

12 Foundation Stones—Class 11A

Three Steps to Victory

Overcoming Problems, Part 1

Introduction

➤ **Difficulties are common to all**

Among the parables that Chinese teachers use is the story of a woman who lost an only son. She was grief-stricken out of all reason. She made her sorrow a wailing wall. Finally she went to a wise old philosopher. He said to her, "I will give you back your son if you will bring me some mustard seed. However, the seed must come from a home where there has never been any sorrow." Eagerly she started her search, and went from house to house. In every case she learned that a loved one had been lost.

"How selfish I have been in my grief," she said, "sorrow is common to all."

Section 1: The Ups and Downs of Life

➤ **Be happy**

God is not a sad God!—He's a happy God, Who wants you to be happy too. The Bible says,
Psalm 144:15—Happy are the people who are in such a state; happy are the people whose God is the Lord!

Even though we all face difficulties and problems from time to time, we have so much to be happy about! We have solutions, because we know the great solution-giver: Jesus!

➤ **Battles are inevitable!**

Even though the Lord wants us to be happy, there are times when it isn't so easy. Some people think that as soon as they receive Jesus they're never going to have any more problems and things are going to go real smoothly.—But getting saved doesn't bring complete relief from all problems and struggles.

There's a saying: "There's no testimony without a test, there's no triumph without a trial, and no victory without a battle!"

Jesus bled and died for you on the cross to save you, and won the battle for eternal life for you. But when it comes to day-to-day living, we all have some battles to fight!

What if a soldier said, "I've joined the army—why do I have to fight?" But that's what a soldier joins the army for, to fight!—And we are in a spiritual warfare, and the Devil is going to try to fight you!

1 Timothy 6:12—Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

2 Timothy 2:3–4W—You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (4) No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who enlisted him as a soldier.

There's an old saying: "The enemy doesn't start shooting till you go over the top!"—which dates from the trench warfare of World War I. Not until you came out of your trench and started attacking his territory did the enemy really let go and let you have it with all his big guns! Now that you are walking on the path of serving the Lord, it is only to be expected that you are going to face battles.

➤ **Types of problems**

We could divide our troubles or difficulties into three groups: 1) physical problems, 2) difficulties caused by our own mistakes or by intentional or unintentional actions of others, and 3) spiritual attacks from the outside.

■ **1. Physical problems**

Most of us face some physical weaknesses or limitations or sickness at some time or other, or maybe we are short of money or have some other material lack.

Philippians 4:12—I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have

learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

The apostle Paul wrote this, so he obviously experienced physical difficulties.

■ **2. Human weaknesses**

Romans 7:18–19—For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. (19) For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

Hebrews 12:1b—Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

The Lord made each of us differently, and has allowed each of us our own particular imperfections—plain old human weaknesses, frailties and lacks like selfishness, pride, laziness and envy—"every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us," against which we must daily battle. Battling these keeps us in shape spiritually, fighting and relying on the Lord!

We can also suffer problems because of the actions of others, whether intentional or unintentional. Maybe a scheduled bus doesn't show up and you're late for an important interview. Maybe someone has borrowed some item but failed to return it. The examples are endless.

■ **3. Spiritual attacks**

Then there are the attacks from the outside. The Devil tries to defeat you personally, to hinder you, and discourage you. You're already saved, the Lord's possession forever, but the Devil fears you and knows that he's going to lose others from his clutches because of you and your witness. So what does he do about it?—He tries to hinder and stop you, and discouragement is one of his favorite tools. Thank God we know the answer: Faith! We'll be talking more about how to defeat the Devil's devices later in the class but for now, remember we are already victors:

1 Corinthians 15:57—Thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

➤ **No trial greater than you can bear**

Troubles are common to all! Whether we face trials from spiritual attacks, or battles with our human weaknesses or physical problems, we all have troubles! Not to speak of the mistakes that we make, or suffering from the effects of the mistakes of others, and so on.

