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Daily Devotional, Wednesday, February 21, 2018 - The Principles of Sowing and Reaping

FEBRUARY 21ST 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Galatians 6:7-10

Satan wants us to believe the lie that our actions have no natural results or consequences. But the truth is that you can't rebel against God and not reap the fruit of that choice later. You also can't obey God without eventually receiving the blessing. The choices you make are the seeds you plant, and they determine the kind of crop you're going to harvest in the future.

The heart of this principle is that all our choices are important. How we think and act matters, and not only for ourselves. Our choices always impact those around us, for good or bad. Think about the seeds others sowed that affected your view of yourself and the world. You either rejected or accepted them, and the things you accepted eventually manifested in your life.

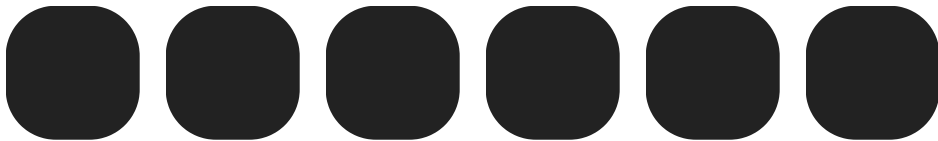
At some point, we all have made choices we've regretted. Since consequences never simply evaporate, you may find yourself harassed or even governed by things you've seen, said, or participated in. Yet God will forgive everything you genuinely repent of, and He will work with you to redeem those past choices. The road to redemption often includes obstacles, but the Holy Spirit can enable you to overcome. Lay your burden down before the Lord every time it weighs on you, and request that He cleanse and shape you into the person you were created to be.

Ask yourself the following three questions: *What kind of life do I want to live? What do I want my character to be like? Who do I want to become years from now?* Let God’s Spirit speak to you about your choices—past, present and future—and His plans for you.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, February 20, 2018 - Where Battles are Won

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Exodus 17:8-13

In today's reading, we find the nation of Israel engaged in combat with the Amalekites. While Joshua led the troops, Moses went up onto a hill overlooking the battlefield and, in an attitude of prayer, observed the action. The Lord gave the Israelites success as long as Moses' arms were raised, but whenever he lowered them, the enemy gained the advantage. So Aaron and Hur helped him to maintain the posture that assured victory.

This historical account teaches an important lesson for every believer: Life's battles are won or lost in the place of prayer. We may think that conflicts are decided on the battlefield, but victory depends on children of God coming before their Father and seeking His face. It is not the size of our army or the strength of our opponents' forces that ultimately determines the outcome. When we spend time alone with God, we will be equipped by the One who knows the end from the beginning and understands the reality of all circumstances, regardless of appearances.

God foresees every snare and temptation of Satan just as He discerns what people are thinking and plotting. So it is wise to trust His battle plan instead of our own instincts—and we can do so with confidence that we will not suffer defeat.

Faith will allow you to keep your eyes focused on the Lord, even in the midst of frightening circumstances. When you acknowledge Him as the source of everything you need, your sense of direction will become clear. No matter what enemy is facing you, God will reveal what needs to be done.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, February 19, 2018 - The Gospel of Freedom

FEBRUARY 19TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Galatians 2:20

Each Monday morning I begin the day excited about the next Sunday's sermon because I get to share what God is going to teach me that week. Now, you may not be a pastor, but you have the same privilege of sharing with someone else what the Lord has been teaching you.

The passion to proclaim Jesus Christ is born from the Christian's conversion experience, but enthusiasm can fizzle unless we continue learning and growing in faith. If we barely know God, why would we want to talk about Him? But if, on the other hand, we are continually growing in our knowledge of His character, works, and ways, we'll want to share with others what we've learned. In the midst of the world's ills, Christians have the most precious treasure—Jesus Christ! What good can we do for the kingdom of God or for our unbelieving friends if we stay quiet about Him?

The message we proclaim not only offers freedom from sin's penalty but also provides the power to live righteously. When Christ died on the cross, each believer was crucified with Him, and sin's allure and power were broken. This means Christ's followers can say no to sins that enslave others and live victoriously in obedience to God.

Most people in the world are searching for a better, happier, more purposeful life. But Christians have the secret of life in Christ, who offers us rest for our souls (Matt. 11:29). This is

a message we can't keep to ourselves. As you open your Bible and pray today, ask God to reveal a truth you can share—and the person He wants you to tell

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Daily Devotional, Thursday, February 15, 2018 - Avoiding Confusion About Salvation

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1 John 5:11-15

God never intends to trick or puzzle believers. He wants us to be confident about our salvation and has clearly laid out the plan. So if uncertainty should arise in your mind, realize the problem isn't with the Lord.

Someone else, however, does want us confused: Satan knows that doubts will make us less effective as Christians. Here are four major tactics he uses:

1. Sin When we give in to temptation, our enemy piles on feelings of guilt so we'll think, *How can I be saved when I'm living like this?* But Scripture assures us there's no condemnation for believers in Christ (Rom. 8:1).

2. Ignorance Unless we're immersed in God's Word, it's easy to have just a hazy notion of what transpired when we came to faith. But if we're well grounded, we're less likely to question our salvation in tough times.

3. Feelings Once we are saved, nothing can snatch us out of the Father's hand (John 10:28-29). And yet sorrow and shame can make us want to hide instead of confessing and keeping lines of communication with God clear. (See Gen. 3:8; 1 John 1:9.) Be aware that feelings have nothing to do with the truth of our salvation.

4. Harassment Sometimes the devil comes at us like a roaring lion, other times like an angel of light (1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 11:14). Whatever his approach, he wants to take our eyes off Jesus. Scripture, however, promises that no weapon formed against believers will prosper (Isa. 54:17).

Spending time in God's Word will help you to stand securely in your salvation. Then you'll be better prepared to resist Satan's strategies.

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Daily Devotional, Wednesday, February 14, 2018 - The Power of Love

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Luke 15:11-24

The limitations of the English language at times diminish our understanding of scriptural concepts. For instance, there is only one word for *love* in English, but the New Testament uses two different Greek words. One of them, *phileo*, refers to brotherly concern and affection, but the more powerful term *agape* signifies a sacrificial commitment to another's satisfaction, security, and development. This is the kind of love that God has for us—and that the Holy Spirit produces in and through believers.

Perhaps the best way to understand *agape* is to see what it looks like. In His parable of the prodigal son, Jesus describes a father's sacrificial love for his wayward son. When the young man demanded an early inheritance, the father didn't deny his request, though he knew it would lead only to bitterness. So despite personal and financial sacrifice, he gave the son his share. Then the father waited patiently while the prodigal learned a difficult lesson.

No doubt that was a trying time for the father because a good dad wants to protect his children from mistakes and the resulting consequences. But a wise man also knows that some hard truths must be learned through painful experience. At times the best thing we can do is trust the Lord

to reach defiant hearts.

But *agape* love doesn't just let go; it also forgives and restores. When the prodigal son returned home humbled and contrite, his father reached out to receive him and restore him to the family—just our heavenly Father does for us.

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