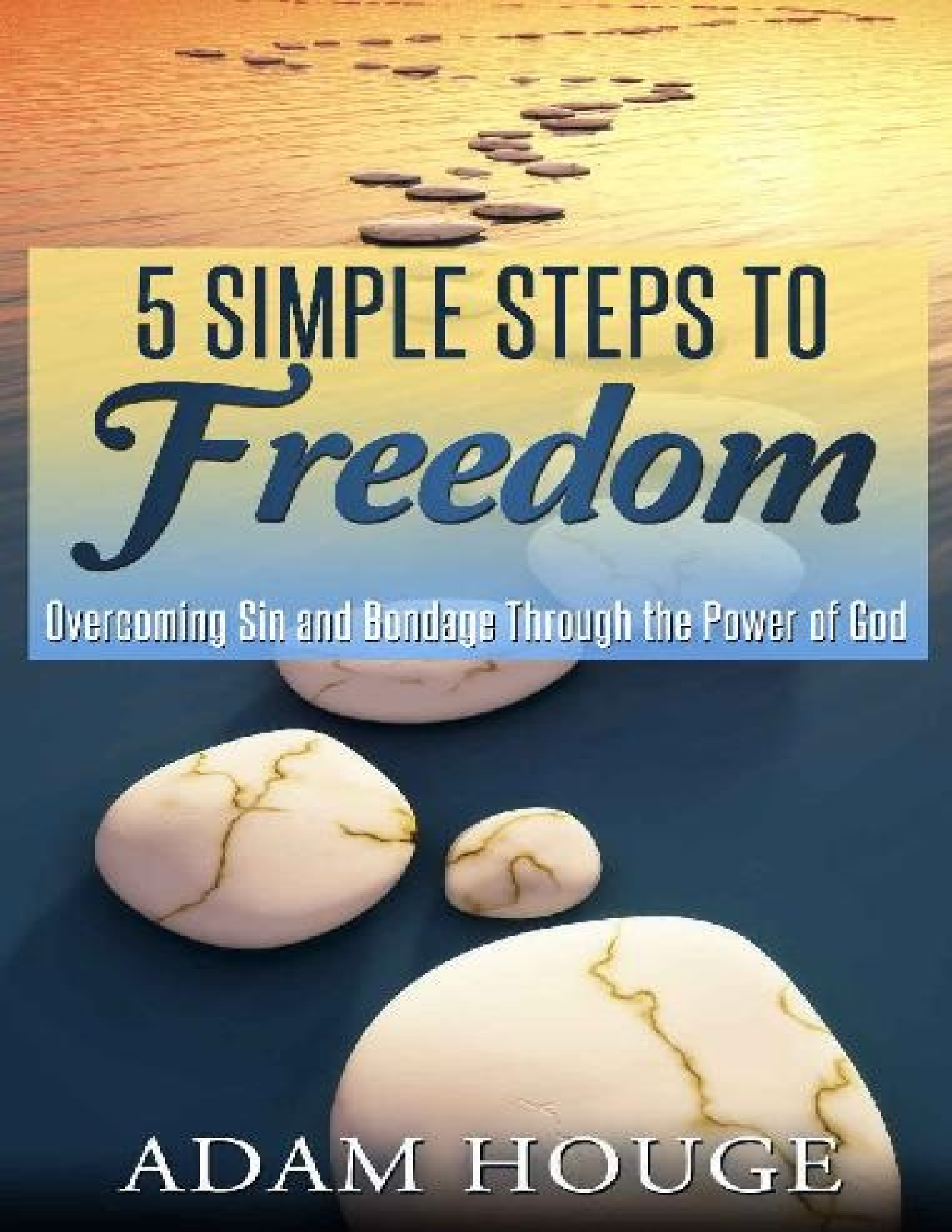

5 SIMPLE STEPS TO
Freedom
Overcoming Sin and Bondage Through the Power of God
ADAM HOUGE

5 Simple Steps to Freedom: Overcoming Sin and Bondage Through the Power of God™

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Table of Contents

Step One

Remembering His Love

Step Two

Committing to Perfect Humility

Step Three

Responding Rightly to the Love of God

Step Four

Overcoming with God's Strength

Step Five

Remaining Free and Pure Forever

Conclusion

I'd Love to Hear from You!

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About the Author

Step One

Remembering His Love

God's love convicts us. It is because of His love we have life, and by His love that we're forgiven and free. Whenever we struggle with sin, it's good to remember the nature of His love. After sinning, many thoughts arise in the believer's mind, such as, "Is God mad at me?" Or after believers sin and repent, they're attacked with the thought "God isn't okay with me."

At this time it would be good to establish the two types of sinners. There is one group who secretly want their sin, so they listen to a sermon such as "God has grace; God's not mad. He still accepts you" as a commission to continue in sin. They have a sigh of relief, saying to themselves, "Oh good, I can keep doing this sin and still be okay with God. I'm so glad because I enjoy it and don't want to let go of it. Praise God!"

But God is not okay with that sort of person. Such a person ***must*** repent and can't keep justifying it. Jesus Christ was not crucified to justify sin but, rather, to condemn it in the flesh. Consider that the world doesn't repent—and are they justified? Any such Christian is acting no differently than an unbeliever and must be made whole in the Holy Spirit.

