

Letting Go of Sin for the Hopeful Life

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Hi, I'm Katie Sciba. The first obstacle we talked about is busyness. So many of us have mile-long to-do lists, or we have things buzzing in our heads and we don't take the time for peace or any sort of time spent in the calm of Christ. So, if we take our prayer lives and we up them just a little bit then peace will flow from that union with the Father. The next thing we talked about is self-comparison. A lot of us will kind of measure up size each other up and find ourselves either lacking or superior to others. And either way we are cutting God out as the source of our gifts. The next one we talked about is personal pain. A lot of us are walking around with wounds from a long time ago or even wounds that are ongoing. And that can tempt us to harden our hearts against the Lord because we don't want to open our hearts to more pain. And we might be afraid that the Lord would show up for us. The antidote to that is vulnerability. Allowing God to see the raw experiences of our hearts. And so, letting Him come in and heal. He cannot come in and heal if we constantly stonewall Him.

The Obstacle of Sin

Now, this last one we'll discuss is quite possibly the most obvious obstacle and that is sin. And we all do it. We all do it. So, I know a lot of us have habitual sins. So, I have a handful of sins it's like they're stuck on me, or maybe I'm stuck on them. I go to confession you've heard this before we go to confession and we say the same stuff every time. And it's like, we feel renewed and refreshed coming out of the confessional. And then those same behaviors keep showing up. Or sometimes those habitual sins are the ones that keep us out of the confessional. because you don't want to go in and sound like a broken record. It is the same stuff that we're afflicted with. And when we invite the Lord into our lives. we know that change is going to happen. And especially when you're dealing with habitual sin that has been with you your whole life, as mine have been, it is very difficult. Sometimes impossible to imagine yourself any other way.

We chalk it up to personality. This is how I always am. Or this is the way I've always been. It's the way I'm always going to be. It is what it is. And we kind of become comfortable with the sins that keeps showing up. And that is a foothold for the devil. And that is a strong and steady way that we keep the Lord out. When we bring these habitual sins to the Lord, we know that He can change us. We know that He will. And that is a scary thing. Because change means different and different means work. So sometimes we're terrified of the work that we'll have to do to get those sins out. And when we want to avoid change, when people are asking something of you and you're scared of doing it, it's easy to become avoidant.

So, you kind of keep a surface relationship with that person. You just chit chat. "How's the weather, how's your family? Great see you later." We do that with Jesus. When we have these habitual sins that He wants to change us He wants to transform us, but then we keep a surface level relationship with Him and just offer an Our Father and we don't really think about the depth of our own hearts. Because too deep, going deeper than a surface level relationship does mean that we'll have to confront what is so hard in us, what is so deeply set. Though I've understood recently that the sins I've struggled with my entire life, I can live without. And not only can I live

without them, but the Lord wants me to live without them. "I came that they may have life and have them to the full" John 10:10. I am sure that when Jesus said that He wasn't thinking that we would hold on to those habitual sins, that we would hold on to really any sin.

Imagine Your Life Without Them

So, I encourage you even right now, consider the sins that you hold on to. And imagine what your life would be without them. What if you were free of those particular falls? What if those sins were gone from you? The Lord can overcome that for you and with you. And it calls for hope. And we've talked about hope before, but hope is kind of a risky thing because when we hope we dare to consider that things can be changed, that we can be changed. And that is terrifying if we're doing it alone. But we don't have to. When we fall into that self-reliance that I talked about a couple sessions ago, then the burden of our habitual sins is too much for us to bear, it's too difficult. Of course, we can't get rid of them. We can't get rid of that on our own, but we can with the Lord. When we attend mass frequently, when we go to confession frequently, when we pray on an individual basis in our homes, in the car, wherever it is. And we say, "Lord, I'm struggling with this. Break in and get me, come get me Lord. Heal me, heal this part of me. Save me from this temptation." All of these are very short, simple prayers that we can offer the Lord in hope.

We know that He can overcome the power of evil. He's done it a million times. And so when we offered those habitual sins to Jesus with the humility of I can't do this alone and He will meet us. I love when the prodigal son, when the son is returning home after living a life of sin, his father was looking for him. And when the son was still a long way off the father ran to him. We don't have to be perfect or recovered or healed in order to approach the Lord. He is be divine physician. He wants to heal us now in all of the mess and in all of the brokenness and especially in all of our sin.

We Must Open Ourselves to Him

So, I mentioned in another session that that quote from Chesterton, *"Hope is the power of being cheerful in circumstances that we know to be desperate."* On our own, we can't do it, but we can be cheerful when approaching our sins because we entrust them to Jesus who is the healer of all things. As Saint Jerome said, *"It is our part to offer what we can. His to finish what we cannot."* And that is so powerful.

We will fall short, but with Jesus working within us we will know the power and the healing of Christ. Now, in order to do that, we do have to open ourselves up to Him, which does mean praying. It means having conversation with God. And like I mentioned, in the first session, Saint Therese said "a prayer as a launching out of the heart to our God." It is real. Jesus wants us to be real and honest with him. He desires our hearts. So, we don't have to have perfect prayer in order for your prayer to be heard. The Lord will hear us in our intention and in our honesty and especially in our honesty with ourselves. So sometimes it is the sins of ourselves that keep the Lord out and sometimes that is the sins of others that prevent us from letting the Lord in. And the

reason why that can be very painful is that we take our experiences, painful experiences from other people, and we have a tendency to project them onto the Lord.

Projecting to the Lord

I'll use the example of rejection. I think a lot of us have experienced rejection in some way, shape or form at some point in our lives. Maybe it was rejection in school. Maybe it's rejection by a parent or by a spouse or by someone, right? We have all experienced the pain of rejection at some point. And sometimes we take that painful experience, and we project it onto God. I say, well, that important person rejected me. And so, will our Lord. We have a tendency to look at the conditions other people place on us in their imperfection. And we think that God will be the same way. That if you haven't prayed in a long time, you'll have to play catch up with God in order to resume a good prayer life. Well, a lot of us take the relationships that we've had with our parents and we project them onto God. That's actually a very, very common tendency. So as parents, it's so important that we love our children mercifully, that we receive our children, that we walk with justice and honesty with our children.

And so, they are painted a good picture of who God is. Now, if we take our painful experiences and put them on God and believe that He will treat us the same way the other sinners have, and honestly, we are creating a God who isn't real who doesn't exist at all.

An Invitation

And so, I invite you to examine your relationship with Jesus. Who do you say that He is? Do you take the sins of others and pin them on Christ? Because the sins of others don't have to affect us in such a way that will keep the Lord out. And so, the challenge that I have for you is to invite Mary into your heart as well, because the antidote for this like the others, is having a more frequent prayer. And Mary always points to her son. She says, "Do whatever He tells you." The Lord encourages us to pray to our Father.