No matter what problems you face, always remember that the Lord is with you and can help you get victories! The trials of life can be overcome by trusting in Him and looking to Him for help. God's Word promises,

1 Corinthians 10:13—No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

If you're ever tempted to feel all alone and forsaken and like you're the only one that's going through this, and you feel like you're going through it worse than anybody else because of all your mistakes, just remember, many others have felt the same way.—And they have pulled through victoriously. The Lord's not going to make it any harder for you than you can take, and will always make a way of escape.

➤ **Fiery trials: How will you respond?**

1 Peter 4:12—Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.

1 Peter 1:7—That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Lord sometimes lets things happen that we don't understand to test us and try us. He places us in the refining fires of His trials and testings.

Some things happen that keep you close to the Lord—sickness, trouble, problems. Sometimes they happen to drive you close to others. Sometimes they happen to keep you humble. Sometimes they happen to make you pray. There are all kinds of reasons for having troubles.—And even troubles and tribulations are good for us! We'll talk more about that later.

The sorrow, the suffering, the sacrifice and sadness you go through will bring out the best in you—sweetness, compassion, tenderness, brokenness, love, and concern for others—if you love the Lord and turn to Him when you go through such trials. He says,

1 Peter 4:19—Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

If we learn and grow from our difficulties, then they will make us better, not bitter.

"Thank God for this wheelchair!"

Dr. Hubert Davidson visited the noted poetess, Myra Brooks Welch, who perhaps is best known for her masterpiece, "The Touch of the Master's Hand." As he turned to leave her home, Myra Welch patted

the arm of her wheelchair and said, "And I thank God for this." Imagine being grateful for a wheelchair! But her talent lay undiscovered prior to her wheelchair days. Rather than becoming bitter, she chose a better way, and a wonderful ministry opened new doors of blessings for her. Her poems have blessed many.

➤ **Closer to Jesus**

Psalm 55:22—Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

Remember that whatever troubles you face, the ultimate result can be a closer and better relationship with the Lord. When you're in trouble and call out for help, He answers!—And His presence will be so precious and real to you when you let Him encourage, guide and lead you. No matter what you go through, He is there to help, comfort and bring meaning to it all.

Hebrews 13:5—Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

If possible, share a personal anecdote on how the Lord's presence seemed even closer during a time of trial.

➤ **Three steps to victory!**

No matter what the problem is, if you'll just put into action what you've already been learning in our classes, you'll find the answers. We could say generally the answer is "be close to the Lord" and that is true, but we think it would be most helpful to go through the specifics. Whatever your problems are, if you will prayerfully follow these steps, you're guaranteed to win victories!

Summary:

Step 1: Identify the problem

Step 2: Find the solution

Step 3: Move on!

(Section 2) Step 1: Identify the Problem

➤ **Step 1 is: identify the problem!**

■ **Ask the Lord about your problem**

When any of us face any kind of a crisis or dilemma, test or privation—whatever the trouble or problem—what is the first thing we should do?—Complain? Get upset and angry that things aren't going just the way we would like them to?—Of course not!

When things go wrong in your life, whatever your emotions at the time, one of the first things you should do is ask the Lord what is wrong, whether you have done something wrong, and what lessons He wants to teach you from it.

There can be many reasons why a problem has arisen. Whether you have any fault in the matter or not, it is beneficial to take the time to pray about why things happen.—It's good to always keep the Lord in mind, asking Him about things.

Psalm 143:10—Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness.

Matthew 6:10—Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

➤ **Read the Word**

■ **Activity—Books that tell us how**

Look in God's Word and find the counsel and guidance you need about your problem! Ask the Lord to speak to you through His Word.

2 Timothy 3:16–17—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Psalm 119:105—Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Look for similar situations or problems in the Word. Draw your encouragement from the Word.

You can also find counsel in godly writings like those offered with this course, such as *Discovering Truth* and books in the *Get Activated!* series. *Obstacles Are for Overcoming* has a wealth of advice.

The riches of the Word

Some time ago an elderly man living in New Jersey made an unusual discovery as he leafed through an old family Bible. Many years earlier, his aunt had died and left it to him. Part of her will read: "To my beloved Steven Marsh I bequeath my family Bible and all it contains, along with the residue of my estate after my funeral expenses and just and lawful debts are paid." When everything had been settled the nephew got a few hundred dollars plus the old volume mentioned in the will.