However, a majority of Christians fall under the second group: the group that fights hard to get rid of sin. Then they wonder if God is okay with them and struggle with thoughts of whether He really forgives them or not.

Now, let's consider the nature of God's love for a moment. Jesus came down to this earth, knowing no suffering and knowing no pain, because He lived in a place of continual peace, which He created. But rather than receive Lordly glory, He wrapped Himself in flesh and humbled Himself for our sakes.

He didn't do it because He felt obligated to do so, but because He loves you. Then He humbled himself to suffer the worst type of agony anyone can suffer. Jesus humbled Himself time and time again, even to the point of death, because He loves you and wants to save you. He wasn't crucified to condemn the repentant but, rather, to save them!

When we focus on the Lord's presence and meditate on it, it keeps us from sin. Satan knows this and plants seeds of self-condemnation, that we may be focused on ourselves and our situation rather than on the Lord. In this we are made to stumble again. Then, because of a series of stumbles, we wonder if God is still

okay with us.

There are so many Christians who, after repenting, struggle with the thought that God is mad. They can't feel His presence; they feel condemned. The number-one most important thing to note is that such a person feels broken—broken over their sin. But what does the Lord say of those who are broken over their sin? This is what we read:

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise." Psalm 51:17

When you're broken over your sin, your heart is in the right place. God is looking for those who *want* to change. Brokenness is a fruit of the desire for change.

But unfortunately, when we're broken, Satan steps in to beat us up. Now, there is a difference between brokenness and self-condemnation. Brokenness is sorrow. Repentance means to be sorry and change—and remember that every "sorry" begins with sorrow. Self-condemnation, by contrast, comes from anger and disappointment with oneself. When we condemn ourselves, it's because we're mad at ourselves and disappointed that we can't do better. Then Satan steps in and suggests to you that God is mad at you, when you're really the one who's mad at yourself.

When we feel disappointed, the enemy beats us up, saying, "It's really God who's disappointed." Then, when we believe his lies, we slip into the depths of self-condemnation. It would seem after this that some believers wallow in their disappointment, as if to facilitate some type of self-inflicted punishment.

"Well, if God isn't mad at me, He should be! Look at how I've messed up, and how many times!"

Beloved, Jesus wasn't crucified to condemn you in repentance, but to save you through it. Your own heart and Satan condemn you, but the Lord's heart is to cherish you. God knows that when you focus on His presence, you abstain from sin, but when your eyes veer off of Him, you fall into temptation. Needless to say, He wants to embrace you in your repentance so that you can be free from stumbling. He doesn't want to push you away; He wants to hold you near and draw you close. The nature of hate is to push away and kill, but the nature of love is to draw near and hold dear.

And what does the word say about this?

“The Lord is *near* to those who have a broken heart, and *saves* such as have a contrite spirit.” Psalm 34:18

God is near to you when you’re broken. He doesn’t condemn you, nor is He disappointed. He *does* want you to grow beyond this, but He doesn’t condemn you in it. Beloved, unless we move beyond our doubts and wrath, we’ll never see the fullness of a life without bondage.

Satan holds you in your sin through your own self-inflicted condemnation. But our own wrath doesn’t produce the results God is looking for, nor does it create a heart of righteousness in us. By being angry with ourselves, we are holding ourselves in our sin. This is because sin is overcome in the way we approach God’s strength, not through our own resources. When we condemn ourselves, we’re acting out of the flesh and not working in the power of the Holy Spirit. Although we *must* be broken in our sins, we ought not to condemn ourselves but, rather, press forward for victory.

We do not overcome sin through our own efforts, forcing against it in our anger or strength. We overcome it by focusing on the Lord. When we take our vision from Him and rest it on ourselves and on our situation, we are weakened because we’re no longer focusing on the Lord and His heart. We are strengthened by focusing on Him, like Peter walking on the water.

Indeed, strong Christians are not those who are strong in themselves; instead, they are strong through Christ. Therefore, Beloved, if you want the full strength of God, align your heart with His. Focus on His presence and meditate on His Holy Spirit. Our wrath on ourselves doesn’t lead us to be righteous. In fact, no wrath produces the righteousness of God. As it is written,

“…for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” James 1:20

Rather than doubting the love of God and having wrath on ourselves, we ought to pray in the Spirit. For it is written,

“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting…” 1 Timothy 2:8

When struggling with sin, we need the Lord’s help to overcome it. Beloved, we must pray in the Spirit, having faith that He will help us. Be broken, but do not be wrathful. Jesus doesn’t condemn you. He loves you and wants to embrace you, not push you away.

When you repent, He isn’t angry; He isn’t disappointed. Rather, He is so

overjoyed that He would do backflips for you! All He wants is to have you. He has been fighting so hard for your heart already, why would He give up now? Beloved, don't run from the arms of God but, instead, let Him embrace you. All His heart wants to say to you is, "Oh, my baby, finally you have it right! Come and let Me hold you now." When you repent, He isn't mad; He is full of love and *wants* to hold you.

Remember the prodigal son? He felt unworthy even to be called a son, so he made himself out to be a servant. But his father, by his reaction, more or less said, "Nonsense! You will always be my son, and I will always love you and cherish you. I'm just glad to have you now. Let's rejoice! Please, my child, come enter my happiness!"

You're so precious to Him, why would you think He would want to hurt you? Beloved, He doesn't want to hurt you; He wants to hold you. Sometimes we just need to accept that God is greater than us and His love is better than our own. He loves us perfectly, and His heart is above ours.

