

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Spirit Empowers Us for Victory

Scripture: Romans 8:12-13

Code: 45-58

Only God has the capability to fill our life with song. Only He is the one who can save us and redeem us. And as a result of that, we are in tremendous debt to Him. And that is exactly what the Apostle Paul says in Romans 8:12 and 13.

Let me read those two verses and then we'll look at them, talk about them; see if we can't apply them to our hearts. Romans 8, verse 12:

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do kill the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Two very, very important verses. And I trust the Spirit of God to be our teacher, tonight.

To begin with, let me say that I want you to know that the things that I teach and the things that I preach in the Word of God are very personal things to me. This is not an exercise in theatrics. This is the commitment of my own heart. I take the Word of God very seriously. And I believe that before I can ever be so bold as to apply it to your life, I have to apply it to my own life. And so, I find myself in the text of every sermon of every lesson and no different here.

This is not just a message to you; it is a message to me. And it is a very important reminder that I am in no debt at all to the flesh. For that's a part of the life of deadness that I no longer am engaged in, thanks to Jesus Christ. And so, I owe the flesh nothing. But I am in debt, and that's implied here, I am in debt to God with a tremendous debt. And that's really what I want us to understand tonight.

This week as I was thinking about my own responsibility to be the kind of man God would have me to be, whether or not I was the pastor of a church or not, I was drawn to read a book which has a way of confronting my soul and it's an old book, in fact it was written in 1656. I have a current edition, I want you to know. It's been republished many, many times. The title of it is The Reformed Pastor and it was written by a pastor by the name of Richard Baxter. And he says this, on one page, and he speaks to those who are pastors.

"Take heed to yourselves lest you live in those sins which you preach against in others and lest you be guilty of that which you daily condemn. Will you make it your work to magnify God and when you have done dishonor Him as much as others? Will you proclaim Christ's governing power and yet condemn it and rebel yourselves? Will you preach His laws and willfully break them? If sin be evil,

why do you live in it? If it be not, why do you dissuade men from it? If it be dangerous, how dare you venture on it. If it be not, why do you tell men so? If God's threatenings be true, why do you not fear them? If they be false why do you need righteously troubled men ... why do you righteously trouble men with them and put them into such fright without a cause? Do you know the judgment of God that they who commit such things are worthy of death? And yet, will you do them?

"Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself. Thou that makest thy boast of thy law through breaking the law, dishonorest thou God. What, shall the same tongue speak evil that speaks against evil? Shall those lips censor and slander and backbite your neighbor that cry down these and the like things in others? Take heed to yourselves lest you cry down sin and yet do not overcome it, lest while you seek to bring it down in others you bow to it and become its slave yourselves. O brethren, it is easier to chide at sin than to overcome it," end quote.

I find that a very important warning in my own life. And Baxter went on to say, "Many a tailor goes in rags that makes costly clothes for others. And many a cook scarcely licks his fingers when he hath dressed for others the most costly meal."

And so, I want to say at the very beginning that what I say tonight is not only to you, it is to me as well. And has been as I've prepared to share with you.

Now the responsibility that we're confronting in Romans 8:12 and 13 as we go through this marvelous chapter, is the responsibility to kill sin in our lives. The word "mortify" means kill. And the text is basically saying, since we have no obligation to the fleshy, we better be about killing sin in our bodies. We need to be putting it to death.

Now just to set you in mind as to what Paul's purpose is in this great chapter, remember that it began with a wonderful announcement in verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." That is the best news we ever received. We will never be condemned. We will never be punished for our sin. That is the sweetest sound of any word that could ever have fallen from the lips of God. It is a pardon to a condemned criminal who sits on death row. For we were condemned to an eternal punishment in hell. We sat on death row waiting God's execution. We were indeed guilty and the Savior delivered a pardon and said there will be no condemnation, for I have already died in the behalf of this criminal. What joyous news, incredible news.

And if that news doesn't thrill your soul, then you're cold and you've lost the warm and thankful heart of praise. You see, the promise of no condemnation is the last in a string of pearls, the pearls that are the result of justification. As Paul outlined the doctrine of salvation, or justification by grace through faith in chapter 4, he then moved from there into the wonderful pearls of blessing that come as a result of that justification: peace, grace, hope, love, life, holiness, freedom, fruit, spiritual service and glory of all glories--no condemnation. No condemnation, no judgment will ever come upon us who are

in Jesus Christ.

