

OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME

George Tabac Mar. 17,1996

None of us are perfect! Each of us have various shortcomings that we are striving to overcome, as we struggle up the narrow way. Mine are different than yours, and yours are different than mine. None of ours are exactly the same.

But for a few moments this morning we would like to consider six basic ones that we probably all have had to a degree one time or another.

WANTING TO BE LIKED

The first is an attribute that all mankind has. That of wanting to be well thought of by your friends, your class mates, your employer, in reality we want to be well thought of by most everyone we know.

This can be a desirable quality often prompting to positive, wholesome above average qualities. But as in so many aspects of human nature it can have a down side as well.

This strong inward desire of "wanting to be liked by others, is often the underlying cause of countless heartaches thruout the world.

For young people this desire is especially strong. The pressure of our peers to conform and be one of the crowd, can become almost unbearable.

It's the cause of experimenting with smoking, alcohol and drugs.

It's what causes youth to cut or color their hair in outlandish ways.

It's the cause of wearing clothes that are purposefully bought torn, ragged, and five sizes too big.

It's the cause of sexual promiscuity.

It's often the cause of drive by shootings.

But not only are young people affected by this desire to conform, to be well liked, it affects adults as well.

It's the cause a Secretary will bend the truth for her boss, telling a client on the phone He's not in.

It's the cause one will remain silent at their place of employment even though things are being done that are outright wrong.

Company policy may be jeopardizing peoples health or the companies integrity. Yet one remains silent because they don't want to be looked down upon as a whistle blower.

Wanting to be liked by our children, is often the cause a parent may allow their children to do most anything, even though it's not for their ultimate best interest.

It's the caused a parent will refrain from disciplining their children adequately, for wrong doing.

It's the cause that can prompt us at our business meetings to vote contrary to what we really feel would be best, because we don't want to offend our close friend who brought up the idea.

It's the cause we remain silent, when one of our close brethren starts criticizing another, that we really know is unjustified.

It's the cause, that **when we need to take a stand for principal**, we go along with the wrong because it's one of our close friends and we don't want to hurt their feelings.

Whether as young people or adult brethren, we realize we are not immune from having difficulty at times of making the right decision in discerning between **our longing to be liked**, - from - our desire **to do what is right**.

It may be terribly hard at times not to go along with the practices of a group of our friends in school, especially if at first it doesn't seem to be that wrong, just a little far out. But even then try to remember the scripture in:

1 Tim 4:12 "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers."

Your taking a position of being an example of a believer, could very well help to turn around an action or fad that at best was meant only to be different, to do your own thing as it were, but at worst could bring injury or death to another.

However, as hard as it is not to go along with what our friends expect, it may be even harder not to go along with our boss upon whom our income depends, when he wants you to compromise a little on what to you are Christian principals.

What should we do in these situations.

If you start feeling a tinge of guilt even on just considering the decision of going along, do strive with all that is within you to have the courage to explain why you cannot.

Feelings of guilt are caused by our conscience which is warning us that that which we are contemplating is contrary to God's will for us.

Any time we disregard guilt feelings and go ahead anyway, we can be sure we will be injured by it. Morally, spiritually and perhaps even physically.

But it might be reasoned, but if I didn't go along with an occasional small inconsequential white lie, or bending of the truth slightly I'd probably loose my Job.

Perhaps, but not necessarily. At one job I had, I refused to work on an item that was a part of a fuse for warfare bombs, and I was fired. But I soon found another.

At another job I requested not to work on refrigeration equipment in Taverns. After explaining why, my request was granted, I was not fired, and I believe I was appreciated more for it.

In my last 20 year job I was asked to twist the truth slightly on several occasions, but after explaining why I could not, I was respected for it, and the example set, influenced my boss for the most part to follow suit, even though at times it meant a temporary disadvantage to the company. But overall the company prospered for it's integrity.

But in any case if our taking a stand for truth and honesty results in our being fired or demoted I believe it would be a good sign for us to seek for other employment.

May we remember Rom. 12:2 (Phillips) "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into it's own mould.