It is *His* heart that we should strive to have. We should strive to become believers whose hearts are conformed to the heart of God. He loves us and accepts us when we repent, and He doesn't turn us away.

Beloved, trust that He does love you and doesn't want to turn you away. Do you not believe this? Then accept it and sit in His Spirit. Let His Holy Spirit wrap around you, hold you, and cherish you. Let Him embrace you and set you free from the things that break your heart.

In this step we are remembering God's love and being convicted by it. Let's return to His Spirit without fear. If we respond to conviction with repentance, then what have we to fear when we know the love of God covers us? For love casts away fear. Therefore, let's be convicted by it and respond to it with repentance.

Step Two

Committing to Perfect Humility

All believers have an issue with sin at some point in their walk—not merely a one-time sin, but an issue that causes them to struggle where they need growth. It's a reality that faces every individual. We're not perfect people, and we have weaknesses.

Yet the sin itself may not be the only weakness with which we struggle. Like tangled roots in the earth, there are many issues that we don't see hidden beneath the dirt. Whether we struggle with overcoming a particular issue or are in complete bondage, there will always be other sins propping up the main issue.

Remember that a weed has to be pulled up by the roots in order to keep it from coming back. Likewise, we need to get to the root of the sin and remove it if we don't want the issue to arise again.

But we can't possibly get to the root of an issue unless we can be humble enough to admit our faults. If we believe we've been a strong Christian in the past but are now struggling, then the truth is that we have been weak. We aren't strong because of how we judge ourselves but, instead, according to how the Lord strengthens us in the Holy Spirit. The mere belief that we're strong doesn't make us strong. If we do not seek His strength, we will not be strengthened. However, if we live according to the Spirit and walk in Him, His strength to overcome will be natural.

Therefore, it is imperative for all believers who struggle with sin to say in their heart that they are not strong. Strong Christians are not determined by their own strength but, rather, by how they make God their strength in their weaknesses. A strong Christian isn't really strong at all. Rather, he or she appears strong because of having God as his or her strength.

If we view ourselves as strong Christians, it gives us opportunity for pride. But if we confess that we are continually weak and in need of the Lord's strength, we will be more likely to overcome. Why? Because those who say, "I am full," never seek to eat. But he who says, "I am never full enough," never stops eating. Likewise, if we confess that we are "not strong enough," we will always be in pursuit of more strength. Indeed, we should always seek to be filled with the things of Christ, having a never-ending appetite for the Spirit.

But we need to have the humility to admit where our weaknesses lie. If we

cannot humble ourselves before the Lord, we cannot overcome our sin. Humility is necessary so that humiliation will not ensue.

Having humility helps us to understand our need for a lifestyle change. We have to confess that we haven't been getting everything right, for which reason we have points of stumbling. As we grow nearer to the Lord, we should be constantly changing.

When a baby grows, it changes. A baby begins as a newborn and then becomes an infant, then a sitter, then a crawler, then a toddler. After that, it becomes a child, then an adolescent, then a teenager, then an adult. Whenever something grows, it goes through phases of change. Likewise, Beloved, the more we grow in Christ, the more we should be changing as well.

If we're not having humility, we will not grow as we're supposed to. Humility permits change, whereas pride says, "I'm good enough—why do I need to change?" Yet God calls us to grow constantly. Even as it is written,

"…but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18

This scripture tells us that we should always be coming to know our Savior better. We are called to grow in our relationship with Him and in knowing Him. Unless we're humble enough to admit our need for growth, we will not find the knowledge to overcome.

Therefore, humility becomes necessary. It opens our eyes to see our own faults. When we struggle with pride, we have a tendency to justify ourselves, point the finger at other people, and downplay our own sins. But if we are given over to humility, we will take the plank out of our own eyes before we worry about the specks in others'. Therefore, humility is necessary for a lifestyle change—a change that requires not only growth but also movement away from the pattern of sin altogether.

There are various sources of sin in our lives: idleness, laziness, gluttony, lack of self-discipline in seeking the Lord, spending more time with other things than with the Lord, and idols. There are obviously more things to add to this list, but these are a few of the serious sins that many Christians regard as "smaller" sins without realizing it. Some may say, "Well, I don't worship an engraved image; therefore, I do not have an idol." But if you're consistently giving your time to something other than the Lord, you have an idol.

Some people would rather hang out with friends constantly than seek the Lord, calling it “fellowship” to justify it. But we, as believers, fellowship over the Lord and not over idle things. If a person is continually idle with friends or family, their friends or family are likely becoming an idol. If you consistently would rather watch football than spend time with God, you have an idol. If you consistently would rather watch a movie or play a game than spend time with God, you have an idol.

Examine your own heart and be humble. Do you have an idol? Change your heart and remove it from yourself. Be holy before your God and commit yourself fully to Him. There are many issues with which we struggle, but ultimately we need to have open eyes to our own hearts. Then, through humility, we logically need to call our sin for what it is and step away from it. Let us not get caught up in the emotion of sin, nor the lust of it. But let’s instead be free through the love, grace, and power of God.

Take the time to examine your heart, and if there are any issues, be humble and admit your faults. Pray that God will open your eyes to see the areas in which you need growth. Then have the humility to start growing, that He may become your strength.

