

DEVICE 7: Because you repeatedly struggle with the exact same sin Satan tells you that God will reject you, or that this proves you are not a Christian.

It is important to understand that this is a very great concern for a believer because it shows that a believer is doing what he or she knows is wrong. When a believer sins he or she is walking in the way of falsehood (Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. (Ps. 119:104 ESV). When a genuine believer walks in falsehood a deep hatred of what they have done overwhelms their soul. Satan recognizes their vulnerability.

Remedy 1 – The Bible states that Christians can fall back into the same sins they had once repented. Sad but true.

I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. (Hos. 14:4 ESV)

Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, "Return, faithless Israel, declares the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the LORD; I will not be angry forever. (Jer. 3:12 ESV)

Return, O faithless children, declares the LORD; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. (Jer. 3:14 ESV)

Remedy 2 – The Bible does not state that Christians can never fall back into the same sin after conversion. (I can't give examples of what does not exist).

Remedy 3 – There are many believers mentioned in the Bible who relapsed into a sinful pattern they had previously committed.

- Lot was overcome with wine at least two times (Genesis 19:30-38).
- John worshipped an angel twice (Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9).
- Abraham often told lies that would have forced his wife to commit adultery (Genesis 12:10-20; Genesis 20; Genesis 26:7-11).
- David committed himself to kill Nabal and all his innocent family, and actually arranged the death of Uriah the husband of Bathsheba (1 Samuel 25:1-38; 2 Samuel 11:1-12:15).
- Even though Jesus told his disciples that His kingdom was not of this world, they kept trying to find positions of power in His kingdom (Matthew 20:20-28; Luke 22:24-30; Matthew 18:1-4; Mark 9:33-37, etc.).
- Other godly believers sinned like Jehoshaphat who was a godly man, joined with Ahab (2 Chronicles 18:1-3, 30, 31) and later also joined with Ahaziah who was also wicked (2 Chronicles 20:35-37).
- Samson repeatedly fell into profound immorality (Judges 13:24-14:3; Judges 14:8&9; Judges 15:1-8; Judges chapter 16) yet is considered as someone God used to perform His wonderful deeds (Hebrews 11:32-34).
- Peter fell back into sin repeatedly (Matthew 14:28-31; Matthew 16:21-23; Matthew 26:69-75; Galatians 2:11-14).
- Jonah disobeyed God's direct commands repeatedly (Jonah 1:1-3; Jonah 4:1-3; Jonah 4:5-9).

Without the renewing power of God at work in a believer's soul it is impossible to overcome temptation and corruption (and if children, then heirs-- heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Rom. 8:17-25 ESV).

Remedy 4 – (This remedy is mostly to guide you in your prayers not to sin.) Learn to distinguish relapse into sins which are “infirmities” from relapse into sins which are “enormities.” God may let us commit “infirmities” to keep us humble, because these sins will not destroy our witness to other believers. He wants us to see that we cannot defeat sin by our own efforts, but only by His power. “Enormities” are destructive sins (“enormities” are sins that damage and hurt many people). Pray that God will use His power to keep you from committing “enormities” which will bring great personal hardship and cause much harm to others.

Remedy 5 – (This remedy is also to guide you in your prayers not to sin.) Learn to distinguish between involuntary lapses into sin and voluntary lapses that we were determined to make. It is the difference between wanting to sin and forgetting to avoid sin.

An example of voluntary sin would be when the Jewish people wandering in the wilderness longed for meat they used to have in Egypt (Exodus 16:3). To look back fondly on the sins of “the good old days” is a voluntary sin.

In today’s world we might think involuntary sin is a contradiction in terms. However, there are many sinful behaviors that we all fall into without even thinking about our behavior as being sinful. These would be examples of involuntary sin. Gossip would be one example, yet the Bible calls gossip a sin (Romans 1:29&30; 2 Corinthians 12:20; 1 Timothy 5:13). Most of us want to hear the latest gossip, but the hunger for gossip is a sinful desire. That’s just one example, but there are many: slander (Ephesians 4:31); most forms of anger (Colossians 3:8); paying back what someone has done (Leviticus 19:18; Proverbs 20:22; Matthew 5:38-39; Romans 12:17-21).

Knowing the difference between voluntary and involuntary sin can help us to know what change must take place in our hearts when we pray that God will change our hearts. Was it a sin done in full understanding that it was sinful, or did we not understand that such an action was a sin? We need God’s help to overcome both kinds of sinful desires. Only God can bring about this kind change in the heart of a sinner (And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. Ezek. 36:26 ESV; Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Ps. 51:10 ESV; Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Cor. 5:17 ESV; and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Col. 3:10 ESV; I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Gal. 2:20 ESV; Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Rom. 12:2 ESV; to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, Tit. 3:5 ESV; and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Eph. 4:22-24 ESV).

Remedy 6 – The Bible shows us that Christians can return to sins they committed in the past. God does not guarantee that He will prevent believers from returning to old sinful patterns. Some of the greatest believers did, in fact, commit sins repeatedly. When Peter heard Jesus explain that He would be killed in Jerusalem, he tried to persuade Jesus not to go to Jerusalem (Matthew 16:15-19, 22-24). Peter, along with James and John, saw Jesus glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9; 2 Peter 1:16-18). When Peter denied Jesus, at that moment, Jesus looked Peter in the eye (Luke 20:60-62). Despite everything Peter had witnessed, and committed himself to do, he still sinned against Jesus by denying he even knew Jesus. Soon after Jesus’ resurrection an angel gave instruction to tell the disciples, and especially Peter, that Jesus had risen and would meet them in Galilee (Mark 16:7). And even after that, Peter denied the power of Jesus’ resurrection to transform Gentiles into God’s people by trying to show the separatist Jews that he was “one of them” and refused to associate with the Gentile Christians (Galatians 2:11-13).

Even Peter, who was an incredible Christian, committed sin. If God did not prevent Peter from returning to sin, even a sin that denied the reality of Jesus’ power to defeat sin and death, then there can be no such guarantee for any of us.

Questions

1. *What is at stake here? What will happen to a person who repeatedly falls back into the same pattern of sin?*
2. *What do you think of remedy 2, does the Bible say believers should have a total victory over any sins? If it does where is it found?*
3. *How do you feel about the fact that some of the most famous people in the Bible fell into repeated patterns of sin (see remedy 3)?*
4. *Do you think a drug addiction would be an involuntary relapse? (remedy5)*