and the events are not only historical, but they serve as a spiritual parable. To understand the parable, we must look at the context of the entire creation account.

In Genesis chapter one we read the account of Yahweh creating the earth. Genesis chapter one recounts the six days of creation in which God created the earth, culminating in His creation of man on the sixth day. God then gave the man and his wife a command. It was the first command given to man, and is therefore filled with prophetic importance and tremendous significance.

Genesis 1:26-28

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

It has always been the practice of God to reveal, and hide, truth through means of parables. Christ declared that He did not speak anything to the people during His ministry without the use of parables. Christ did not speak the first parable during His life as a man on earth, however. We are told that Christ spoke the creation into existence.

John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Hebrews 11:3

By faith we understand that the ages were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

Jesus Christ, Yahshua the Messiah, is called "the Word of God." We are told that He spoke the creation into being. He has always spoken through means of parables, and the creation story and the fall of man, though historical, is one great parable. The first commandment God gave to mankind was to subdue the earth, and rule over all the beasts. What does this mean? How are we to understand this parable?

The earth is a symbol for mankind. We are told that mankind's body was made from the dust of the earth. The apostle Paul further tells us:

I Corinthians 15:47-49

The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

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The natural man who was created on the sixth day is closely associated with the earth. In particular, man's flesh is directly linked to the earth. From dust we are made, and to dust we shall return. The commandment to subdue the earth can be understood as a parable of God's desire for man to rule over his own flesh. The command to subdue the beasts and rule over them, serves as a parable of Yahweh's desire that mankind rule over all the things that dwell inside his soul (the depths of the sea), all the things that reside in his flesh (the beasts and all creeping things on the earth), and to rule over all spiritual forces in the heavens (the birds of the air).

(If a more thorough study of this parable is desired, I would recommend the book *The Mark of the Beast.*)

The serpent that appeared unto Eve in the Garden was a beast. In Chapter three of Genesis the serpent is twice described this way.

Genesis 3:1, 14

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which Yahweh God had made... Yahweh God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field..."

Yahweh's command to the man and woman was to rule over the beasts. This they failed to do. Rather than making the beast submit to them, they submitted to the beast. Rather than demanding obedience from the beast, they became obedient unto the serpent. Remember then the words of the apostle Paul.

Romans 6:16

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey...

When Adam and Eve presented themselves to the beast for obedience, they became slaves to the beast, becoming subject to the spirit of the beast. What was the spirit of this beast that they obeyed? We can define it as we see how the parable continues.

Genesis 3:14

Yahweh God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life..."

The nature of the serpent is described in the curse that Yahweh spoke upon it. The words "on your belly you will go" are filled with symbolism. The spiritual sense of this statement is that the serpent would be ruled by its appetites, it would go forth on its belly. The next phrase is also symbolic, "and dust you will eat all the days of your life." This too is a parable pointing to the type of appetites that would rule the beast. Man's flesh was formed of the dust of the earth, and here is symbolized an appetite for fleshly things.

When Adam and Eve presented themselves to the beast for obedience, they fell under the rule of the beast nature.

When Adam and Eve presented themselves to the beast for obedience, they fell under the rule of the beast nature.

They began to be driven by the appetites of their flesh. The apostle Paul alludes to this form of slavery in the following words:

Philippians 3:18-19

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.

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Christ referred to Satan as “the god of this world.” This fallen sinful world lies under his dominion, and those who are citizens of this world are ruled by their belly. Their minds are set upon earthly things. They are dust eaters. Paul also defines for us what many of these fleshly appetites are to which man is enslaved.

Galatians 5:19-21

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

All these fleshly appetites entered into the human race through our first ancestors.

Addictions of all types certainly fall inside the scope of this list. Some are addicted to various forms of immorality and sensuality. Some are addicted to idolatry, they covet the ma-

terial possessions of this world. Some are addicted to anger and all that goes along with it. Others are addicted to drunkenness and carousing, which would include addictions to all types of substances that alter one’s mood and mental state.

All these fleshly appetites entered into the human race through our first ancestors. “Through the one man’s transgression, the many were made sinners. Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

As we understand that the accounts of the creation and the fall of man are historical, as well as being spiritual parables, we begin to perceive many things. Consider for a moment how a serpent kills its prey. A serpent injects venom inside the victim’s body, and this poison begins to spread death through the entire body. Eventually the vital organs shut down and death results.

This too is a parable, revealing the manner in which Satan has poisoned man’s being. Satan enticed the man and woman to eat of that which was forbidden, and in doing so sin entered into their being. Sin always results in death. It is a toxin that is present in all mankind from the day they are conceived. The very seed of mankind is infected with sin, and so death and sin are the portion of all who are born of the lineage of the first Adam.