Remember that every repentance begins with confession and every confession begins with humility. Beloved, examine yourself to see if a lifestyle change is in order. If so, be zealous for God and carry your cross. Do not live for this life, but instead be diligent to live for the Lord. Even as we said earlier,

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

In this step we are humbling ourselves to admit fault. If we’ve been caught up in idle or worldly things, we need to remove them from our lives. That way we can feed our spirits with Christ and strengthen them to overcome. Examine your heart to see if you’ve been spending more time with things other than God. Then abstain from those things and give the time to the Lord instead. In so doing, you’ll see your own walk growing beyond anything you could have ever imagined. Swiftly He will be your strength and bless you in your humility.

Step Three

Responding Rightly to the Love of God

We know that God loves us, but sometimes we forget the nature of His love when we're struggling. We forget how He chooses to relate to us in temptation and set us free through intimacy with Him. But rather than be overtaken by a trespass, we should abide in His Spirit and sit in His love. If we spend more time focusing on Him and His goodness, we will be strengthened by His Spirit.

Remembering these things, we need to respond rightly to His love. He gave everything for us so we could be made free. We should arm ourselves with the same mind, taking up our crosses in this life.

Bondage is not an isolated sin. It is not one area in which we struggle, but a set of areas. Knowing this, we need to make it our effort to remain humble in everything. That way we can admit to our other faults that are propping up the main issue. Rather than succumb to the underlying issues, we need to be more fervent for the Lord. The best way to respond to His love is to dedicate ourselves wholly to a life for Him.

Rather than be caught up in idle activities that weigh us down, we should be spending more time with the Lord. Consider the various activities you do. With what or whom are you spending more time than with the Lord? Are you being idle in your walk, or are you consistently diving into the word of God and seeking to live according to His voice? Are you being led by God in your walk? Are you attentive to the Holy Spirit's voice and conviction, that you may obey Him continually, all day and every day?

Give your life wholeheartedly to Him; be caught up in His presence daily and let a fire be rekindled in your heart. The more time you spend with God, the less time you'll spend with weakness and sin.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider this as a step. When we're caught up in a pattern of sin, we need to rededicate ourselves to the Lord. We need to remember His love, be humble, and respond rightly to it. We need to force ourselves to be fervent in spending more time with the Lord.

Also, when tempted, rather than running from God, we need to run straight into His arms. We're only tempted when we take our focus off Him. For this reason, it is more than obvious that we need to return our focus to Him in order to overcome.

If we’re being tempted, we overcome by running into His arms. If we’ve just sinned, we stop it from becoming a pattern by running to and remaining in His Spirit. If we’ve been stuck in a rut of sin, trying to get out, this requires a lifestyle change—a change of heart and a change of surroundings. We need to surround ourselves with the things of Christ, being careful not to depart from meditating on His Spirit.

In remembering how He has loved us, we need to repay Him with the same and wholly dedicate ourselves to Him. Even as it is written,

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:1–2

Every time you get caught in the heat of the moment, rededicate yourself to the Lord and quickly refocus on His Holy Spirit. Crawl into your Daddy’s lap and be delivered from sin.

In this step we are choosing to respond rightly to His love. We’re choosing to turn to Him in our sins, that we may be strengthened by Him.

Step Four

Overcoming with God's Strength

We cannot allow sin or the ambitions of the devil to rule over us. Rather, we must resist the enemy. The desire to resist doesn't always exist in the heat of the moment, however. Therefore, we must push back against our own heart to please the Lord. In this we will show our true heart to Him; but if we willfully succumb, then we willfully sin.

When faced with sin, the Christian often struggles within the place of the heart. In the place of the heart, we find two different desires: the desire of the flesh and the desire of the Spirit. If we spend much time focusing on our own desires rather than on the desires of the Spirit, we will be enslaved by sin. However, if we resist desire and force ourselves to focus on the Spirit's heart, to live according to it, we will find room for victory.

But Satan often likes to puppet us. He tempts us according to our desires and, through our desires, makes a marionette out of us to follow after sin. Through our own heart, he tempts us; thus, it's our sin but his temptation.

Therefore, we first must notice when the devil is carrying our thoughts to places where they ought not to go. Then we must refocus our heart back on the Lord and abide in the Spirit. Now, this is the simplified method for overcoming sin. We will take a more in-depth look at the method of victory itself in just a moment.

Every sin begins in the place of the heart and mind. When we allow our thoughts to trail off, Satan may enter and offer subtle suggestions. Then, as we contemplate these tempting thoughts, our minds fall further into perdition.

If we're attentive to the state of our own heart, we will know when we're being led astray in our thoughts. If we continually reflect on the Lord and meditate on the presence of the Holy Spirit, it will ultimately be easier to resist sin. But when you're struggling with heavy temptation, you'll probably notice that you don't feel God at the same time. This is most likely because you've been idle in your thoughts and have not been reflecting on the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Understanding the origin of sin helps us to overcome it. A weed cannot be eradicated unless it's pulled up by the roots. Likewise, sin cannot be eradicated unless we get to the root of the problem and remove it.

The origin of all sin, as we just mentioned, lies in the place of the heart and the mind. How we govern our thoughts and our heart dictates how we walk and whether or not we will sin.

Our heart is full of wickedness. It is because of our heart and its wickedness that we need a Savior. We could never understand the fullness of love without Jesus Christ coming into our life. Thus, it stands to reason that our heart is the center of our sin.