And that is so incomprehensible and so marvelous a truth that the Apostle Paul does not just leave us with that truth, but he marches us through the eighth chapter of Romans which tells us why that truth is indeed a truth. And he tells us it is because of the great and wonderful work of the Holy Spirit. And so, we call chapter 8, "Life in the Spirit." The marvelous reality of no condemnation is not only due to the work of Christ, it is due to the work of the Holy Spirit in applying to us the work of Christ. Christ does the work and the Spirit applies it to us.

And so, as we're moving through the chapter, we're noting seven aspects of the Spirit's work in our behalf that demonstrates to us that we will never be condemned for sin. Great, great chapter. Let me remind you of the ones we've already discussed.

First of all, we noted in verses 2 and 3 that the Spirit frees us from sin and death. The Spirit frees us from sin and death. That's why we have no condemnation. We're free from the power of sin. We're free from the penalty of sin which is death.

The second thing we saw about the Spirit's ministry is He enables us to fulfill God's law. Verse 4, we are not under condemnation because rather than violating God's law, by the power of the Spirit in Christ we fulfill God's law. And so, we become pleasing to God. And that again, the wonderful work of the Spirit. For it says in verse 4, this is true of those who walk after the Spirit.

Thirdly, we saw that the Spirit ministers to us by changing our nature. We are not under condemnation because we have been made new creations. And we looked at that, didn't we, in verses 5 through 11. We saw that the Spirit of God changes our inside. We are a new creation. And someday He will change our outside, says verse 11.

So, it is because the Spirit frees us from the law of sin and death, because the Spirit enables us to keep God's righteous law and because the Spirit transforms our nature that we no longer are under condemnation. And so, we bless the Spirit for the marvelous work which He does in our lives.

Now for our study tonight, we come to the fourth of those seven elements. The Spirit empowers us for victory over the flesh. The Spirit empowers us for victory over the flesh. And this point is somewhat similar to the second point in verse 4, but focuses not so much on what the Holy Spirit does as on what we do as we allow the Holy Spirit to accomplish His work in us. So the focus of verses 12 and 13 is not on His accomplishment as much as it's on our obligation. That's why it says "we are debtors," "we must kill the flesh." And of course, it implies and even says through the power of the Spirit, but nonetheless, we must be involved.

So, these two verses then become a demonstration to us of the call of God upon us to practically get about the business of killing sin in our lives. And we must be about this business. It is a very practical exhortation. It is God commanding us to do something which we are able to do. God never asks us to do what we can't do, that would be futile. And when He asks us to kill sin, He says in verse 13 through the Spirit. And we remember that every Christian possesses the Spirit because that's what we learned in verse 9, didn't we? "Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." So those that are His have the Spirit and because we have the Spirit, we have the capacity to kill sin in our lives.

Now as we look at this whole matter of dealing with sin, of overcoming the flesh, I want to give you several points. Point number one is the power of victory ... the power of victory. And this is very practical. And very clearly it says in verse 13 that the power of victory is through the Spirit. You might want to underline that in your Bible. That's the power. If we're going to know victory over the flesh, if we're going to know the killing of sin in our lives, it's going to be in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It's so wonderful, you know, to be aware of the fact as Christians that we possess the Spirit of God. Because if we did not have supernatural power, if we were not transformed and changed so that the Spirit of God dwelt within us, we would never be able to overcome the flesh. We would never be able to kill sin.

It's a very simple reason for that, flesh can't overcome flesh. Flesh can't gain the victory over flesh. Sin can't gain the victory over sin. Humanness cannot defeat humanness. And so, we needed a transformation and that's what verses 5 to 11 told us. Once we have been transformed so that the life within us is now the life of God in the presence of His indwelling Spirit, we now have the power in the Spirit to overcome the flesh. Humanness can't overcome humanness. We learned that back in chapter 7. Didn't we? Verse 18, Paul says, "I know that in me," that is in my flesh, "dwells no good thing. For to will is present with me but how to perform that which is good I find not."

