

Introduction

The weather alert goes off telling you a storm with high winds is on its way. You have time to prepare; so you batten down the hatches. Ultimately the storm arrives. The winds do their thing. You hang tight and endure the storm until it passes on. After it passes you go out and survey the house and yard to see if there is any damage and you resume living.

The storm that comes and goes is akin to our experience of temptation. Christ's followers are exhorted to prepare for the evil day. When it arrives, we must execute the plan for dealing with it. Finally, when the temptation passes, we must gather ourselves for resuming life's daily pattern of preparation again. In our study of how to handle temptation, we have looked in depth at the preparation phase and the execution phase. Tonight we will study the resumption phase. What to do when the evil day passes.

There are two possible outcomes when the evil day passes. The most desirable outcome is that you are rejoicing in victory, even if weary. By God's grace and provision of a way of escape, you withstood the draw of temptation. Desire did not conceive and give birth to sin. Rather, the submission to the Spirit resulted in triumph over fleshly desire so that you endured the temptation. This is absolutely the place you want to be, having weathered the storm. The other outcome is the undesirable outcome of defeat. You gave in; you succumbed. You failed to take the way of escape that God provided. You sinned.

How do you resume? How do you as a follower of Christ continue the path of perseverance? Obviously how we answer these questions depends on the outcome of our experience of the evil day. If we have endured, we will answer the questions one way, and if we sinned, we will answer them another. These answers are what we are going to consider tonight.

1. How to resume if we endure.

1a. Resume with caution. We must not allow an experience of victory over temptation to persuade us that we are invincible. Often an experience of God's provision is translated by our deceitful hearts to mean that we are strong and do not need help.

Consider Hosea 13:4-6. But I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior.

5 It was I who knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought;

6 but when they had grazed, they became full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore they forgot me.

The Lord calls to the attention of his people the fact that He is the one who protected and provided for them, but in the abundance of God's provision, the people forgot him. They forgot they needed him. Is it not true that times of victory are the times in which we are prone to wander. The absence of affliction breeds self-sufficiency, self-confidence, and forgetfulness.

1 Corinthians 10:12 underscores this tendency of which we must beware. "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." This statement precedes the one which informs us of the common experience of temptation among human beings. Emerging successfully through a season of temptation is a time of vulnerability to further temptation, so beware. Do not let success go to your head. Recall that the glory for your enduring temptation is God's. Continue to walk with such a conviction.

Proverbs 16:18. Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Do not think you are better! Know that God is the one who provided the way of escape.

1b. Resume with assurance. Go back into living in the strength provided by the Lord. Think back to the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Forty days of fasting were followed by three instances of intense satanic assault. Then the devil left Jesus. When you resist the devil, he will flee from you (James 4:7). And God will strengthen you.

After Satan departed from Jesus, angels came and were ministering to him (Matthew 4:11). Peter tells us to "resist the devil . . . and after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace . . . will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you" (1 Peter 5:9-10). Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Be assured that the Lord will provide for your rejuvenation when you have fought a fierce battle. Give thanks to him and call on him to supply new strength.

2. How to resume if we fall.

2a. There are several facts to know and of which to be assured.

1. Know that you are on the threshold of further sin if you do not respond well. Psalm 119:133. Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me.

If you do not steady your steps, iniquity will get dominion. It will become a stronghold. The hole in which you find yourself will get deeper and deeper. Proverbs 22:3 instructs, "The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it." So stop in your tracks before the damage gets any worse.

2. Know that you will be tempted further. Jeremiah 17:9 says that "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" When sin is committed, the heart and mind kick in over time. Add to that the accuser the devil pounces on you when you are down. Thoughts like these will flood your mind when you sin: "You are no good." "You can't be saved." "Boy, is God mad at you now!" "It just does not do any good! You try and try but look where it has gotten you!" "You are nothing more than a lousy sinner who will never get over this sin!" "You are one of those who has wandered away from the faith." "You should just give up!" "The pain and shame of repentance are just too much!" "How did this happen?" "How could I have done this." "There is just no hope for you." Is that enough examples?

3. Know that better days are ahead. On the other side of forgiveness is a blessedness that you can sing about. Psalm 32:1-2--Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

4. Know that God, while he hates sin, will never forsake his children whom he loves. The shepherd who seeks for the wandering sheep is the Lord. Psalm 94:14 confirms, "For the Lord will not forsake his people; he will not abandon his heritage."

5. Know that God has sympathy for the toughness of the battle and the weakness of the flesh. Psalm 103:13-14--As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. 14 For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

6. Know that God is more ready to forgive than we are to repent. It is God's way to be gracious with those who love him. Psalm 119:132--"Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name." Psalm 51:17--The sacrifices of God are a

broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

God has made provision for us in the person of his own son. 1 John 2:1—My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

Our hesitancy to repent only makes matters worse, but when we repent there is forgiveness. Psalm 32:3-5—

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away

through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah

5 I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

2b. There is a plain and simple pathway to restoration.

1. Confess your sin. Admit that you have rebelled against God, that what you have done is transgression, iniquity, evil, sin, rebellion, hostility, treason. The willingness to own your sin as evil against God evidences a repentant heart, a heart that is determined to abandon the sin.

1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin . . .

Psalm 32:5—I acknowledged, did not cover, confessed . . .

Psalm 51:4—Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight

2. Seek God's forgiveness. Plead Christ's blood.

Psalm 51—Have mercy on me . . . blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! . . . purge me with hyssop . . . wash me . . . hide your face from my sins . . . restore to me the joy of your salvation . . . deliver me from bloodguiltiness . . .

1 John 2:2—[Jesus] is the propitiation for our sins

3. Accept that he has promised to forgive, forget, and restore. Embrace the gladness of forgiveness.

Psalm 32:1—Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Psalm 51:10, 12—Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me . . . restore

to me the joy of your salvation

4. Tell it out! Teach other transgressors and praise the name of the Lord!

Psalm 51:13-15 – Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

15 O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

Conclusion

After a storm news crews are out looking for damage. If they find some they will interview the owner of the property. How are you taking this? What are you going to do now? Mostly I hear them saying they are going to clean up and rebuild. Nothing else to do. I don't think I have ever heard anyone say that they are going to just crawl in a hole somewhere until they die. Admittedly a storm is a little different from wilful sin, but one of the keys to continue to progress in sanctification is that when we have sinned and the conviction and guilt sets in as we survey the damage, we run to the only one who can do something great with the mess we have made.