

Successful Christianity Now

- I. This study sets forth the importance of not letting the past impede victory and progress in the present.
- A. We do not live in the past and cannot change the past.
 - B. Decision-making is for the present and has implications for the future, not the past.
 - C. We do well to live in the present under the present law of Christ in this present evil world. **GAL 1:4.**
 - 1. The past law of Moses served its purpose but could perfect nothing. **HEB 7:19; 9:9.**
 - 2. The entire law of the sinless future world is not the rule for us now. **LUK 20:34-36.**
 - a. They of that world will not have to war against sin but we must be constantly at war with it now. **REV 21:27; 1PE 5:8-9.**
 - b. They of that world will never witness a brother being cast out but we must expect it now. **JOH 6:37 ct/w MAT 18:7; 2TI 3:1-5.**
 - D. The past is valuable for such things as:
 - 1. example and admonition. **1CO 10:6-11.**
 - 2. learning and hope. **ROM 15:4.**
 - 3. humility. **1TI 1:12-14.**
 - E. But the past can otherwise be contrary to our success as believers.
 - 1. We are to lay aside *every weight* that hinders our race. **HEB 12:1.**
 - 2. The past can be such a weight if it is not processed by faith.
 - F. The gospel is for the casting down of imaginations. **2CO 10:5.**
 - 1. imagination: The action of imagining, or forming a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses (cf. sense 3); the result of this process, a mental image or idea (often with implication that the conception does not correspond to the reality of things, hence freq. *vain (false, etc.) imagination*).
 - 2. It is our challenge to distinguish between the realities and our perceptions in the past, to distinguish between past right and wrong, to not pretend that the real past never happened, and to process the past through the grid of faith in the present.
 - a. Paul had a warped perception of God, Christ and righteousness in his pre-conversion past. **ACT 26:9.**
 - b. Paul also had zeal and a good conscience in his pre-conversion past (**ACT 22:3; 23:1**) which he continued in after conversion.
 - c. Upon conversion, Paul abandoned past errors but not past correctness, and he processed the past through faith so as to live victoriously in the present. **1CO 15:9-10; GAL 2:20-21.**
 - 3. The battle lines are drawn between God's truth and Satan's lies which corrupt our thinking and masquerade as reality.
- II. We all have pasts that can weigh us down and hinder progress in Christ.
- A. Past sins must be identified, renounced and repented of in biblical conversion. **MAT 3:6; PRO 28:13; JOB 34:31-32; ACT 3:19.**
 - 1. This gives one a clean slate upon which a better life in service to Christ may be written. **1CO 6:9-11.**
 - 2. Sins become identified with one's past, not his present or future. **1PE 1:13-14; 4:1-3.**
 - 3. Continuing sin after mercy invites judgment (**JOH 5:14**), grieves the Spirit

- (**EPH 4:30; HEB 10:29**) and, if reverted to, calls one's election into question. **2PE 2:20-22.**
4. Successful processing of past sins depends on knowing what sin is, and this depends upon God's law. **1JO 3:4; ROM 4:15; PSA 119:128.**
 - a. God's word is light that exposes known and unknown darkness. **PSA 19:7-13.**
 - b. God's word is also light that relieves false burdens. **ROM 10:1-3; ACT 15:28; LUK 4:18.**
 - c. Remember Paul: it is the wrong that needs to be forsaken, not the right.
 5. Successful present Christian living after conversion sees past sin as *remitted* (**ACT 2:38**), *washed away* (**ACT 22:16**) and *dominionless*. **ROM 6:1-2, 11-18.**
 - a. We know we are the objects of mercy (*Forbearance and compassion shown by one person to another who is in his power and who has no claim to receive kindness; kind and compassionate treatment in a case where severity is merited or expected*) and therefore have nothing to boast of before God. **ROM 3:27.**
 - b. Knowing we deserve no mercy makes us humble, and this allows for more grace to live victoriously now. **JAM 4:5-6.**
 - c. Having obtained such mercy, we are better fitted to understand and offer hope to others. **1TI 1:15-16.**
- B. We cannot change the reality of past sin by present thought but we can by present thought have a healthy perception of the past. This is accomplished by thinking about ourselves and our past sins as God does. Faithfully embracing His declarations about us as repented believers is key to present success.
1. We should embrace what Scripture says Christ has done for sinners.
 - a. He by Himself purged our sins. **HEB 1:3.**
 - b. He has forgiven us all trespasses. **COL 3:12.**
 - c. He has called us unto eternal glory. **2TI 1:9; 1PE 5:10.**
 - d. He has positioned us in Himself in glory. **EPH 2:6.**
 - e. He has made us new creatures. **2CO 5:17; EPH 2:10.**
 2. We should embrace what God declares about believers who also sin (for there is no other kind on earth).
 - a. They are children of God in spite of themselves. **1JO 5:1; 3:2; ROM 7:21-25.**
 - b. They are justified. **ACT 13:39.**
 - c. They have everlasting life. **JOH 6:47; 11:25-26.**
 - d. They shall not come into condemnation. **JOH 5:24.**
 - e. They are washed, sanctified and given a clean start. **1CO 6:11.**
 - f. They are empowered, not enslaved. **ROM 6:22; 1JO 5:4.**
 - g. They are represented in heaven by an Advocate, not an accuser. **1JO 2:1 c/w ROM 8:33-34.**
 - h. They have a right to personally ask God for mercy and are assured of its provision. **HEB 4:15-16; 1JO 1:9.**
 - i. They have a forgetful, blotting God. **ISA 43:25.**
- C. Our present success as Christians largely depends on how we see ourselves, i.e., what we identify as.
1. Do we see ourselves as we once were under Adamic sin in our nature because we sometimes sin? **EPH 2:1-3.**
 2. Do we see ourselves as somehow still responsible to obtain eternal favor with

