

# PARCHMENT

AND HE SAID UNTO ME, WRITE: FOR THESE WORDS ARE TRUE AND FAITHFUL.

REVELATION 21:5



*For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. Malachi 4:1*

## NEITHER ROOT NOR BRANCH

Earth is host to over 130 species of coral tree. Best known for their signature red flowers, which all but few species share, the coral tree stands proud at up to 30 metres tall. Despite their beautiful red blooms, however, this bright and beaming tree is an immensely invasive pest.



It's well known that if a branch breaks off a coral tree and settles on the ground, it will sprout, and another tree will begin to grow. Incredibly, the same is even said of wood chips from mulched coral trees. As one can imagine, this makes the removal of coral trees highly problematic. One must burn the tree, which can be difficult due to its high water content, or place it in landfill. Not one branch, stick, or wood chip is allowed to remain.

In the surrender of oneself to Christ, all sin must be wholly eradicated. Not one seemingly small vice is to remain. Even the wood chips - the defeated flaws and evil tendencies of the old life - must be defeated again day after day. Otherwise, the wood chips will find their

size again. And in due time, what was once a broken-down branch, will grow up into a towering tree. For this very reason, the Christian is to practise the words: "I die daily". 1 Corinthians 15:31. As the story of Elijah teaches, yesterday's victory is no insurance against tomorrow's battle.

Expounding upon this story, Sister White writes: Elijah "had stood undaunted before King Ahab, [and] had faced the whole nation of Israel, with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal at their head." Nevertheless, "after that terrible day upon Carmel, when the false prophets had been slain, and the people had declared their allegiance to God, Elijah fled for his life before the threats of the idolatrous Jezebel." {DA 120}

Certainly, Satan is ever at hand to tempt and annoy, particularly under trying circumstances. One might then feel justified in murmuring and voice is given to the devil's thoughts of doubt and distrust. Thus, the wood chips begin to sprout, and the faults of the old character rise up again.

Yet as Sister White



states in the same paragraph, “by parleying with the enemy, we give him an advantage.” Just before the committal of every sin, one is faced with two distinct options. To go through with the act, or to walk away from it. It’s important to remind oneself that at this point, you haven’t sinned yet. Thus, it’s invaluable to learn to think before one acts. In fact, most children are taught by their parents to think before they speak. Yet how often does an adult sin because they fail to do this very thing? If one is able to slow down time in their minds, they are more likely to say ‘No’ to the enemy, rather than falling prey to what seems to be an impulsive and inevitable sin.

Friends, no sin is inevitable. All sin is committed because we choose to commit it. And with a choice as consequential as our eternal destiny, is it not worth a moment of rational thought? Indeed, it’s our duty to discuss with ourselves the arguments for and against the temptation before we choose to indulge it.

If one is looking to purchase a car, for example, they familiarise themselves with the pros and cons of the vehicle, and compare it to others before making their decision. Weeks and even months are dedicated to weighing up the value of one car against another, before finally, an educated decision is made. Are our sins - which crucify the Son of God; our only true helper and confidant - of less consideration than a car?

It’s true that before a sin is committed, one often has less than a minute to decide whether or not to proceed. Yet it’s often the case that one has formed a habit of proceeding into sin before properly considering the matter. This is partly due to the false belief that the sin before them is inevitable. They forget that the principle of choice still stands. No sin is inevitable. All sin is committed by choice. And temptation is not sin. Therefore, the key to breaking the habit of impulsive and irrational sin is by learning

to slow down time, and figuratively granting oneself more time to weigh up the temptation from either side.

The next time you find yourself faced with a temptation, take a moment to ask yourself: Will this action cause me to feel separated from God? Will this action result in regret? Will this action have a negative impact on another soul for whom Christ died? And is the short-lived pleasure of this sin worth the aforementioned negative results?

This internal dialogue might last only a few seconds or milliseconds, yet they will be enough for you to realise that the sin you are being tempted to commit is simply not worth it. This is a very practical method for overcoming sin. Even the apostles of old, by faith employed this method, “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”. Hebrews 11:25.

However, unless one values their relationship with Jesus more than this world, and unless one is connected with Him through prayer and the Word, they’re likely to answer ‘Yes’ to that last harrowing question. Satan will be there to suggest that the sin before them *is* worth the regret. That it *is* worth bearing a damaged relationship with the Saviour. And that it *is* worth the knowledge of having caused pain to others. Like his first temptation to Eve in the garden, Satan’s argument will be that disobeying God *is* worth the dazzling effects which come from partaking of the forbidden fruit.

And what were the dazzling effects in Eve’s case? Heart-wrenching regret. Separation from God. And a knowledge of the pain, suffering and misery caused to others for six thousand years.

If Eve were alive today, she would tell you that the sin before you isn’t worth it. She would urge you to consider each temptation with fear and trembling,

and to weigh up the matter with carefulness before impulse. Eve would tell you that “the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:23. Indeed, the law of sin is strong, but the law of the Spirit is stronger. And armed with the law of the Spirit, one may attest that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Romans 8:18.

There is another application for the object lesson of the coral tree. For six thousand years, the devil has sought to eradicate the gospel from the face of this earth. And through the temptations in the wilderness, he sought to exterminate the Holy One for good. He arranged for the crucifixion of the Son of God and desired to hold Him in the tomb forever. Yet Jesus came forth from the dead. And in the lives of the apostles, the beaten gospel lived on. Though men were slain, and the Bible destroyed, a remnant survived, sprouting new growth wherever they went. And when they fell, new trees sprung up. “Our blood is seed,” the martyrs cried. The broken down branches of the coral tree, the wood chips and the sticks would rise again.