In other words, when I look into myself, I find no resource for doing good. I find no ability to overcome sin. I find no capacity to gain the victory over the flesh. And he reiterates that again and again and again in that seventh chapter.

In the eighth chapter, same thing in verse 5: "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh." Verse 7, "The carnal mind, or fleshly mind, is at enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be and they that are in the flesh can't please God." So, the flesh can't please God. The flesh can't obey God's law. The flesh can't overcome the flesh. It cannot bring about a victory over sin.

So, what we're saying then is that apart from the power of the Spirit of God in the life of an individual, there is a hopelessly debilitating corruption that controls everything. And there is no capacity within

the human ... within the flesh, within the unregenerate man to deal with sin. But, when the Spirit comes in, all of that changes. And by the presence of the Spirit of God in a life, there comes the capacity to overcome the flesh. We walk in the Spirit according to His power. And we overcome the flesh.

Now, just to make a little mental note somewhere along in there ... your theological file, the Spirit is almost synonymous with power. And I think the most graphic illustration of that is found in Acts 1:8, and you just need to listen to it cause you're familiar with it. Jesus said this, "But ye shall receive...what?... power after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you." In other words, there's almost an equation there ... power--the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit--power. Power? what kind of power? Power for what? Power to overcome the flesh. Power to overcome the disabilities of being human. Power to gain victory over the bodily desires and objectives. That's the kind of power.

It's interesting to note as you move further along in the book of Acts, that you see this again and again. Wherever the Holy Spirit is there's power. For example, in Acts chapter 6, you know, when they were going to choose out men who could serve who were men of high reputation spiritually, the text said they were to look for men full of faith and the Holy Spirit. And then when they found one of those men, they said he was full of faith and power. So you look for someone full of faith and the Holy Spirit and you'll get someone full of faith and power because having the Holy Spirit is equal to having the power of God.

When the Holy Spirit was moving and working in marvelous ways in the eighth chapter of Acts, Simon Magus came along and what he saw was power and he wanted to buy that power...power being synonymous with the ministry of the Spirit of God. Power to speak the message of God and power to overcome the flesh.

In Acts 10:38, just one other note on this, it says that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth? Listen to this, with the Holy Spirit and with power. And I think that's an equation there. You get the Holy Spirit and His power comes along.

Now this is not something that's just isolated to the text of the New Testament. This is a truth that finds its way through the Scripture again and again. For example, in Micah chapter 3 and verse 8, "Truly I am full of power," says the prophet, "by the Spirit of the Lord." By the Spirit of the Lord ... great statement. In the fourth chapter of Zechariah, you know this, don't you? "Not by might nor by power on a human level, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." And again, in the gospel record in Luke chapter 1, it says in verse 35, the announcement came to Mary, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee." And when it says in 'Romans 1 that Jesus was raised from the dead, it says He was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And so, as I say over and over again, in Scripture there's a strong message regarding the power of the Spirit. In Romans 15:19, "Through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God." And it just goes on and on and on like that. In Ephesians chapter 3, a last Scripture for your thought on this point, verse 16 says: "That you might be granted according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man."

So, there is a very obvious equation between the Holy Spirit and power. And I want to make that point very strongly because I want you to know that as a Christian,, as one who possesses the Spirit of God, you have within you the power to overcome sin. That's very important for you to know. Therefore, if you're not seeing victory, the problem is not a lack of power, the problem is a lack of putting it into operation, a lack of appropriation of available power.

Look with me for a moment at 2 Corinthians chapter 10...2 Corinthians chapter 10. Now we're talking about the power of victory as we look at this matter of how to kill sin in our lives, how to have victory over the flesh. We have to know the power. Now I want you to follow 2 Corinthians chapter 10--very, very, very important passage.