The apostle Paul has aptly described the condition of all men under the curse of sin.

Romans 7:18

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh...

When you and I are born, sin is already present within us. We are born enslaved to the desires of the flesh. A child does not have to be taught to lust, and covet, and act selfishly. No man needs to go out searching for an addiction, or an enslaving desire. These things are present in our flesh, for we are all under the curse of sin.

Romans 7:14

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

I have met many addicts as I have lived and worked at a rescue mission. Many have been struggling with addictions for as long as they can remember. I have sat in meetings with them and heard them testify of their resolve to do better, and to finally overcome the appetites of their flesh. I have watched these same men fall, some almost immediately after purposing to not do so. I have seen the look of resignation in the eyes of the more honest ones. They have given up the delusion that they might somehow free themselves from their captivity by a further act of willpower, or from some renewed commitment. The emotion of the moment always fades away, and some moment of weakness comes and they fall once more.

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The first thing you must do in order to be set free from your slavery to the appetites of the flesh is to agree with those things God has testified concerning your condition.

Romans 3:10-12

As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."

It requires humility to agree with God concerning our human condition. The proud man or woman wants to believe there is some good in them. They want to testify that they can accomplish anything they set their mind to. They want God to acknowledge that they are inherently good, when He testifies that our condition is just the opposite.

Some might argue that they have heard of instances of men and women who overcame their addiction quite apart from God. I too know of some rare instances where men and women have ceased taking illegal drugs, or put away a life of drunkenness, and some of them knew nothing of the salvation of Christ. This is merely part of Satan's deceit to keep men and women perpetually trying to improve themselves by their own efforts.

What those who point out such examples are not acknowledging is that though these men and women might have put away one manifestation of the sin that resides in their flesh, that the poison yet remains, and it always manifests in some form. Some have been able to quit drinking, but they have then made the pursuit of their life the acquisition of material possessions. This is an addiction that is not condemned by society. Even a carnal church speaks highly of such a pursuit. Christ, however, sees that nothing has changed in the person's life. They are still going forth on their belly, living to satisfy a hunger for fleshly things. There is actually much more written in Scriptures to condemn a pursuit of material possessions, than there

is to condemn a life of drunkenness.

So do not be deceived. No man or woman has ever in history overcome the power of sin that is resident in their being, apart from the deliverance provided through Jesus Christ, Yahshua the Messiah. Neither will you be able to do so. If you can receive this as truth, and are humble enough to admit your inability to free yourself from the raging appetites inside your being, then you have taken the first step to receiving true deliverance through the Son of God.

The first thing you must do in order to be set free from your slavery to the appetites of the flesh is to agree with... God

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Chapter 2 - Separated by Sin

I have met a large number of men in recent years through my association with a rescue mission who have been struggling with addiction. It has been my experience that the majority of them have little problem confessing that they have a problem with evil desires that reside within them. Most will also freely confess that they have tried many times unsuccessfully to overcome their addiction. I believe that men who have been held captive by cravings

We are all born in the condition where no good thing dwells in our flesh.

for alcohol and drugs are quicker to recognize and acknowledge their captivity to sin than those who have never struggled with these issues.

It is more difficult to bring men who are not enslaved by some sin that society finds abhorrent to admit that they too have a sin problem. Yet all men suffer from the same problem. We are all the offspring of Adam. We are all born in the condition where no good thing dwells in our flesh. As mentioned earlier, some men simply channel their selfish desires and fleshly appetites into some form that society does not condemn. Many give themselves to the pursuit of material gain, or to a pursuit of entertainment and a life of ease and pleasure. In God's sight all of these things constitute sin.

Some men also have become ensnared to addictions that are more easily hidden from society than alcoholism and drug addiction. A vast number of men are enslaved to an appetite for sexual stimulation. This is an area that was once a source of great shame and frustration in my own life.

As a young boy around the age of thirteen I had my first encounter with pornography. I had gone over to a friend's house. This friend had older brothers, and he took me into a room in the house that his brothers used to hang out. On the walls were pictures of naked women taken from the pages of some pornographic magazine. My flesh was immediately enticed. I did not ask for these desires to be

present within me. They were simply there.

Having once experienced the physical stimulation of viewing such pictures, my body and mind desired to repeat the experience. I knew that doing so was sin, for I had for many years been raised in church, and I had a sincere conversion experience when I was ten years old, followed by the act of baptism in the church my family attended.