Reprint 4085 - "In a word conscience is one of our most valuable assets; according to our obedience to conscience will be our standing before the Lord."

1 Tim. 1:5 "The ultimate aim of the Christian life after all, is to produce the love which springs from a pure heart, a good conscience and a genuine faith."

Paul is telling us that the ultimate aim of our Christian life is to have a good conscience, that is a conscience that is always obeyed, and to produce LOVE, that is "AGAPE," LOVE, from a pure heart.

In essence Paul is telling us that the ultimate aim of every action and decision of our life, is to be motivated by "AGAPE " LOVE.

That is a love that is not influenced by "Our wanting to be well thought of by others," but by our wanting to be well thought of by God.

Because it is AGAPE LOVE that motivates every decision and action of God towards mankind.

Which is doing every thing possible that will be for the "**eternal interest**" for every intelligent being.

Thus the ultimate aim of our life, is to conduct ourselves with all with whom we have to do, our friends, our children, our boss, everyone, in such a way that it will be for the **ultimate eternal interest** for all involved, whether they can appreciate it at the time or not! SOMEDAY THEY WILL!

Never should our conduct be governed, - BY JUST WANTING TO BE WELL LIKED!

CALLING ATTENTION TO OURSELVES

Next we would like to consider some lessons from Jesus rebuke of the attitude of the Pharisees. We're all familiar with the parable Jesus gave in:

LUK 18:10-14 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The Pharisees were a religious sect in Israel that felt they were superior to all others. They were continually calling attention to their self righteousness, showing off trying to impress others.

They were filled with a judgmental attitude against others. They were continually calling attention to legalistic outward observance of the law, such as tithing the tiniest inconsequential seeds such as mint and cummin but neglected much weightier matters of justice and mercy.

In Jesus sermon on the mount he gave us heart searching admonitions to avoid some of the attitudes the Pharisees had and that our fallen flesh would at times like to emulate.

MAT 6:1 NAS Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them.

Jesus realized how we all like to be well thought of by others and it would be so easy for pride to enter in and want to call others attention to our goodness.

He goes on to show three examples how people show off their own righteousness.

MAT 6:2-4 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men.

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

In other words whenever we are involved in a righteous act of Christian service, don't sound a trumpet, that is calling others attention to see what we did. Our Lord is admonishing us to keep it quiet, even a secret.

Another example follows. MAT 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.

Here too we need to be careful. Our public prayers should be simple and brief from the heart to God. We don't need to use flowery language or long prayers referring to most all aspects of the plan. Public prayer should never be worded to call attention to our knowledge or piety.

Jesus third example is in: MAT 6:16 NAS Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men... but you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face.

If we fast we are to anointed our head and wash our face, that is that is we are to look clean fresh and neat. We're not to try to appear humble and sad calling attention to our great sacrifice.

Alms, sacrifice or any service, which is done to be seen of men will have little value in the eyes of God.

RUMORS OR GOSSIP

Another attribute our flesh likes to engage in is telling others little tidbits of rumor.

They usually are prefaced with the words, "You know they say," or, "Have you heard," or, I understand from others that," and the rumor or gossip follows.

You know they say that he's not very kind to his children.

Have you heard that no one in that group believes in the 2nd presence!

I understand their thinking of voting him out as elder!

I heard their son is taking drugs!

I understand they really don't study the volumes!

They say they rarely discipline their children!

Usually rumors are of negative qualities of someone. We know it's wrong to spread rumors, but still it is so easy for the flesh to enter in to such conversations.

Even as James tells us: James 3:8 (NAS) "No one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison."

We may not be able to tame the tongue perfectly, but oh how we must try with all that is within us.

For as James tells us, if we are responsible for spreading an untrue rumor about one of our brethren, it's effect is just like giving them poison, for it can destroy their character in a matter of seconds.

Prov. 20:19 tells us, "He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, therefore do not associate with a gossip."

? What could we do to help ourselves in overcoming this tenancy of the flesh?

King David's tells us of his method:

Psa. 39:1 "I will guard my ways,
That I may not sin with my tongue,
I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle.