After the money was used up, his only support was a small pension, and for more than 30 years he lived in poverty. Then one day he cleaned out his attic in preparation for a move to his son's home where he hoped to spend his old age. There in a trunk was the family Bible he had inherited. Opening it, he was amazed to find banknotes scattered throughout its pages. He counted over \$5000 in cash. Within his reach were riches he could have been enjoying all along.

➤ **Recognize the spiritual warfare**

■ **Your great, yet defeated Enemy**

God, Jesus, the good angels and departed saints, are not the only inhabitants of the spiritual world! There is also a dark side, headed up by the Devil, who is our arch-enemy, and is assisted in his evil tasks by his minions, lesser devils and demons. The Devil (Greek: diabolos) is the fallen angelic being who is the supreme enemy of God and man. He is in direct opposition to everything God is or all He wishes to do. Starting in the Garden of Eden, the Devil has attempted to deceive every living soul.

Revelation 20:10a—The Devil, who deceived them ...

He is called also "the accuser of the brethren":

Revelation 12:10—Then I heard a loud voice saying in Heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down."

Sometimes the problems we face are not caused by other people or by our own sins, but they are part of the spiritual warfare that is going on unseen by human eyes.

Ephesians 6:11–12—Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly (spiritual) places.

That's why the Lord promises:

Isaiah 59:19b—When the Enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.

Luke 10:19—Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the Enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

He also cautions us:

Ephesians 4:27—Nor give place to the Devil.

1 Peter 5:8–9a—Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (9a) Resist him, steadfast in the faith.

The temptation of Jesus

Jesus was carried out into the desert and tempted by the Devil. Even His physical body was allowed to be put under the power of the Devil for a short time. But under the attack He never yielded but resisted the Enemy with the Word of God, until the Enemy saw Jesus wasn't going to give up, and then he quit.

Matthew 4:1–11—Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the Tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Then the Devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" Again, the Devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Then the Devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Take note of how Jesus fought back with the Word, "it is written"!

➤ **Be aware of the Devil's devices**

2 Corinthians 2:11—We are not ignorant of his devices.

God's Word tells us not to be ignorant of the Devil's devices, so although we don't even like to talk about him and we'd rather emphasize the positive, you need to be able to recognize the Enemy and his wiles so you can fight and overcome him.

So what are "Devil's devices"? How does he try to hinder us, stop us, slow us down, etc.? Here are a few of his most common wiles:

He tries to play on our weaknesses, frailties, or vices. Perhaps someone has a natural tendency to grumble, which is something we all do on occasion, even though it is more healthy physically and spiritually to have a positive attitude:

Nehemiah 8:10b—Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

The Devil may try to tempt the "occasional grumbler" to habitually complain, which results in unhappiness and even depression. The Devil often attacks us first in our thoughts: That's the door through which he finds entrance. But thank God you can slam that door shut with Scriptures, as Jesus did!

The Enemy attempts to separate us from others: This is such a typical device of the Devil.—He accuses God's people and exaggerates to you what others are doing, and will try to take things that others have said or done and twist them and make things sound a lot worse to you than they really are. He's an expert at picking on all the little flaws and all the little faults that he can find, and constantly tries to accuse others and get you to blame everything that goes wrong on someone else!

Part of what our spiritual adversary says is often true, because he couldn't get you to believe his lies unless he told you some truth mixed with it, which would deceive you into thinking his lies were true too! So you have to be on guard.

James 4:7—Therefore submit to God. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.

➤ **Greater is He that is in you!**

1 John 4:4—You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Jesus is our Defense Attorney before God, our Judge, defending us from all the fiery darts of the Evil one, that prosecuting attorney, the accuser of the saints, Satan himself! Through the name of Jesus you have power over the Devil, and you can command him to leave! (James 4:7)

The Lord and His angels and you are far more powerful than the Devil and his demons! Satan has to obey your commands in the name of Jesus. He might fight against you for a while, but sooner or later he's going to have to knuckle under and admit defeat.

Philippians 2:10—At the name of Jesus every knee should bow.

Warning: The Scripture says we're not to be unaware of the Devil's devices. In other words, we are to beware of his devices. But we're not to get so fascinated by studying how he works that it becomes a fascination for evil!