Therefore, we must not only guard our heart and our mind but also dictate the directions they go throughout the day and every day. We should not be slave to our own heart and our own thoughts, lest we be given over to idle minds. When one has an idle mind, Satan is able to step in and offer temptation. But if we keep a focus on the Lord, temptation will be less likely.

Similarly, when in the heat of the moment, we can overcome by refocusing on the Lord. In reality we are being tempted because we have not been keeping our eyes on God. This is why Peter was able to walk on the water when looking at Jesus but fell in when the noise of the wind and the waves distracted him.

This parable has significant meaning in many aspects of the Christian walk, in regard to issues of faith, trials, and sin. Ultimately, every time we take our eyes off of God, we'll fall into our circumstances. If you're being tempted, you'll take your eyes off of Jesus and fall into temptation. If a circumstance requires you to have faith and you take your eyes off of how God is working in the situation, you will fall into the waves of doubt. If you're in a trial and take your eyes off of God and how He is in control, and how He is working love through the situation, you'll be overcome by the waves of grief, fear, and doubt.

But by keeping our eyes on the Lord, and by walking in faith, we can overcome all things. Faith is substantial for overcoming sin. Without faith, sin can never be eradicated. We need to have faith, not merely in the fact that Jesus saved us but also in the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin.

When in the heat of the moment, then, stop reflecting on the temptation and force yourself to pray. Focus on the Lord with all your heart. It will be a battle, as temptation always is. Nevertheless, focus hard on the Holy Spirit and pray for strength. Now, as you pray, if you do not have faith that God will give you strength, you will not be given strength. But if you have faith that God will deliver you from your own heart, He will. Therefore, Beloved, pray that God would deliver you from yourself.

Pray also as Jesus exhorted us to pray:

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” Matthew 6:13

When you’re being tempted, focus on the Lord and pray, “Lord, lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from this. Be my strength in my weakness.” Then have faith that He will be your strength. If you do not have faith, then it will not happen. According to the measure of your faith, so it will be for you.

Continue to pray like this until you feel His strength. Then, when you feel strengthened, move your mind away from the tempting thought. Begin to worship and reflect on the Lord’s goodness. Concentrate on the Holy Spirit and stay focused on His presence.

While you do this, Satan will continue to plant seeds of that tempting thought back in your head. For as long as he thinks he can wrangle you back into struggling with sin, he will continue to plant seeds. However, if you continue to force yourself to focus on the Holy Spirit and persist in faith, you’ll overcome. If you continue to meditate on the Spirit’s presence, the temptation will fizzle out altogether.

That we should pray for God to be our strength in our weakness is evident, for it is written,

“And he said unto me, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’” 2 Corinthians 12:9

If you do this by faith the method really is that simple. For God said,

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:30

Sometimes we make things harder than they need to be. It sounds oversimplified, but rest assured that it’s not. God promised us strength for victory. Our victory comes through approaching God the right way, and through faith. As it is written,

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” 1 John 5:4

Indeed, our faith is our victory. It is God’s immediate desire and will for you to overcome sin. Therefore, have faith that He will give you strength as you pray for it. This is not one of those cases in which you need to say, “Your will be done.” Beloved, His will in this was done at Calvary!

When Jesus said, “It is finished,” He meant that *it was finished*! God already gave you everything you need to overcome. Every tool and every weapon of war you’ll need to win this battle has been laid in your lap already. Therefore, have faith and walk in it. Seek to live in the Holy Spirit and walk continuously in Him. When tempted, return your focus to Him, and He will give you strength according to your faith.

In this step we are applying the principles that help us overcome sin. By them we are strengthened with God’s might to overcome.

Step Five

Remaining Free and Pure Forever

Although we may struggle with sin from time to time, there is a way to be free continually. While in this world, we will still struggle with temptation, but in Christ we are given power to overcome all things. Yes, we will sin on occasion due to the nature of the flesh, but for the most part sin will no longer be a problem due to the power of God.

When we continue in the Spirit, we are strengthened to remain holy and pure. By continuing in Him, we find that His conviction is more easily heard and His strength is more readily accessible. But when we are overcoming sin, it can be difficult to adhere to a pattern of the Spirit, due to the flesh.

We struggle with sin due to our two natures: We have the nature of the flesh and the nature of the Spirit. As we know, the old nature, or the "old man" as some Scriptures call it, is the nature of flesh. It is our flesh that is contrary to God and struggles with sin. As we read,

"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." Romans 8:6–7

The flesh, by nature, is contrary to the Spirit. The flesh is the center of sin, which desires against God. Then Satan stirs up the desires for sin that already exist for sin. Thus, all temptation begins with desire. As it is written,

"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." James 1:14–15

Knowing this, we need to conform our desires to the Lord's. The desire of the flesh leads to temptation every time. Now, Satan can turn a godly thing into lewdness through temptation, as our own hearts pervert the words of God. In this it is easy to understand that some godly desire can be used for temptation. How so? Consider that Jesus, who always desired what is godly, was tempted in all things. Nevertheless, it is easier to tempt us using evil desire and very difficult to use godly desire.

How we act on desire determines whether it will become sin or not. For example, it is godly to desire the position of a bishop; however, the Scriptures

exhort that a novice must not become one. Although the desire is good, if a novice were to step forward to become a bishop, he would be walking contrary to the word of God and, thus, sinning. The desire is good, but the timing is bad. God needs to prepare his heart first and then lead him into the position, since it is a spiritual “gift” not a spiritual “taken.”