"Now I Paul," he says, "myself, beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ who in presence," that is in my person when I'm with you, "am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you." Now I think Paul may be sort of reflecting a somewhat ironic attitude here and it may have been that he had heard a criticism that Paul was very gentle and very loving when he was there but when he got away he wrote these stinging rebuking letters such as 1 Corinthians. And some were condemning him and saying when he's around he's a coward and when he gets out of town he writes these really hot letters. But he lacks real courage like a coward who will not say what ought to be said when people are present. In fact, you could translate it, some of you perhaps think I am humble when I'm among you but ... or fainthearted when I'm among you, but overly bold when I get away from you. But what he is saying in verse 1 is it isn't that, it's that I treat you with the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

Now verse 2, "But I beseech you that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence with which I think to be bold against some," In other words, I hope when I come there I don't have to be bold like I don't want to be bold. In other words, confronting sin. "Who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh." Boy, he says, if I come I don't want to have to confront those people who are spreading the opinion around that I walk in the flesh. He's saying, I want to be gentle like Christ is gentle. And if you see me as being humble and appears to be faintheartedness, it's the meekness and gentleness of Christ, but I can be bold if I need to be I just don't want to be bold. I don't want to have to be bold to confront those who think I'm walking in the flesh.

And then verse 3, "For though we walk in the flesh,* in other words, in the sense that we're in the world, though we have to be a part of that, "we do not war after the flesh for the weapons of our

warfare are not fleshly but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." He's saying, Look, I'm no superhuman. I have to walk around in this human body. But I know this, the war that I fight; I don't fight in the ... what? In the flesh. I don't fight that war in the flesh because the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Mighty, powerful weapons that God has given us and, of course, the obvious implication there is that the weapons come by the power of the Holy Spirit. "They are able," verse 5 says, "to cast down imaginations in every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." That's holy living in the power of the Spirit. He says I do not walk after the flesh. I do not conduct myself according to the flesh. Yes, I'm in this human body. Yes, there's a sense in which I dwell within a house of flesh. But that's not where my war is being fought. I fight with those weapons that are spiritual.

What does he mean by that? They're of the Holy Spirit. And they're powerful strong weapons.

Now, beloved, I believe that this is the answer. If you go back for a moment, just a moment, to Romans chapter 7. I believe this is the answer to the anxiety of Romans chapter 7. Because in Romans 7 verses 14 to 25, Paul goes through this whole anxiety of the struggle in his own life and he says on the one hand I want to do right, on the other hand I find myself doing wrong, the things I want to do I don't do, things I don't want to do I do. And he says, "O wretched man that I am," verse 24, "who will deliver me out of this body of death?" In other words, you have this tremendous tension, this tremendous anxiety of a man who hungers after God's law, who longs for God's best, who loves God's truth, who desires to obey God's principles but he finds within him a hesitancy. He finds a power within him that holds him back and it's summed up at the end of verse 25. "With my mind I serve the law of God, with the flesh the law of sin." And we've been through all of that.

But the anxiety of that tension is resolved in the understanding that you can have victory over the flesh because you have weapons that you can fight with that are not fleshly. You understand that? They are mighty. They are spiritual. They are yours by virtue of the Spirit of God.

And that is again illustrated, turn with me ... one more passage comes to mind...Galatians 5 and you notice verse 17, "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit against the flesh. They are contrary one to the other so that you cannot do the things you would." And so, you have the flesh/Spirit battle.

Now go over to verse 24 and 25. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and love ... and lusts and if we live in the Spirit let us also...what? ... walk in the Spirit. In other words, you've got the battle in verse 17 and over in 24 and 25 it's resolved as we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, beloved, let me just say it one other simple way, bringing all that together. When you became a Christian, the Spirit of God took up residence in your life. And with the Spirit of God came the power of

God, mighty enough to pull down strongholds, to tear down every high thing that exalts itself against God and to bring you into captivity to the obedience of Christ, right? In other words, there's a resource there that can enable you to have victory over Satan and victory over demons and victory over the flesh and bring everything in your life into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Listen, I'm going to say something that might shock you. You have the potential to be perfect. You have the potential to be perfect. If you do not have victory in each individual case, it is not because the power for victory isn't there, it is because the appropriation isn't there and I confess, I agree that it is somewhat debilitated by the power of the flesh but nonetheless, the potential is there.

You say, "You mean I've got power to deal with the sin in my life?" That's right. You say, "I'm not doing too well." I understand that. And there's something else you might need to know that will help you. Look at Ephesians chapter 5 verse 18, a familiar verse. And I want to remind you of something you perhaps have studied before.