① *For more on this subject, see the chapter in Obstacles Are for Overcoming, "Spiritual Warfare" (pages 39–43).*

Don't let the Devil trick you!

Needy miners and settlers in British Columbia, Canada, engaged in stripping abandoned Fort Alcan of lumber, electrical appliances, and plumbing, made an amazing discovery. While dismantling the jail they found that the mighty locks were attached to the heavy doors, and two-inch steel bars covered the windows, but the walls of the prison were only wallboard made of clay and paper, painted to resemble iron. A good old heave against the walls by a man not as strong as a football tackle would have burst the wall out. Nobody ever tried it because nobody thought it possible. Many Christians are prisoners of fears that are nothing when pushed against. Satan cannot do anything against a child of God, but he loves to put barriers of papier-mâché in the path of a believer to make him think that there is no progress in the direction of the will of the Lord. When by faith we push against it, we will be free.

➤ **Accept your responsibility**

Some people tend to blame everybody else for all of their troubles.—"Why me, Lord? I didn't do it, they did it to me! It wasn't my fault, it's his fault, her fault! They're the ones to blame! They're the ones who made me do it!"

How can you ever grow spiritually or learn any lessons from the Lord when you're self-righteously blaming other people for everything bad that happens to you and if you won't accept the responsibility for your own problems?

Even if you were not directly to blame for something, you still need to take responsibility for your situation and work toward a solution. No matter who caused the problem, blaming others will not resolve it. Concentrate not on placing blame but on finding solutions.

Don't be too quick to judge and blame others!

Matthew 7:3–5—And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? (4) Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? (5) Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye.

The Fall in the Garden

It's human nature to look around for somebody else to blame our problems on. "Passing the buck" started in the Garden of Eden. It's sinful man's first line of defense when he's in trouble—to blame others.

Just look what happened in the Garden of Eden: When they got caught in their sin, the first thing Adam said to God was, "It was my wife, she did it!" Then Eve said, "It was the Serpent's fault, he did it!" And the serpent as good as said, "It was God, it's all His fault!"

Genesis 3:12–13—Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

To "pass the buck" and try to blame things on others is an almost automatic reaction and self-defense mechanism with most people.

➤ **Acknowledging your own blame is essential if you want to make progress.**

Nobody who continues to blame other people for their problems is going to be able to progress and grow spiritually! You've got to take the responsibility yourself.

You've got to confess your part in the wrongdoing (all have sinned—including you!) so that the Lord can forgive you, because it says "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9). But if we don't confess our sins, if we don't even think it's our fault, then how can the Lord forgive us?

Even if you feel you have not been in the wrong, progress is not going to be made until you forgive the other person and make steps toward reconciliation.

Be honest with yourself!

We must not only glory in our successes, but also be willing to confess our mistakes and attempt to rectify them.—But, as they say, the hardest words in any language are: "I was wrong."—And the hardest one to confess your faults to is yourself! We hate even to admit to ourselves our own mistakes, sins, and shortcomings, as it is sometimes so discouraging, humbling, and humiliating.—But you'll never get the victory until you face the facts honestly and confess. "He that confesses his sins," the Word says, "shall be forgiven. But he that covers his sin shall never prosper!" (Proverbs 28:13).

Another reason why we need to confess our sins is because it really helps keep us humble! It helps you to be honest with yourself and with others and with the Lord. This takes humility of the kind only God can give.—Because it's just the inborn, sinful nature of man to not want to take the blame and so be unable to confess.

So may God help us all to be honest with ourselves, others and God! As Shakespeare said, "If thou canst to thine own self be true, thou canst not be false to any man!"—Be honest now!

➤ **Seek godly counsel. Ask others to pray with you.**

People often have the attitude, "I wanted to get my problem all straightened out and worked out, and get the victory by myself." But sometimes it can be difficult to resolve some issues on your own.—The more you worry about them and think about them, the more confused you're likely to become. Whereas if you do what the Scriptures say and let someone help you bear those burdens, you may be able to get help and resolve the problem much sooner.

Proverbs 11:14—Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

Proverbs 19:20—Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days.