Some people step forward to take what they think is good and do what they think is right according to how they interpret the word of God. But we are called to be led by the Holy Spirit in all things. As it is written,

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Romans 8:14

Humanity is always led by something. Whether we are led by our own hearts, and spurred on by temptation, or led by the Holy Spirit, there is always something leading us. Even when people worship false gods, the Scriptures say, they were led to do so. As it is written,

“You know that you were Gentiles, *carried away* to these dumb idols, however you were *led*.” 1 Corinthians 12:2

In such a case, these people who do not have God were led by demons to worship the things that are contrary to God. Now, knowing that there is always something leading us, we ought to be circumspect to the spiritual environment around us.

We need to be vigilant as to the state of our own heart. ‘Vigilant’ means “awake.” We must be awakened to the state of our heart, paying attention to our own thoughts and desires. As our heart conforms to His, the things we desire will be godlier. Then, by the nature of godliness, sin will be less frequent and holiness will abound.

But if we are not awake to the state of our own hearts, then we will continually stumble in the darkness, struggling with sin. Jesus Christ was not crucified so we could struggle with sin. He didn’t die so we could justify our sin but, rather, so that He could condemn it in the flesh. That way He may do away with sin once and for all.

Therefore, God has not intended for us to continue in sin. We must be awake to the various things that lead us to sin, with temptation in the desire of our own hearts being one of them. If we are paying attention to what is happening around us spiritually, we will understand what “voice” is speaking to us. For example, in

the moment of sin, the Holy Spirit speaks through conviction. Also in the moment of sin, Satan speaks through temptation. But if we're paying attention to who is speaking to us, it will be easier to listen to God. And we must be led by God! If we are not led by God's conviction, then by what are we led?

When we listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and obey it, we are being led by the Spirit. If we are not being led by the Spirit, one must ask, "By what am I being led?" Quite obviously, not by God. If God is not leading, then sin is. But as we discussed before,

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Romans 8:14

We must be led by the Spirit of God if we're going to call ourselves the "sons of God." For God leads His people, and His people follow Him. Even as it is also written,

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." John 10:27

However, if we allow the flesh to lead us, we will walk continuously in a pattern of sin. We will not be able to escape this pattern except on temporary occasions. Nevertheless, sin will be a pattern for those who walk according to their own hearts. Jesus called us to carry our crosses. Therefore, Beloved, I'd like to encourage you to pick up your cross and lay down your heart before God, not to pick it up again. Rather, pick up God's heart and walk according to it.

For when we walk according to the love and will of God, we will walk in His holiness continually. But if you live according to the flesh, you will be enslaved by the flesh. When you walk according to the Spirit, you walk in the freedom of God because those who seek to walk in the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit, thus giving themselves the mind of Christ. Is the mind of Christ sinful? Assuredly not!

Thus, those who continue in the Spirit continue in holiness because Christ takes over their heart and mind through the Holy Spirit, who leads them. Now, the mind of the flesh is sinful; hence, we have the need for a Savior. That those who live according to the flesh will be slave to the flesh, however, is evident. For do we not read that they set their minds on the things of the flesh?

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." Romans 8:5

And as Jesus explained,

“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.” John 8:34

Therefore, Beloved, set your mind on the things of the Spirit and be edified by the presence of the Lord. Continue in the Spirit and you’ll be strengthened by the Spirit. Be awake to your circumstances around you. Be vigilant to your own heart to know whether you’re walking in the Spirit or in the flesh.

If you pay attention to the activities of your day, and the things you’re doing, but ignore the state of your own heart, then by nature you will begin to walk in the flesh. We have to focus on the Spirit of God in order to continue in Him. It can take effort to listen to the Holy Spirit. If you do not turn your ears to Him to listen to Him, then by nature you won’t hear Him. Awaken your heart to the voice of God and be led by the Holy Spirit.

Do not be led away by the various desires of your heart, for they weaken you and bind you to your sins. If you live according to the flesh, your mind will be set on the flesh and it will be difficult to overcome. But if you set your mind on the Spirit, He will strengthen you, and overcoming sin will be consistently easy and natural. It is impossible to be free from the shackles of sin unless we first understand the necessity of walking continuously in the Spirit.

Unfortunately, some Christians do not know what it means to walk in the Spirit. Perhaps this comes from a lack of sermons regarding the need for conviction and how to hear the voice of God. Or maybe it comes from a lack of personal time spent studying the Bible.

It is unfortunate in this world today that the church, which is a spiritual body, does not regularly teach how to walk in the Spirit or how to hear and understand God’s voice. There are many Christians struggling with this, whether they realize it or not. Some Christians know that they need to hear the Spirit and, so, try to. Some Christians believe that hearing the voice of the Spirit and growing in it is a lifelong process, not to be mastered in this life. There could never be a more horrible misunderstanding than this!