- God by our doings, as if the great work of justification was not finished once and for all, thus holding our conscience in thrall? **ROM 10:1-4; HEB 10:1-4.**
3. Do we see ourselves as yet guilty of forgiven sins or still under the dominion of the law of sin and so conclude that our failings define us and prove our hypocrisy, hopelessness and damnation? **ROM 7:23-25.**
 4. As long as we entertain false perceptions of who we are NOW in Christ, we will be frustrated in our Christian progress by bondage to unnecessary burdens. The truth is needed to make us free. **JOH 8:31-32.**
 5. Learn a lesson from the elephant. A young elephant can be trained by restraints and beatings to go through its life as a numbed behemoth. It has all the power it needs to break free of its master but its conditioned mind holds it in bondage. It does not have a realistic perception of itself. It sees itself as chained when it may not have had a chain upon it for years.
- D. Satan, like the elephant trainer, cons our minds by his lies into a false state of bondage. We need to renounce his lies in favor of the truth or we will not walk as free men with good consciences. The more false burdens we bear, the more our progress is impeded.
1. Fact: The difference between our past Adamic nature of death in sin and who we are now is not owing to ourselves, but God and His grace. **EPH 2:4-5.**
 2. Fact: Saints will sin but they have an Advocate to plead their cause. **1JO 2:1-2.**
 3. Fact: Confessed sins are forgiven (**1JO 1:9**). That sin occurred is one thing; that it, being confessed, still has guilt attached to it is another.
 4. Fact: Past sins that are confessed and forgiven are no barrier to renewed value, joy in God and usefulness to God. **PSA 51:7-15; PRO 24:16.**
- E. Satan loves to accuse our consciences whenever we slip up, implying that we are not even God's child and should just concede.
1. When we feel like worthless nobodies who are nothing more than walking hypocrites with delusions of hope, powerless to meet the challenges of daily Christian living, we are likely to think like the poor elephant.
 2. There is a big difference between "having sin" and "being sin," between "depraved" and "dysfunctional."
 3. In Christ, we are no longer totally depraved sinners; we have been redeemed by the blood of our Savior and are saints who sometimes sin. **ROM 7:21.**
 4. Satan may disrupt our daily victory, but not our position and identity in Christ. But if he can dupe us into believing that we are NOT in Christ, we will live as though not in Him.
 5. Paul's prayer was that believers would perceive their position in Christ of being exalted over Satan (**EPH 1:19-21; 2:4-6**). If we do not realize our position and power over Satan, we will not utilize it. The elephant will not even try to go past the limits of his chain that had long ago been removed.
 6. Mark the TRUTH about our PRESENT identity in Christ:
 - a. Our old man died with Christ. **ROM 6:6; GAL 2:20.**
 - b. We are new creatures in Him. **2CO 5:17.**
 - c. We have NO condemnation. **ROM 8:1-2, 33-34.**
 - d. We are secure in His love. **ROM 8:38-39.**
 - e. We are seated positionally with Christ in heaven. **EPH 2:6.**
 - f. We are NO MORE under sin's dominion. **ROM 6:8-11, 14.**
 - g. We are FREE from the law of sin and death. **ROM 7:4; 8:2.**
 - h. We have His Spirit for victory. **1JO 4:4.**
 - i. No temptation or oppression is greater than His grace.

1CO 10:13; 2CO 12:9-10.

- j. The former barrier between us and God being taken out of the way, we need not shy from approaching Him for grace to overcome.
HEB 10:18-22; 4:16.