Becoming a Christian, however, does not mean that the sinful desires of the flesh go away. These appetites will be present with us for as long as we inhabit these bodies of flesh, but we can come to a place where they no longer rule over us. We can enter into a place of victory over the flesh, its passions and desires.

As a young man growing up in the church there were many things that the ministers and teachers of the church failed to teach me. I believe this was largely due to their own lack of understanding of the dynamics of spiritual warfare, and the absence of a clear conception of the process of ruling over the flesh. I heard many things that were contradictory and confusing.

Some ministers proclaim the false message that when a person becomes a Christian they will no longer sin, or even desire to do so. They usually build such a doctrine upon one or two isolated Scriptures pulled out of their proper context, and entirely misunderstood. Following is one such verse.

I John 3:9

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

This seems like a very cut and dried statement. Some ministers use this verse to tell their congregation that if they are sinning it is proof that they have not been born of God and are therefore not members of the body of Christ. A perusal of Scrip-

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ture will reveal that this is simply not true. Men and women do not cease struggling with sinful desires when they are born again of the Spirit of Christ. Nor do they always walk in victory over sin. The apostle Paul in writing to the churches spoke much on the need to rule over the sin within our being. He even testified the following regarding himself.

I Corinthians 9:27

I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

No, the desire to sin, and the passions and appetites of the flesh, do not go away when a person comes to Christ. They must still be faced, but God has given us a way through Christ to walk victoriously over these things. In his letter to the church in Galatia, Paul gives us this further insight into our struggle.

Galatians 5:16-17

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another...

It is obvious from these words that becoming a Christian does not bring an end to our struggle with evil desires that reside in our flesh. But it does provide all that is necessary to begin walking victoriously over these evil appetites. Failing to overcome the desires of the flesh does not imply that a person is not a Christian. It simply reveals that they have not yet become spiritually mature. They are still fleshly in some area, or areas, of their life.

There was a city called Corinth that was a part of the Roman Empire in the days of the early church. The apostles Paul and Apollos both preached there. A large number of the citizens of this city came to faith in Christ, and experienced spiritual birth. This was a very wicked city, filled with idols and sensu-

ality. The pagan temples employed prostitutes to engage in sexual activity with the devotees of the various gods and goddesses.

The apostle Paul had to strongly rebuke the members of this church because they had been united to Christ, but had not separated themselves from the lusts and desires of the flesh. Some Christians were still going to these pagan temples and having sexual relations with prostitutes. The apostle admonished them in the following way.

I Corinthians 6:15-20

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, "The two will become one flesh." But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

becoming a Christian does not bring an end to our struggle with evil desires that reside in our flesh.

That Paul is speaking to Christians who have been born again of the Spirit of Christ is apparent from the words here. Paul declares that he is speaking to members of the body of Christ. He is speaking to those who are temples of the Holy Spirit. Only those who are Christians can be described in this way. Yet these Christians were sinning. That a person is troubled by some besetting sin, or has fallen into some addictive behavior, is not evidence then that they are lost, and separated from the life of Christ. Many people are lost, and acting sinfully is something they cannot avoid. But there are those in the church who are what Paul describes as "carnal Christians." The word *carnal* means *fleshly*.

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I Corinthians 3:1-3

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

When Paul asks them whether they are not acting “like mere men,” he is speaking of them acting as if they have never been born of the Spirit of God, but are still Adamic men, no different than those who are foreigners to

Viewing pornography was a love/hate experience for me.

the life of Christ. It is possible for a Christian to walk in sin, but it is not the will of God that they do so. Yahweh has made every provision for His children to overcome every desire and passion of the flesh.

I was not presented these truths as a young man growing up in the church. When I found within myself a desire to view pornography, and entertain lustful fantasies, I became troubled with thoughts that I might not be a Christian. These thoughts tormented me for many years. Many nights I would lay awake wondering whether I would be cast into hell and separated forever from the presence of God. I had been told that Christians don't sin, and I knew I was sinning.

I know now that God allowed me to experience these torments that I might press in to know the truth of the matter, and that I might be able to instruct others regarding the truth. I am therefore glad that Yahweh did not spare me these experiences.

There have been a few occasions when men at the rescue mission have suggested that I was not quali-

fied to address their problems with alcohol and drugs, since these things have never been an issue in my life. I have never been drunk, nor have I ever taken illegal drugs. I have, however, struggled with addictive desires in many areas. Sexual lust, covetousness, and an appetite for foods that are unhealthy have all been areas in which I have found myself tempted and failing time and again. Yet God has shown me that victory is possible in every area, and I am now walking as an overcomer in these things.