We are saved by the word of God. The Holy Spirit has been conveying the word of God to us since before we were saved. It is He who convicts us of the gospel; and because the Holy Spirit is in the world, mankind repents of their sins to receive Jesus Christ as Lord. If it were not for the pull of the Spirit in the moment of truth—if it were not for His conviction and how He softens our heart to the gospel—no man would be saved. It is by the mechanism of the Holy Spirit

that the Father draws us to salvation. But that we must be drawn by the Father is evident, for it is written,

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” John 6:44

Hearing the Holy Spirit and walking according to His leading is one of the most important, yet misunderstood aspects of the Christian walk. Unfortunately, some Christians believe, “I have the Holy Spirit; therefore, when I walk, I walk in the Spirit!” If this were true, then there would be no sin in a believer’s life. To claim that you’re walking in the Spirit while you’re sinning is blasphemous against the Holy Spirit.

For anyone who is led by the Spirit and walks in the Spirit does not sin but, instead, overcomes it by the power of God. As it is written,

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16

But that we don’t always walk in the Spirit is evident, because we still sin. Therefore, we need exhortation! And because we do not always walk in the Spirit even though we live in the Spirit, the Scriptures exhort us thus:

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Galatians 5:25

Although we live in the Spirit, we must be exhorted to walk in Him. Since we do not always walk in Him as we should, we must take this to heart. For as we discussed, only by walking in the Spirit do we overcome sin.

But many Christians don’t actually know how to walk in the Spirit. It is not that they do not want to do so, but that there is a lack of teachings in regard to it. Not many churches center their sermons on what it means to walk in the Holy Spirit or be led by Him.

Rather, many congregations today hear preaching on heady intellectual topics that do not benefit walking in the Spirit. Some churches seek to be ecumenical in their approach, rather than pinpoint the heart of Christ. Although there are many great sermons that benefit the walks of Christians, it seems that there are few that are centered on hearing God’s voice, being led by the Holy Spirit, living according to His conviction, overcoming all things through Him, and walking in Him continuously.

If you are an elder or a leader in your church, consider whether you have

centered any of your teachings on this topic recently. Consider the state of the church and the hearts of the people. Are they in need of this message? If so, then I encourage you to show them how to walk in the Holy Spirit, just as you do.

But for those who do not know how to walk in the Spirit: We walk in Him when we are led by Him. We are led by the Spirit when the Spirit is upon us and we are listening to and obeying His voice. In order to listen to and obey His voice, however, we need to be paying attention to Him. When we pay attention to Him, we feel Him "come upon us." There is a difference between God always being with us and God "coming upon us."

When we say that He "comes upon us," we really mean to say that He takes control of the situation, our hearts, our mind, and our strength. If we don't give Him control, we won't always see Him take control. This is because we are taking control from Him and, thus, we are in control because of our misuse of free will. But when we allow Him to come upon us, He takes control of the situation and gives us His heart, mind, and might. As we read in regard to Samson,

"And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done." Judges 14:6

In this we see God's strength upon a man to overcome. Likewise, when faced with the lion who is called Satan, we overcome his temptation by the power of God when the Spirit comes upon us. Why, then, doesn't He come upon us when we're tempted? Because we're caving into temptation and not pursuing the Holy Spirit. But if we seek Him, He will be upon us in temptation and, thus, we will overcome.

So needless to say, we must partake in the activities that cause the Spirit to come upon us. Now, it is easy to tell when the Spirit is upon you: When you feel the Holy Spirit, He is upon you. If you don't, then He's not. It's that simple. If you're faced with a troubling situation and a storm of trials, sometimes you won't feel God, but that won't change the fact that He is in control of the circumstances if you commit control to Him.

When He comes upon us, He takes control of ***us***. He is always in control of the things ***around*** us, but because we're given free will, we need to give the control of our own hearts back to Him. Therefore, as a clarification, we are not saying that God is only in control of the circumstances of your life when He is upon

you. We are saying, rather, that He is in control of your heart when you trust it to the one who created it.

Now, when the Spirit is upon us, our desires conform to His and we are thus made godly. If we focus on always having the Spirit upon us and continuing in Him, we will constantly walk in Him and, in this way, be continually strengthened.

Two of the best ways to bring the Spirit upon us are prayer and worship. When you pray, pray in faith while listening to the heart of the Spirit. He will answer your prayers as you pray, and He will reflect the heart of the Father to you, thus giving you words to pray.

Make it a habit to pray constantly, always, and every day. When you talk to God, expect Him to answer you. When we pray, we are talking to Him—directly to His presence. When we pray, we feel His presence, and by this we know that He is upon us as we speak with Him. However, Beloved, be attentive to His answers. Prayer is a form of communication, more so than a moment of supplication.

Similarly, worship is more than singing about God. There are plenty of edifying Christian songs out there, but not all are worship. God may speak to us in each of them, reflecting His heart in regard to a particular situation of life through which we may be going. But not every Christian song is worship. Although it can be good to listen to edifying Christian music, we know that it is not all worship. When we worship, we are not singing *about* God but singing directly *to* Him with praiseful adoration. When we worship, we aim our praises at Him and sing directly to His presence, glorifying Him with our words.

As we do this, we may not immediately feel the Spirit come upon us. But when we continue to pour our hearts out, He comes upon us and, thus, we feel Him with us. However, as soon as we stop focusing on His presence to pay attention to other things, we began walking in the flesh again. It is possible both to meditate on the presence of the Spirit and to take care of the needful tasks of the day simultaneously, but this takes practice, effort, and a fervent heart. It is something that every Christian can grow in and eventually master.