By the way, the word "power" in the Bible is *dunamis* from which we get our word "dynamite." And as a believer, you ought to be explosive; the power of God ought to be blasting its way through you.

But there is a key to that and I think it's given in Ephesians 5:18 where it says, "Be not drunk with wine in which is *asotia*, dissipation, excess, but be being kept filled with the Spirit."

You see, the key is in appropriation. And the way you appropriate the available power is to be filled with the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit, basically, simply means to have habitual permeation of your life by the Holy Spirit. You think His thoughts, you feel His feelings, you obey His will. It's to be controlled by the Spirit of God. Frankly, you're controlled by whatever fills your mind, isn't that right? You're controlled by whatever fills your mind. And that's the old computer thing: G.I.G.O.--Garbage In, Garbage Out. Whatever you pump into your computer is going to come out in your behavior. Whatever controls your mind is going to control your behavior. And if the Spirit of God can control your mind, then you'll have a mind renewed in the Spirit, as the Bible talks about. You're going to find that that fleshes itself out in your good and godly and holy behavior. And so all it means here when it says, "Be being kept filled with the Spirit," doesn't mean fall backwards in some trance. It doesn't mean you flip out into some sort of ecstatic experience. It simply means you get under the control of the Holy Spirit so that He fills your life.

The best way I found to illustrate it is the word *pleroo* used for "filling" here, is used very often in the gospels to talk about different kinds of reactions and attitude. For example, they were filled with anger, they were filled with hatred, they were filled with bitterness, they were filled with wrath, they were filled with rage. And what it meant was they were dominated by that one thing. Most of the time in life we can manage a certain equilibrium, between anger and happiness. And we sort of try to keep our balance. When someone becomes filled with anger, or filled with wrath, or filled with bitterness, they've lost the ability to balance and they're under the total control of that emotion. That is exactly

what it means to be filled with the Spirit, to be totally under the control of the Spirit.

And if you notice the passage, you will notice that following that statement is a list of results: speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, giving thanks, submitting. And then it goes into wives, then husbands. Chapter 6 talks about children, talks about parents in verse 4, servants in verse 5, masters in verse 9. In other words, it will affect every relationship. It will affect every relationship.

Now to help you to understand that, go to Colossians 3:16 and let me show you a parallel many of you are familiar with. And I want you to see this. If you look at Colossians 3, you have a condensed version of Ephesians 5 and 6. For example, in verse 18 you have the wives. In verse 19 you have the husbands. In verse 20 you have the children. In verse 21 you have the parents, in verse 22 the servants, chapter 4 verse 1 the masters. And back in 16 you have the psalms,, the hymns,, the spiritual songs. You have the giving thanks. The whole thing, everything is there as a result. The same results are here that are in Ephesians 5, only the thing that produces the results is different. This time it doesn't say "be filled with the Spirit," it says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly."

Now let me just make a simple conclusion. You get the same results with both; therefore both must be the same. So being controlled by the Holy Spirit is the same as being controlled by the word of Christ. If you want to get real practical, if you want to live a Spirit-filled life, don't look for some ecstatic experience; simply get your life under the control of the Word of God. And as you saturate your soul and your heart and your mind with the truth of God, it begins to flesh out in a Spirit-controlled behavior. That's why we have so long and so diligently and so hard advocated the priority of the study of God's precious truth. There must be a saturation of the life so that like a computer, whenever your buttons are pressed, your involuntary responses are godly. It's one thing to control your voluntary responses, right? You can say to yourself, "Boy, I want to be careful how I react here. I want them to know I'm spiritual." It's something else when you get slammed against the wall and you can't think about what your reaction ought to be and your involuntary response is godly. Now you know you're seeing progress and you know who's in control of your life.

So, it's a day-by-day awareness of the truth of God. You not only take it in, you meditate on it. It controls your thinking, therefore controls your behavior. So the power is in us to kill sin. It's there in the power of the Spirit of God. And you cannot deny that. You can't say, "Well, I just can't overcome ... I just can't..." It's not a question of available power; it's a question of available will on your part. Or, a question of whether or not you're saturating your heart and mind with the things of God and His Word.