Proverbs 20:5—Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

Proverbs 27:9b—The sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.

One word of caution: If you are seeking counsel from another, make sure you ask for help from somebody spiritually strong, who will not be hurt by your problem.

Romans 15:1a—We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak.

➤ **Quick summary of Step 1: Identify the problem**

We've gone through the first step. Let's quickly review how we can diagnose our problems and find out what is actually wrong.

1. Ask the Lord about your problem. Ask Him to tell you whether you have done something wrong that is causing this problem. Or does He have another reason or lesson behind it?

2. Read the Word. Look for similar situations or problems in the Word and see how the solution was brought about. Let the Word guide you; also let it encourage you and cleanse you.

3. Recognize the spiritual warfare. Be aware of the Devil's devices. He often tries to play on our weaknesses, frailties or besetting sins. Remember always that the Lord's power is much greater than the Enemy's.—Resist the Devil and he will flee. Don't become fascinated with his evil handiwork.

4. Accepting the responsibility for your own actions is essential if you want to make progress! Don't blame others. Concentrate not on placing blame but on finding solutions.

5. Seek Godly counsel. Ask others to pray with you. Be sure when asking for counsel that you go to someone spiritually strong who will not be adversely affected by the problem you will describe.

(Section 3) Step 2: Find the Solution

➤ **Step 2 is: Find the solution!**

Pray and ask the Lord for help!

Songs

As we saw earlier, we all have times of trial and need, and when those times come the Lord is more than able to help us.—So one of the first things to do when facing a problem of any kind is to ask the Lord for His help! Ask, believing that He can and will help you!

2 Samuel 22:7—In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry entered His ears.

Psalms 34:4—I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

Psalms 50:15—Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.

Hebrews 4:16—Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Use His strength!

A small boy was trying very hard to lift a heavy object. His father coming into the room and noting the son's struggle asked him. "Are you using all your strength?"

"Yes, of course I am," the boy impatiently exclaimed.

"You are not," the father answered. "You haven't asked me to help you."

Let the Lord lift you!

During the construction of one of the bridges over the East River in New York, the engineers were baffled by an old sunken barge which lay embedded in the river bottom. Powerful engines, steel cables, derricks, and tugs were powerless to remove the obstruction.

A young man, fresh from technical school, thought he could solve the problem. At low tide, he had a large barge towed out to the spot and had cables attached to either side and fastened to the sunken derelict. As the tide came in from the Atlantic, the barge rose, bringing with it the submerged wreck. The young engineer had linked to his task the limitless power of the ocean tides.

➤ **Confess your sins to the Lord, and if necessary to others**

Psalms 97:10a—You who love the Lord, hate evil!

You'll never be able to correct the problem or find the solution if you deny it exists and keep saying everything is all right.—That doesn't solve the problem at all. In fact, it makes it even worse! You'll never get the victory over such a problem until you honestly face it and confess it.

Proverbs 28:13—He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

The Lord promises forgiveness, and God says everything He can in His Word to encourage you to have faith to be delivered from your problems! But deliverance is dependent on your willingness to be honest and confess your sins and your faults.

If you're willing to recognize and face your problem, then you can attack it and overcome it! So confess your sins to the Lord and ask Him to forgive you.

➤ **Confessing to others**

James 5:16—Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

There is also a time when you should not only talk to the Lord about your sins, but sometimes you also need to confess to others who were affected by your mistakes.

If others have been hurt by your actions, you should apologize. If you've done something for which you should be sorry, by all means say so.

David's prayer of repentance

Psalm 51 is a beautiful expression of repentance of sin.

➤ **Take a stand against your problems. Don't give up!**

Once you've recognized that you have a problem and you've confessed it, then you've got to take a stand against it. When you're determined to forsake a spiritual problem and you call out to the Lord with a whole heart to deliver you, He does His part and will fulfill His promises:

Ezekiel 36:26—I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you.

2 Corinthians 2:14—Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

The Lord will be faithful to answer prayer and do His part. But then you've got to do your part by exerting the effort to forsake and "put off" the old negative patterns and bad habits. His Word says:

Ephesians 4:22–24—That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, (23) and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, (24) and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

2 Corinthians 10:3–5—For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. (4) For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, (5) casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

You don't always necessarily get over this sort of thing in a day, it often takes a while.

