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March 13, 2011 "Taking God and Sin For Granted"

Many people look at the Lenten season as a time to give up something. Over the years I have given up caviar, expensive champagne, and trips to the Bahamas. What about you? Do you give up something for the strengthening of your faith or do you take something on? You could take on the responsibility of attending each Wednesday Lenten service or read a devotional each day. Sad to say, many people could care less about Lent whatsoever and forget about God and sin and concentrate on the fun things of Spring.

There is a story of one of our members who was late for a meeting. He was driving around this building again and again looking for a parking spot. He decided to pray, "Dear Lord, help me find a parking space and I'll go to church every week and quit drinking beer." Miraculously, a spot opened up. He looked up to heaven and said, "Never mind, God, I found one." It's so easy to forget about God's blessings and just think that we're L(ucky). We find it easy to take God for granted.

The same can be true as we face temptations to sin. The Native American, Iron Eyes Cody, famous for the tear running down his cheek as he saw the pollution in the world, is quoted as sharing this story of a young Indian brave. A young man went out into the wilderness to prepare for manhood. Out in nature he wanted to test himself so he climbed up a mountain. Once at the top, he swelled with pride as he looked around at the beauty around him. Suddenly, at his feet, he saw a rattlesnake. He jumped away as the snake spoke to him, "I am about to die from the cold and lack of food. Please take me up into your shirt and take me down to the warm valley." The youth replied, "I was warned about you rattlesnakes. Your bite could kill me." "No, I'll treat you differently. If you're nice to me, I'll be nice to you." After a while the young man picked up the beautiful snake, put it in his shirt and carried it down the mountain. At the bottom, the snake suddenly coiled up and bit him deeply on the leg. "But you promised..." replied the young man. "You knew who I was when you picked me up" said the snake as it slithered away. We find it easy to take sin for granted in the same way.

When we read of the temptation of Jesus, we see that Jesus never took sin for granted. Jesus fought against every little temptation Satan put in front of Him. Jesus knew that if mankind believed there was no sin, there would be no need for a Savior from sin and they would be lost eternally. It has been said that Satan's greatest trick is convincing mankind that he doesn't exist. We rationalize sin as simply the choices people make, mistakes, boo-boos, so they're not bad at all. We gladly give Satan an inch, not realizing that he'll take a mile. Jesus was smart enough not to take the Devil for granted and give him an inch, and we shouldn't either. Now is the time to confess and repent of our many sins before God.

Jesus never took His Heavenly Father for granted either. During temptations and happy times, Jesus was committed to staying close to His Father. From the time

He was a young man in the temple doing His Father's work, to His death on the cross for our sins when He committed His spirit to His Father, staying close to His Father kept Him strong for the battle against sin as our Substitute. If Jesus needed strength, we do too. Devotionals, Bible Class, worship, prayer, and all that God gives help us to keep us close to God and strong during our temptations. As the Union Pacific Railroad was being built, an elaborate bridge was built over a canyon. To test the bridge, a train with a double load of cars was placed on the bridge for a day. It was asked if they were trying to see if the bridge would break and the builder replied, "I'm trying to show it won't break." Because God is Good.. All The Time, He allowed Jesus to be tempted to show that Jesus wouldn't break. With Jesus really living in your heart through faith, sin won't break you either. Amen. .pastor matthews