Let's go to the second element of this text. We see the power of victory--that's the Holy Spirit. Now I want to show you the people of victory--the people of victory, just to touch base with every part of this

text. Verse 12 says, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors." And the people of victory are the brethren. And as I said earlier, there's no victory for people who are not in the family of God. The word "brethren" is a word for "Christians." It's a beautiful word. It's a word that carries a note of love. There's a sweetness to that word. And the very word "brethren" has a way of sweetening the power of this exhortation so it doesn't hit us too hard. It's a word of love, it's a word of affection, it's a word of warmth, it's a word of sympathy. But it's also a word of equality. And when Paul calls me brother, I feel better. Because I tend to think of him in a different category, don't you? I tend to think that he would speak down to me. "Hey, boy, get your act together," see.

But he doesn't say "Hey, boy," to me, he says "Hey, brother." In other words, there's a term of equality. It's not only a term of love and affection; it's a term of equality. And that's a wonderful thing to know that he serves the same Lord I serve and he struggles in the same way that I struggle. And so, the people of victory are the brethren, the ones who know and love the Lord and belong to His family and are His children. The rest of the world will never know victory. The rest of the world will never be able to overcome their human corruption. Oh, they may divert themselves into religion that gives them a certain amount of apparent piety on the outside and cleans their life up morally, but it never really is an ultimate victory over the flesh, it's just another way for the flesh to handle itself. They feel better being moral than they do feel being immoral. So they want to feel better, so they feel better by being moral. And that's the flesh wanting to feel better about itself. Other people feel better being immoral, have you noticed? And they're really no different. Neither the presence of morality alone, or the absent of it has anything to do with eternity ultimately, only whether or not a person knows God through Jesus Christ.

And you look at the world and you can see, though, that there's something built in men and it is the residual image of God that does not want to be immoral. And even the most immoral people, some of them want out of that, but they can't find their way out. They don't know how to overcome their problems. And I've heard the cries and the moans and I think our mental institutions and hospitals across this country and around the world are filled with people who can't overcome their humanness, who can't overcome their flesh, who are sick of the hopeless debilitation in which they live. They can't make meaningful relationships. They can't adapt to their situation with a sense of honest joy in true fulfillment. They can't pull themselves up by their own boot straps. And it just comes down the line till finally, as I read yesterday, 18 adolescents kill themselves every day in our country. And the rate goes up the older you get. Only the brethren know the rising above the corruption of the flesh.

Now, I want to talk about the privilege of victory. We saw the power of victory, and the people of victory, just a word about the privilege of victory and it's bound up in one word. The first word of verse 12, "Therefore." Oh, I love that word because it just takes you backwards, doesn't it? And when I saw that word, I said, "I wonder how far that word goes back in this text." Therefore ... therefore what? ... what part is the there for, what are we hooking up with? And as I got into it, it took me all the way back through the whole epistle. I mean, it's as if the whole sweep of the thing, all the privileges. This

is the privilege of victory. Because of the privilege position of no condemnation which is given to us in Jesus Christ by grace through faith, because of the reality of the great gospel that has delivered us from sin, because of our privilege position and blessing, because of our salvation, our freedom from sin and death, our righteousness in Christ, our new nature,, the gift of the Spirit: the hope,, the joy, the peace, the love, because of all we have in Christ, because of all those privileges, "Therefore,, brethren, we are ... what? ... debtors."

You see, this is a great truth. We ought to know this. We ought to remember this. All New Testament exhortation is always based on a statement about privilege. And if you read Paul's epistles, you will note that this is his marked means of teaching. When you come to chapter 12 of Romans, I'll give you a little preview, "I beseech you ... what? ... therefore, brethren, because of the mercies of God." In other words, based on eleven chapters of God's mercy in your behalf, I ask you, "Present your body a living sacrifice." And you find the same thing in Ephesians, you get three chapters of privilege, and oh, the sweeping grandiose incredible privileges of the first three chapters of Ephesians. Then four says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy.' Boy, with those kind of privileges, you ought to get your act together.

You find the same thing in Philippians. In fact, the "therefores" are all over the place. You have chapter 1, great privilege, marvelous privilege. Chapter 2, "If there is therefore any consolation in Christ, if therefore any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit," and there's some more privileges, "if any tender mercies, if any compassions, then you fulfill my joy that you be like minded."