In order to continue in the Spirit, always do the things that you feel the Holy Spirit in doing. Now, you may not feel the Spirit in the mundane details of your job, but this is where you need to meditate on His presence while working at the same time. If you come into a circumstance where you cannot feel God when

meditating on Him, while doing another task, then perhaps He does not want you doing that task at this time.

Similarly, no matter how hard you pray and how much you worship, if you watch a movie that's unedifying, you're not going to feel God while partaking in it. You shouldn't be able to feel His presence while you sin, are idle, or do something He doesn't want you doing.

There will be other circumstances in which you may not feel God when you seek Him. It may simply be a place where you are or something you are doing that God doesn't want. Learn to discern His voice in this. Then you will know where He wants you and what He wants you doing, through His presence.

If you do not feel God upon you, around you, or within you, then He is trying to get your attention. He is trying to speak to you to tell you to stop doing what you're doing so that you'll ask Him what you're supposed to do. He is trying to lead you; so Beloved, be attentive to His leading. Listen to the Holy Spirit and be led by Him. When you feel the Spirit upon you through prayer and worship, continue to focus on His presence and to listen to Him. He will speak to you through His inward voice and convictions, thus leading you by the heart and will of the Father.

God leads you not only in the major decisions of life, but also in the little things. Remember that the little things add up to the big things; therefore, He will lead you in them. For this reason we must be diligent to seek His leading in everything.

Now, let's break down walking in the Spirit into a simple, step-by-step formula.

1) Continue in the Spirit through constant prayer and worship.

2) Listen to His voice and obey it. Don't question God when you know He has spoken, even if it's hard to understand. Just obey Him immediately.

3) Be careful to discern between your own heart and the Lord's heart leading you. Then follow God.

4) Continue to focus on His presence so you can hear Him.

5) When you feel dragged down by the activities of the day, come out from the distractions around you and recharge by having some alone time with the Lord in the secret place.

6) Read and study your Bible. Come to a full knowledge and understanding of it, that you may be able to understand the voice of God and His will for you.

By following these six simple tips, you will find that walking in the Spirit will be easy for you. When we walk in Him, we are strengthened to overcome sin and bondage. By walking in the Lord continually, we will glorify Him in all our conduct.

Beloved, be sensitive to the voice of the Spirit and obey Him always. Do not merely read your Bible but, rather, study it faithfully. Learn the true doctrine of Christ, that you may know His voice and walk according to His will.

Many have a habit of forming opinions about God's word. However, God has only one particular meaning in mind when He wrote the Scriptures, and if we want to follow Him then we can't merely assume the meaning. Rather, we must become familiar with the voice of the Lord and allow Him to interpret its meaning to us while we read.

Be diligent to seek the Lord, and commit yourself to following after Him. By this you will overcome all things and experience the perfect peace of God through the enduring freedom of the Holy Spirit.

In this step we are remaining pure by continuing in Him. As we practice walking in the Spirit, sin and temptation will be less frequent and easier to overcome.

Conclusion

Let’s recap at this time.

Depending upon the issue at hand, there will always be a slightly different approach for overcoming. If we are struggling with bondage, then our approach will require a lifestyle change. This is a big change in order to overcome a big problem. But if we are struggling in the heat of the moment from time to time, the steps will be different. The steps will merely encompass what is necessary to overcome in the moment of truth, as well as a slight lifestyle change to experience temptation less often.

To break it down if we’re struggling with bondage, we need these steps:

1) Remember God’s love and be convicted by it.

2) Be humble and admit the need for growth.

3) Respond rightly to His love by choosing to carry our crosses and draw near to Him constantly, every day.

4) Overcome the moments of temptation through prayer, faith, worship, and meditating on God’s Spirit.

5) Finally, we commit our lives to abiding in and walking in the Spirit constantly. We need to study the Bible daily and grow in it. Listen to the Holy Spirit and obey His voice every time, all the time. We must show the Lord we love Him by being fervent for Him. In order to please Him in this, we need to make the appropriate lifestyle change of removing from our lives anything that distracts us from God.

Now, when merely struggling with an issue of sin from time to time, we need to do this:

1) Remember God’s love and be convicted by it, remembering also that He doesn’t condemn us.

2) Respond rightly to Him by drawing near to Him.

3) Overcome the moments of temptation through prayer, faith, worship, and meditating on God’s Spirit.

4) Continually seek the Lord and walk in the Spirit so that temptation is less frequent.

5) Remove continual temptation by eliminating anything that doesn't edify you in Christ.

When we abide and meditate on the Spirit, temptation is seen less often and is easier to overcome. Therefore, commit your life to meditating on the Spirit, hearing His voice and His conviction and obeying it. Have faith that the Lord will strengthen you and that He will do so according to the measure of your faith.

By following these simple steps, you will find it easy to overcome sin and walk in victory. The Lord loves us and calls us to walk not in a pattern of grace, due to stumbling, but instead a pattern of power and victory. He gives us all the tools we need; there is no reason to fight hard; but we must press hard in His Spirit instead. If you do this, He will strengthen you and bless your walk with Him, even as you desire.

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Table of Contents

Step One
Remembering His Love
Step Two
Committing to Perfect Humility
Step Three
Responding Rightly to the Love of God
Step Four
Overcoming with God’s Strength
Step Five
Remaining Free and Pure Forever
Conclusion
I’d Love to Hear from You!
Want Free Books?
Also By Adam Houge
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