Sexual lust was perhaps one of the strongest and most shameful of the addictive desires that plagued me. From the time of my first exposure to pornography, I found the desire would not go away, and instead grew to become an obsessive thing. When I was sixteen years old I took my first job, working at a small, family owned grocery store. At the store there was a magazine rack where several different pornographic magazines were sold.

At the age of sixteen I could not purchase pornography, nor would I have openly done so. I had been raised in the church, and I knew that this constituted a great sin. I therefore began taking magazines off of the rack and sneaking them out behind the store to view them. Later I began stashing the magazines out back, and I would return after work and retrieve them and take them home where I would hide them in my room.

Such behavior is identical to that of many men and women who become addicted to illegal drugs. They are ashamed of their habit when in the presence of family, or others who do not participate in such things. They will also resort to stealing to provide that which their flesh desires. Their life becomes one of subterfuge and deception, and worries of being found out, and brought to open shame often trouble their minds, even as it did my own.

Viewing pornography was a love/hate experience for me. My flesh craved it, yet the immediate after-effect was a feeling of guilt and shame, and a knowledge that my sin had brought a separation

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between myself and God. This separation from God is what troubled me the most. I felt like I could not pray to God after having viewed pornography, and usually I waited until the next morning to confess my sin and ask God to forgive me.

This experience of separation from God is normal for those who engage in sin. The first occasion of sin, that of Adam and Eve in the Garden, reveals the effect it has upon mankind. Immediately after Adam and Eve sinned we read the following.

Genesis 3:8-10

They heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh God among the trees of the garden. Then Yahweh God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

Our sin causes us to feel exposed and naked before God. We know that He sees all things, and He is aware of what we have been doing. Our natural reaction is to run away from that which exposes our failings. Fear becomes a part of our life, and we lack the confidence to enter into the presence of God.

Sin and the concept of separation from God are inextricably woven together. Sin always brings a break in the fellowship that Yahweh desires to have with mankind. This separation produces other harmful consequences.

If we return to the record of man's first sin, and we begin to see that which is revealed in the parables contained therein, we can discern more about sin and its relationship to separation from God. The words of the serpent as he enticed the woman are filled with insights of profound importance.

Genesis 3:4-5

The serpent said to the woman... "God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

There is truth mixed in with the words of the deceiver. The most deceptive lies always contain an element of truth. The serpent was speaking truth when he said that eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil would grant Eve the ability to be "like God" in a way she had not formerly known. This area was in the ability to know good and evil for herself, apart from hearing from God.

Of all the creatures that Yahweh created, including the angels and mankind, He did not grant to any the authority to know good and evil, right and wrong, apart from Him. In order to know what was good and evil, all creatures had to hear from God. Only God had the authority to determine what was good and evil. For the creation to continue in harmony, and endless life, it needed only to abide in God, receiving the knowledge of God's will, and walking in obedience to it.

Life for the first man and woman was very simple. They had been created for God's pleasure, and their highest fulfillment and happiness would be in accomplishing that for which they were created.

In order to know what was good and evil, all creatures had to hear from God.

God spoke to the man and woman and told them what was good, and what was evil. He told them that it was good for them to be fruitful and multiply. It was good for them to tend the garden that He had placed them in. It was good for them to rule over the beasts. It was evil for them to eat of the fruit that was forbidden.

Although mankind had not received the Spirit of Christ to indwell their being at that time, they were walking in the initial stages of what God desired for

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them. He has always desired that mankind should receive the knowledge of good and evil, the direction for their actions, and even the very words they are to speak, from Him. Receiving the knowledge of good and evil from God keeps man ever dependent upon God, and ever abiding in Him. We dare not lose our connection to Him if we are to do that which is pleasing to Him in all circumstances.

When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of this tree, they gained the ability to look inside of themselves and determine good and evil, right and wrong.

Satan offered to the woman the ability to know good and evil apart from communication with God. He told her that if she ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of

Good and Evil, she would become like God and be able to know good and evil herself. When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of this tree, they gained the ability to look inside of themselves and determine good and evil, right and wrong. They truly became "like God" in having this ability. However, it was not an ability God wanted mankind to possess. The inevitable consequence of mankind looking inside of themselves to discern good and evil is that they would no longer look to Him for this knowledge. They would become separated from God.

