

Passages we wish we could ignore

Romans 12:9 and overcoming sin

by STEPHEN MOORE

Romans 12:9 says, “**Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.**” These actions are two sides of the same coin, and they are mutually dependent. Overcoming sin involves not just hating our sin, but focusing on what’s good. Although we’ll never be perfectly victorious over sin in this life (1 John 1:8), we must recognize



that overcoming sin is part of the battle which is the Christian life. God hasn’t left us to battle sin on our own, however. He helps us in the struggle.

Part of the process of overcoming sin involves recognizing the transformation that has indeed taken place

within the believer. Paul writes, “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ

Jesus” (Romans 6:11).

When Paul says, “*consider yourselves dead to sin,*” he’s telling us to remember that in coming to Christ, the power of sin has been broken in our lives. We were at one

time slaves to sin, but now we are slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:17-18). At the cross, the power of sin was broken and in becoming Christians, we are set free from sin’s slavery over us.

The next part of the process is recog-

nizing our inability to overcome sin and our need to rely on the power of God's Holy Spirit, who dwells within us. Back to Romans 7, Paul says, "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out" (Romans 7:25). Paul later says, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11). The Holy Spirit, through God's Word (John 17:17), works sanctification in the people of God. Sin is overcome as we submit ourselves to God and refuse the temptations of the flesh (James 4:7-8).

PHILLIPIANS 1:6

...⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Another part of the process of overcoming sin is to run away from it. We have to adopt the attitude of Joseph who, when tempted by Potiphar's wife to come to bed with her, left the room so quickly that he left his cloak in her

hands (Genesis 39:15). We simply must make every effort to run from the things that tempt us to sin. Jesus tells us to cut off our hand or pluck out our eye if they "offend" us (Matthew 5:29-30). This means removing from our lives those things that especially tempt us to sin. In short, we have to change the habits that lead to sin.

Finally, we need to immerse ourselves in the truth of the gospel. The gospel is not only the means by which we are saved, but it is also the means by

which we are sanctified (Romans 16:25). If we think we are saved by grace, but sanctified by our own efforts, we fall into error (Galatians 3:1-3). Sanctification is as

much a work of God as justification. The promise we have from the Bible is that he who began a good work in us will complete it on the last day (Philippians 1:6). *Hate what is evil, cling to what is good.*