➤ **It can be a struggle...**

If you have a tough struggle getting the victory, it may be because the Lord is testing you to find out how much you want it, and how much you're willing to fight for it before He's going to reward you with it. But if you do your part, the Lord will certainly do His, and you will win!—So don't give up!

1 Timothy 6:12—Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Ephesians 6:10–11—Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. (11) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Galatians 6:9—And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

➤ **Keep trying!**

Having prayed for the Lord to help you overcome a certain problem doesn't mean you will now automatically do all the right things—especially if you've had a certain habit or attitude for any length of time. When you realize that you are wrong about something and you repent and the Lord delivers you, you start out again with a clean slate. But because your thought patterns have gone in a certain direction so long or you have some sort of negative habits, you have to learn to do things differently, and even to think differently in many areas.

It may take some falling and getting up again before you can walk very far without stumbling. In this sense, you may have to pay for your sins by continuing to fight them for a while. But if you keep persevering, the Lord will reward your determination—sometimes so quickly, it's truly miraculous—and you'll find you're hindered less and less by those old habits cropping up.

Proverbs 24:16a—For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again.

Proverbs 4:18—But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

"Go to the ant!"

"Go to the ant, ... consider her ways and be wise" (Proverbs 6:6).

One king used to relate to his friends an anecdote of his early life. "I once was forced to take shelter from my enemies in a ruined building, where I sat alone many hours," he said. "Desiring to divert my mind from my hopeless condition, I fixed my eyes on an ant that was carrying a grain of corn larger than itself up a high wall. I numbered the efforts it made to accomplish this object. The grain fell 69 times to the ground; but the insect persevered, and the 70th time it reached the top! This sight gave me courage at the moment, and I never forgot the lesson."

Struggle: Shake it off and step up

A story is told of a dog that belonged to a certain farmer in what had once been a gold-mining area. One day, while the farmer was walking with his dog in bushland near the farm, the dog fell into one of the many old abandoned mineshafts. Although the shaft was dry and quite narrow, it was not so deep and the dog managed to survive the fall without breaking any bones.

The farmer could hear his dog barking pitifully, but could not get down the narrow, crumbling shaft to get him. After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer decided the only thing to do was to end his dog's distress as soon as possible. He decided to bury the dog in the old shaft and put him out of his misery. He went back to his farm, got some tools and on returning, began to shovel earth quickly into the shaft.

Initially, the dog was terrified as the earth fell on him in the darkness. But as the farmer continued shoveling and the dirt hit the dog's back ... the dog shook it off and stepped up. Clod after clod rained down on him. "Shake it off and step up ... shake it off and step up ... shake it off and step up!" the dog seemed to be saying to himself. No matter how painful the blows, or how hopeless the situation appeared in the dim depths of the shaft, the dog fought his panic and just kept right on shaking off the dirt and stepping up until at last he was within reach of the farmer who joyfully hauled him out to safety.

➤ **Be positive**

Philippians 4:8—Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

We all go through experiences sometimes where we think negative thoughts instead of listening to the Lord. If your thoughts are not according to His Word, or cause you to be discontent or bitter, dissatisfied or unhappy or critical of yourself or others—these things are not of the Lord, and you must rebuke the Enemy in Jesus' name when he tempts you with these kinds of negative thoughts.

1 John 4:1—Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Romans 12:9b—Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

A lot of people feel bad because they think an unloving or sinful thought. But as the saying goes, "Even though you can't keep the birds from flying over your head, you can keep them from making a nest in your hair!" Thinking the thought is not sin; it is the dwelling on it and letting it fester in your mind that is. Resist all such negative thoughts and think positively!

When a room is dark, you don't go around trying to chase the darkness out of the room.—You let the light in and the light chases out the dark! Fill your mind with the Light of God's Word and the darkness will flee. The way to get rid of temptations and negative thoughts is to think of good things, Godly things. Read your Bible, pray, think about Jesus, and then you don't even have time to think the other thoughts.—Which is why Isaiah says,

Isaiah 26:3—You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.