Yes, we need to consciously have a tight muzzle to control our tongue.
With the Lord's help we need to think before we allow our lips to speak.

Is that which we are about to say accurate or is it exaggerated?
Will they be kind or cutting
Are they really necessary or needless?
Are they something wholesome or vile?

Not only do we want to shun being the source of rumors but, we need to strive not to listen to them as well.

If someone is wanting to share information with us that is hurtful to others, we might ask them for the name of the source of their information.

Or, we might ask if it's alright to quote them. Either question will help us all to see that it is better not to engage in spreading information that really is just a rumor.

May we reflect on the old proverb, "I have often regretted my speech, rarely my silence."

COMPARING OURSELVES WITH OTHERS

One of the tendencies of our fallen flesh is to make comparisons. We probably all do it to a degree. Often it is an unconscious habit that we may not even be aware of.

We make comparisons in various ways. One is we compare ourselves with others resulting in one of two different viewpoints.

Often our flesh likes to point out the weak points of others in order to make ourselves feel good. Our flesh may remind our New Creature, - see that, we don't have that problem, we're really doing better.

It can result in a completely false sense of security. For in reality what we may be doing what Jesus referred to in:

MAT 7:3 (NIV) Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brothers eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye.

Yes we may not have the small fault of one of our brethren, but we may have others far greater that we don't recognize.

It's just not healthy to be continually noting the negative qualities of others. Besides being a waste of time, it's hampering us spiritually, for it tends to engender feelings of superiority in ourselves which isn't good.

May we remind ourselves just because someone in the truth doesn't mean their perfect. Were not perfect either! Each of us is struggling to overcome one thing or another.

So instead of allowing our flesh to point fingers at one another, may we do all we can to help them to overcome their failings, and hopefully in the process we will be helped to overcome our own.

If we catch ourselves beginning to compare ourselves with others in this way, may we try to remember Paul's remedy in:

PHI 2:3 In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. That is to literally call to mind some outstanding quality they have that truly is better than ourselves.

Another possible result that may occur after we compare ourselves with others is to begin feeling inferior and get discouraged for we don't seem to measure up to them.

It may even cause us to try to change our real personality trying to be like them.

Let's notice the Apostle Paul's advise to us about comparisons in general.

2 Cor. 10:12-13 (Phillips) Of course we shouldn't dare include ourselves in the same class as those who write their own testimonials, or even to compare ourselves with them! All they are doing, of course, is to measure themselves by their own standards or by comparisons within their own circle, and that doesn't make for accurate estimation, you may be sure.

Now notice the next verse; TLB "Our goal is to measure up to God's plan for us!"

No two people on the face of the earth are the same. Our goal is not to compare ourselves to be like others, but Paul says our goal is to measure up to God's plan for us.

Notice Paul's further logic in 1 Cor. 12:4-7 (LB) "Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same Holy Spirit which is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are many ways in which God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work in and through all of us who are his. The Holy Spirit displays God's power through each of us as a means of helping the entire church."

In other words, God's will for each of us is different than for any other being, it's custom made. This is the whole concept of why God chose to have many members in the body.

Each one is different, each one has it's own role to play in benefiting the body overall. Each one has different abilities and attributes.

God chose this method as 1 Cor. 1:29 says, "so that no flesh should glory in his presence."

May we not feel we must compare ourselves with others and then strive to copy their attributes, it will only result in disappointment. For each of our abilities are unique.

Another way we make comparisons is comparing others with others. Such as a parent may say to their son, "Look at your sister Mary. If she can get an A in math why can't you?"

Or, "See how easy Larry learned to swim, Why are you so afraid?"

This may be done with a well-meaning way, trying to motivate the children, but I think we can see the effect could very easily harm a child's self image.

They are each different human beings, getting a A in math or not being afraid of water may be just beyond their ability.

It's right to encourage each child to do the best they can, but then we need to be happy for what ever attainments they reach regardless of how high. Don't expect perfection any more than we do from one another.

For just like the members of the spiritual body of Christ no two will have the same capabilities.

