

Removing Sinful Behaviors

Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers - Pg# 96-97 Dr. Bob, noting that there were no Twelve Steps at the time (1935) and that "our stories didn't amount to anything to speak of," later said they were convinced that the answer to their problems was in the Good Book. "To some of us older ones, the parts that we found absolutely essential were the Sermon on the Mount, the 13th chapter of First Corinthians, and the Book of James," he said. This was the beginning of A.A.'s "flying-blind period." They had the Bible, and they had the precepts of the Oxford Group. They also had their own instincts. They were working, or working out, the A.A. program, the Twelve Steps, without quite knowing how they were doing it.

As Dr. Bob recalled: "I didn't write the Twelve Steps. I had nothing to do with the writing of them. But I think I probably had something to do with them indirectly. "There was hardly a night [during the three months of Bill's stay in the summer of 1935] that we didn't sit up until two and three o'clock, talking. It would be hard for me to conceive that, during these nightly discussions around our kitchen table, nothing was said that influenced the writing of the Twelve Steps.

"We already had the basic ideas, though not in terse and tangible form. We got them ... as a result of our study of the Good Book. We must have had them. Since then, we have learned from experience that they are very important in maintaining sobriety. We were maintaining sobriety, therefore, we must have had them.

Reverend Sam Shoemaker, whom Bill Wilson called an A.A. co-founder, made this comment about James 1:21-25. I think St. James' meaning is made much clearer in Dr. Moffatt's translation, "Act on the Word, instead of merely listening to it." Try it out in experiment, and prove it by its results—otherwise you only fool yourself into believing that you have the heart of religion when you haven't (Shoemaker, *The Gospel According to You*, pp. 44-55).

In James 1:21-25, we read ...

*Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. (22) Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. (23) Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror (24) and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. (25) But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does. **James 1:21-25 (NIV)***

One of the principles that Dr. Bob and the old-timers taught was removing of sinful behaviors from your life in obedience to God's will for your life.

In Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, page 131, we read about Frank Amos describing the AA program of Dr. Bob's to John D. Rockefeller Jr., who had sent him to investigate the program.

Mr. Amos said that the alcoholic group comprised "some 50 men and, I believe, two women former alcoholics-all considered practically incurable by physicians-who have been reformed and so far have remained teetotalers." In meeting with a number of the men, their wives, and "in some cases, their mothers," Mr. Amos heard varying stories, "many of them almost miraculous." He noted, however, that when it came to recovery, they were all remarkably alike in "the technique used and the system followed." He described the "Program" as follows:

"1. An alcoholic must realize that he is an alcoholic, incurable from a medical viewpoint, and that he must never again drink anything with alcohol in it.

"2. He must surrender himself absolutely to God, realizing that in himself there is no hope.

"3. Not only must he want to stop drinking permanently, he must remove from his life other sins, such as hatred, adultery, and others which frequently accompany alcoholism. Unless he will do this absolutely, Smith and his associates refuse to work with him.

"4. He must have devotions every morning a 'quiet time' of prayer and some reading from the Bible and other religious literature. Unless this is faithfully followed, there is grave danger of backsliding.

"5. He must be willing to help other alcoholics get straightened out. This throws up a protective barrier and strengthens his own willpower and convictions.

"6. It is important, but not vital, that he meet frequently with other reformed alcoholics and form both a social and a religious comradeship.

"7. Important, but not vital, that he attend some religious service at least once weekly."

Mr. Amos said, "All the above is being carried out faithfully by the Akron group, and not a day passes when there is not one or more new victims to work on, with Smith as their leader by common consent."

As you study the Steps, you find that Steps 4 through 7 deal with the same principle – removing sinful behaviors from your life.

4 - Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5 - Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6 - Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7 - Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

A common definition of a “dry drunk” is someone who has stopped drinking, but who still demonstrates the same alcoholic behaviors and attitudes.

Dr. Rose Alexander writes, “A Dry Drunk has been described as a condition of returning to one's old alcoholic thinking and behavior without actually having taken a drink. Or as one wise old drunk put it, if a horse thief goes into A.A. what you can end up with is a sober horse thief. Or a personal favorite: you can take the rum out of the fruit cake, but you've still got a fruit cake! Those who quit drinking often are still angry about it, wind up living miserable lives and usually make everyone else around them miserable too”.

There are many who get sober, but still demonstrate all the sinful behaviors of their drinking days. **God has a different plan for our lives.** He not only wants us “sober”, he wants us to live a godly life.

So, let's examine James 1:21 to see what the Bible has to say about removing sinful behavior from our lives.

*Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. **James 1:21 (NIV)***

Another version of this verse says, “*You must stop doing and get rid all immoral behavior, all the evil habits and conduct that are part of your life. Humbly yourself and submit to God. Accept the message he has placed in your hearts. This word has the power to save your souls.*” **James 1:21 (EXP)**

This picture is that of *taking off* a dirty garment and putting it aside. A person must put off every dirty thing and lay it off to the side away from himself. If he enjoys the dirt and filth, then his mind is going to be on it. His mind will not be clear, not enough to hear the Word of God.

He must also put aside all that remains of any wickedness and evil. The idea is this: even after putting aside all filthiness, there will still be some ungodly attitudes that will show up within us. Therefore, we must be alert to these uprisings and put them off and lay them aside as well. We must be completely clean and pure from all dirt and sinfulness in order to hear the Word of God.

Examine the following passages to see what God says about removing sinful behavior from our lives. That are some behaviors that need to be removed from our lives?

Ephesians 4:25-32 (NIV)

^(4:25) Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ⁽²⁶⁾ "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ⁽²⁷⁾ and do not give the devil a foothold. ⁽²⁸⁾ He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. ⁽²⁹⁾ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ⁽³⁰⁾ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ⁽³¹⁾ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ⁽³²⁾ Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 5:3-5 (NIV)

^(5:3) But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁽⁴⁾ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁽⁵⁾ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Colossians 3:5-10 (NIV)

^(3:5) Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁽⁶⁾ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁽⁷⁾ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁽⁸⁾ But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁽⁹⁾ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ⁽¹⁰⁾ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NIV)

^(6:9) Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ⁽¹⁰⁾ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ⁽¹¹⁾ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Galatians 5:19-21 (NIV)

^(5:19) The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ⁽²⁰⁾ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ⁽²¹⁾ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Revelation 21:8 (NIV)

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

We will finish up next week and examine the second part of this verse which says ...

*"...humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. **James 1:21 (NIV)***

This is a picture of accepting, believing and applying the Word of God to our lives.