If you watch your thoughts and watch your words and fill your heart and mind with the Lord and His Word, you will be well protected and fortified and surrounded by God's angels of protection, and you will be freed from the Enemy's critical and confusing static and negative accusations and doubts.

➤ **Praise the Lord. Keep cheerful!**

One of the greatest things in the world that anyone can learn is to be content in whatsoever state you're in, whether it's to be abounding or to be in want.

Philippians 4:11—Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.

1 Timothy 6:6—Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

We all need to learn to count our blessings! The Lord wants us to think on the positive things, and try not to set our minds on all the negative things and trials and doubts and fears that the Devil tries to get us preoccupied with. Think about your many blessings!

When Jonah finally shouted, "Salvation is of the Lord!" that old whale that had swallowed him just couldn't take it, and he spit him up!

Jonah 2:9-10—"But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." (10) So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Even if God lets the Devil send along a whale-of-a-lot of trouble to swallow you up, you've just got to keep praising the Lord! The Devil can't stand that, and the trouble can't stand it, and God will deliver you! But if you get all down in the dumps and go around complaining and doubting, you'll just sink deeper and deeper to the bottom of the sea.

When the Enemy tempts you to get down and critical or complaining about something, fight back by praising the Lord and counting your blessings!

Psalms 150:6—Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!

We could all praise the Lord more and be more positive! Thank Him for the health you do have! All kinds of things could be wrong with you, but thank the Lord for the blessings you do have! Stay positive, thankful and full of praise to Jesus!

Whenever possible, express your praise in words, preferably out loud. Just saying it in your mind is good but sometimes it is just not quite enough. You need to say it out loud, because if others are listening, it is a declaration to them that you are trusting the Lord. It shows your confidence in the Word and your belief in praise.

Psalms 71:8—Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your glory all the day.

Psalms 34:1—I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

David—A sample of praising through troubles

Poor King David, he had lots of troubles just like us sometimes, and he had his groanings. The Psalms always comforted me, because when I have my hard times and troubles and my groanings, I can remember, "Well, dear King David had the same problem sometimes!" Sometimes he was sure he was finished! Once he said "I shall someday surely die at the hand of Saul!" (1 Samuel 27:1). That was really not much faith, was it? He thought he was surely going to get killed by his enemies. But he didn't, did he? He died in peace at a ripe old age when he was clear up in his 80s. He never got killed by his enemies and all of his worries about his enemies killing him never happened. So he might as well have not done all his worrying, just like I shouldn't worry.

The nice thing about all David's Psalms and all of his time that he gets down in the dumps and weeps and groans and cries and laments is that he never stays there! He always pops back up again and winds up on a positive note. I think the Lord probably let him have all these problems and troubles so he'd write about them and show how you can pull out of them by looking to the Lord.

A positive outlook

Among the students at a well-known college there was a young man who had to get about on crutches. He had an unusual talent for friendliness and optimism and so won the deep respect of his classmates. One day a student asked him what had caused his deformity. "Infantile paralysis," he replied briefly, not wishing to elaborate on his difficulties.

"With a misfortune like that, how can you face the world so cheerfully?" inquired his classmate.

"Oh," replied the young man, smiling, "the disease never touched my heart."

➤ **Quick summary of step 2: Find the solution**

Let's review how to find the solution.

Pray and ask the Lord for help. Ask Him to solve the problem. Sometimes we have not because we ask not!

Confess your sins to the Lord and if necessary to others. Of course, you cannot do this until you recognize your problems. Remember, Jesus will forgive you. The keys to receiving forgiveness are repentance and confession. Also bear in mind that sometimes, particularly if your actions have hurt others, you need to confess and/or apologize to other people.

Take a stand against your problem. Then, don't give up! Sometimes if you are trying to overcome a bad habit, it can take awhile to establish a new, better habit in its place. You'll get tested along the way. But keep going! Victory belongs to those who persevere.

Think positive thoughts. Fill your mind with good things, and there won't be room for the Devil's doubts and discouragement. Use the Word in your fight. Memorize and quote Scriptures. Sing uplifting songs.

Praise the Lord. Keep cheerful! Victories are often found along the path of praise.