Other comparisons we make that are not the best is when we compare ecclesias, or families, or parents, or trials, or groups within the truth movement, or homes, or jobs.

How much better to leave all such comparisons with God and his infinite wisdom. "Our goal is to measure up to God's plan for us!"

How much better it would be to recognize that our loving creator has made everyone different and no one perfect!

The sooner we can appreciate and accept this realization, the deeper we will appreciate and accept one another, just as we would want them to accept us, in our struggle up the narrow way.

EXCUSES

Those who are spirit begotten children of God, are given astonishing promises of virtually unlimited strength and abilities. Let's note a few of them, and as we do try to note what is the underlining theme that stands out:

MAT 21:22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

JOH 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, **ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.**

JOH 14:13 And **whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do**, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. JOH 14:14 **If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.**

ISA 40:31 They that wait upon the LORD shall **renew their strength**; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they **shall run, and not be weary**; and they shall walk, and not faint.

EPH 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly **beyond all that we ask or think**, according to the power that works within us, to him be the glory.

PSA 68:35 The God of Israel is he that **giveth strength and power unto his people.** Blessed be God.

PHI 4:13 **I can do all things** through Christ which strengtheneth me.

ISA 30:21 And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, **This is the way, walk ye in it**

2TI 4:18 And the Lord **shall deliver me from every evil work**, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom

2PE 2:9 The Lord **knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.**

1 Cor. 10:13 (Diaglott) No trial has assailed you except what belongs to man; and God is faithful who will not permit you to be tried beyond your ability; but with the trial, will also direct the issue that you may be able to bear it.

Oh what precious promises! Did you notice the theme in all of them! Through the Holy Spirit that God has placed within us he has promised to give us special strength, powers and abilities that the world in general does not have.

These scriptures promise us that God's overruling providences will guide us and give us strength and power to overcome every obstacle and trial.

And yet with all these promises we find at times we use the word **I CAN'T.**

I can't stop worrying.
I can't find the time to study.
I can't overcome being impatient.
I can't find a job.
I can't stop overeating.
I can't keep my emotions under control.
I can't discipline the children like I should.
I can't forgive him.

For people in the world, we can see it would be appropriate for them to use the word can't, because they really can't. For they don't have the Holy Spirit to help them. But what about us?

Is it appropriate to use the word can't in the previous situations we mentioned?

Perhaps our flesh prompts us unconsciously to use the word can't as an excuse, because it just wants us to stop trying.

It suggests to us, you just can't do it, what's the use of trying anymore, that's just the way you are, It's in your genes and no amount of your trying anymore is going to change it.

But brethren may we not succumb to our flesh's suggestions. May we strive with all that is within us to not use the words "I CANT." For it's not true.

For the Apostle Paul reminded us that with the Lord's help we can do all things, ALL THINGS!

So instead of saying I can't, may we be bound and determined to claim the Lord's promises in prayer, and come off our knees with the determination on our lips of **I CAN!**

With the LORDS help, I can stop worrying.
With the LORDS help, I can find the time to study.
With the LORDS help, I can overcome being impatient.
With the LORDS help, I can find a job.
With the LORDS help, I can stop overeating.
With the LORDS help, I can keep my emotions under control.
With the LORDS help, I can discipline the children like I should.
With the LORDS help, I can forgive him.

Every time we start feeling inclined to say I Can't, may we strive to remember the Lord's promise of JOH 14:14.

If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

With that promised help and assurance may we be determined that our can'ts will be changed to, **I can!** "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

FEAR

This leads us to the subject of fear.

FEAR! Who of us has not experienced it. It takes on many forms.

Fear of talking to people.

Fear of failure.

Fear of heights.

Fear of illness.

Fear of losing our jobs.

Fear of changing jobs.

Fear of what others might think.

Fear of being alone.

Fear of retiring.

Fear of dying.

We are probably assaulted with some aspect of fear each day of our lives to some degree.

Some fears originate from our own flesh, others from suggestions from Satan who often tries to discourage us by implanting in our minds fear with the words **WHAT IF!**

WHAT IF, followed with countless possibilities of what might have gone wrong, when we don't know what's happening.