As soon as the man and woman ate of this fruit, separation occurred. They had embarked on a path where they would begin to determine what was right and wrong by their own innate ability gained through an act of disobedience. Rather than seeking the face of God every time they were faced with a decision, or desired to know what they should be doing, they looked inside of themselves and found the answer. (This subject is discussed in greater depth in the book *Sabbath*, which can be found here: <http://www.heart4god.ws/id214.htm>.)

God planned from before the foundation of the earth that man should become complete and mature as He placed His Spirit within man's body. Man was destined to be a temple, and a dwelling place for the Spirit of God. Yahshua spoke of this desire of God in the following words.

John 14:16-17

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.

God formerly sent His Spirit to abide WITH mankind. This was the experience of Abraham, of Moses, of the prophets and priests of the Old Covenant. God had envisioned a day when man would enter into a fuller communion with Himself. It was never His desire for mankind to walk independently of Him. Yet, He allowed the man and woman to choose this course, and in doing so He has allowed mankind to understand the great folly and tragedy of becoming separated from their Creator.

This separation always leads to a loss of light and life. This separation always ends in darkness and death. Why is this so? It is because all light of the truth, and all life is found in God. The apostle John spoke of the Son of God in this way:

John 1:4, 9

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men... There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

Yahshua confessed the following:

John 8:12

"I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

All light and life are in God, for light and life are His very nature.

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James 1:17

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Sin is a turning away from God to do our own will. We often find ourselves sinning when some desire of the flesh makes its will known, and we set our entire being to accomplish this desire. When a desire is contrary to Yahweh's will for us, then inevitably we must turn away from Him. In turning away from the source of light and life, we find that darkness and death become our portion.

Understanding the nature of sin, and of man's plight in this way, we can begin to make some application to the problem of overcoming addictive desires. The world's solutions only treat the symptoms of addiction. They never get to the root of the problem, and therefore they offer no real cure. The only real answer to the problem of addictive behavior is to restore light and life to our beings. Since all light and life are found in God, the solution to addictive behavior by necessity mandates that we be restored to God. When the life of God becomes resident in our being once more, we are able to put the desires of the flesh to death, and to walk according to the will of the Father.

*Sin is a turning away
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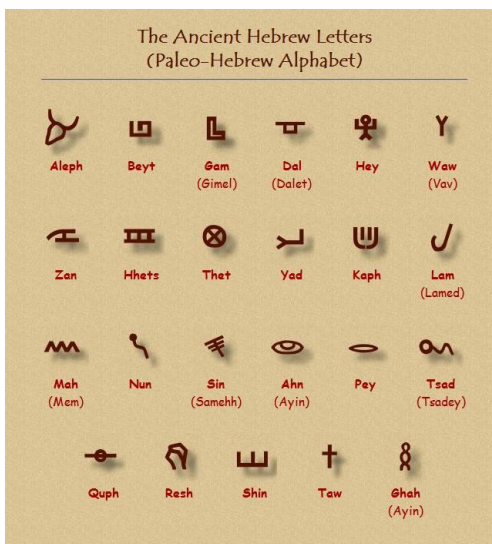
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PARABLES PRECEPT—The Hebrew Alphabet



(Image source: Ancient Hebrew Resource Center's Website)

Recently, I have been studying the Hebrew alphabet. I have purchased several books authored by Jeff Benner, including *Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible*. I

have found this a very helpful topic to study.

The Old Testament of the Bible (the first 39 of the Bible's 66 books) was originally written in Hebrew. The Hebrew alphabet has changed greatly over the years.

The oldest known form of the written Hebrew alphabet is called Paleo-Hebrew. Paleo-Hebrew used a pictographic alphabet. A pictogram is a type of word picture. The early Hebrew people used images as letters to construct words that were related to the pictures used.

The first letter, Aleph, is drawn as an image of an ox-head (𐤀). This symbol represented strength and power. Oxen were used in the way men use tractors on a farm today. The oxen would be yoked to various farm implements that they would pull behind them. Other animals were also used in this way, such as the horse and the donkey, but the ox was the strongest of all.

When the Hebrews wanted to write about some object that was strong, or powerful, they would often incorporate the symbol of the ox-head, the Aleph, into the word. For example, the word for the pole that would hold up the middle of the tent in which the Hebrews dwelt, would be written in the following form.



(Note that Hebrew is read from right to left, just the opposite of how English is read.)

This word above in Paleo-Hebrew is the same as the English word "pole." The letter Aleph is followed by the letter Beyt. The letter Beyt depicts the layout of a tent. Hebrew tents were divided into sections for men and women. The letter Beyt shows the floor plan of a Hebrew tent.

Combining the two images together, one gets the meaning of "the strength of the tent." The pole is the strength of the tent.