At other times Satan uses suggestions of the many things that could go wrong if we take a certain course.

All designed to paralyze us from having the courage to go forth to do the things God would have us do with our lives.

Fear is often the root cause of what takes away our having an inner peace of heart and mind.

God knowing our frame that we are but dust, has given us many strength supporting scriptures to help us overcome our tenancy of fear.

ISA 41:10 **Fear thou not**; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee.

PSA 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. **Therefore we will not fear**, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea...the Psalm ends with the words of (vs 10) Be still, (stop your striving) and know that I am God.

Try to remember to read the 27th Psalm when fear comes beckoning. PSA 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?...⁽³⁾ Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in spite of this I shall be confident. 5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his dwelling: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. And mine head shall be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD. 13 I would have fainted, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

May we strive to realize that everything in our lives that is beyond our control, are in God's hands. We can't change them. And we wouldn't want to!

For God has promised us that he is overruling every aspect of our lives. ROM 8:28 For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose. **ALL THINGS!**

Why then should we fear anything that is beyond our control?

But we realize there are other fears. Fears of things that might happen that are within our own control. Such as fear of the consequences of decisions we must make.

Should I or should I not go to college?
Should I take that job or not?
How shall I make out my will?
Should I get married to him or her?
Should I buy that house or not?
Should I go into full time service?

Such decisions are very important, for we realize that can affect the rest of our lives. But we realize that worrying about them even to the point of illness will not help one iota.

All we can do, is to do the best we can. Thru prayer we beseech the father to help and guide us thru his word and providences to see the principals that we should follow in making our decision.

And then using our best consecrated judgment, make our decision, then leave the results in the Lord's hands.

If our decision was the Lord's will we will be blest spiritually. If it was not, we believe the Lord will overrule circumstances in such a way that we will realize we need to make a change, which we can then do.

In either case God is at the helm and will work it out for our ultimate good.

Therefore let us not paralyze our selves with fear of stepping out in faith to do God's will, even though it seems so overwhelming.

We need to develop courage!

WE need the courage David had when he took his sling, and faced the giant Goliath.

We need the courage Daniel demonstrated when he refused to bow before Nebuchadnezzars statue in Babylon.

We need the courage Elijah had as faced the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.

We need the courage Job showed when he was covered with boils and denounced by his so called comforters.

We need the courage that God wants us to have!

Even as he repeated three times to Joshua as he was about to enter the promised land. JOS 1:6 Be strong and of a good courage, for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land.

JOS 1:7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

JOS 1:9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

These words apply to us as well. So may we have courage.

Most of our calls for courage will not be on the literal battle field as it was for Joshua, but it will be in the quiet inner tests of faith of daily life.

Your test may be as simple as saying **NO!**
It may be an inner struggle between right and wrong.
It may be standing alone when your misunderstood.
It may be enduring pain when all alone.
It may be when we've laid to rest our loved one.

Thru them all we hear our heavenly father whisper in our ear, "Be thou strong and very courageous," keep pressing on, for soon, very soon you will reap if you faint not, the fruition of all my precious promises to you.

We would like to conclude with a heart searching Poem entitled:

TODAY

Outside my window, a new day I see and only I can determine what kind of day it will be. It can be busy and sunny, laughing and gay, or boring and cold, unhappy and gray. My own state of mind is the determining key, for I am only the person I let myself be. I can be thoughtful and do all I can to help, or be selfish and think just of myself. I can enjoy what I do and make it seem fun, or gripe and complain and make it hard on someone. I can be patient with those who may not understand, or belittle and hurt them as much as I can. But I have faith in myself, and believe what I say, and I personally intend to make the best of each day.

May we keep on pressing on. No matter what the trial. No matter what the obstacle before us. May we use each day, the best we can, to the glory of God.

"Therefore . . . be steadfast, immovable . . . your toil is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Cor. 15:58

"Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary." Gal. 6:9

For someday, someday soon, if faithful we will hear those blessed words, Well done, my good and faithful servant: enter thou into the everlasting joys of thy lord.