So, exhortation is always based on an understanding of privilege. That's why we have to know what God's done for us before we can understand why we ought to respond to it. And you know, that's also a good reason why you can't just browbeat people into submitting to God's laws without telling them what God's done for them. You find the same thing in Galatians. It gives you four chapters of the privileges and then in 5 says, "Now therefore, don't get yourself entangled with the yoke of bondage anymore, but go on to the freedom in Christ." Because of what Christ has done for us, we have the tremendous privilege of moving on to a response.

You know, one of the great studies of the New Testament is to study the prayers of Paul. And in Ephesians 3, he prays this profound prayer. I'm just going to give you the gist of it. He prays, he says: "I bow my knee before the Father," you know, "and I pray for you and I pray for you.' And he says, "I pray that you will ... that you will be able to comprehend," right? That you'll be able to comprehend, "And to know the love of Christ that passes knowledge." And he says I want you to understand God's love and I want you to understand what God's done for you and I want you to understand. Then he says, "His power now unto him is able to do exceeding abundantly..." Why? Why do you want us to understand all that? So that he can move in the next verse and say, "Now therefore this is how you ought to live." And so, we must understand the privileges that call us to the responsibility. God doesn't give privileges without responsibility. There are too many people running around loose thinking they

got set loose by grace. And that's not the way the Bible presents it.

As Christians, you see, we're like the children of Israel were. The land was promised to us and the land is ours,, it's been given to us by the Lord, we just have to believe enough to go in and take it, right? And many Christians are like the ten spies and came back and they had the grasshopper complex, they said they're all giants and we're grasshoppers. But there were some who said God promised it and God will deliver it and we're going to take it, right? And we need to know that the power is there and based upon the privileges that we have as the people of God, we can go in and possess the land.

So, the power, the people, the privilege, now come to "D" in our little outline,, the pattern for victory. And this gets us right into really what's in my heart to say to you ... the pattern.

It says we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh, implied, but to the Spirit to live after the Spirit. "For if you live after the flesh, you shall die. But if ye through the Spirit do kill the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Now, let's follow the plan for victory. First of all, we are not to live after the flesh. We have no debt to the flesh. We owe the flesh nothing. What did the flesh do for us? What did the flesh ever do for you? Nothing. Back to verse 3 for a minute, "What the flesh could not do in that it was weak, or what the law, rather, could not do in that it was weak through the flesh." In other words, the flesh can't do anything. All the flesh could do was condemn you. All the flesh can do was damn you. All the flesh can do is to debilitate you and hold you down in the pit in which you were born. You know, you know nothing to the flesh. So, you're not a debtor to live after the flesh.

Now, as a Christian, you're no longer after the flesh anyway. Back in verse 5 it says, "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. So, we're after the Spirit. We're in the Spirit in terms that Paul is using here.

So, here's his point. If we're not after the flesh, why should we live after the flesh? Right? I mean, if that's not who you are, why do you want to act like that? I mean, it's silly enough to say, "Well, you know, I'm not a murderer, but I just enjoy acting like one. Or, "I'm not a homosexual, but I just like to act like one." "I'm not a lecherous lying cheat at work but I just like to make everybody think I am."

You don't do that. Why do you want to act like something you're not? And that's the essence of what he's saying. Since you're not after the flesh, you don't want to act like you are, do you? Why should we live as if we are?

Now, keep in mind that the flesh, and you need to understand what that term means. The flesh is the ugly complex of human sinful desire. It involves motive, affection, principle, purpose, all that evil

generates within us. It is that complex of sinful desires and motives and affections and principles and purposes. And to live after the flesh is to be ruled by that complex, to be guided by that complex. How ridiculous! It's totally contradictory for brethren who are in the Spirit after the Spirit, minding the things of the Spirit, walking in the Spirit to be going out and thinking they owe something to the flesh. You don't owe anything to the flesh. You've been freed from sin and death. You've been made a new creation. You've been transformed. You don't owe anything to that.

And then he restates the reason why in verse 13. Tremendous, "For if you live after the flesh you shall die." Now that is an axiom. That is a spiritual truism. That is a statement of fact. He's not describing a Christian there. He's not even threatening a Christian there. He's simply saying, "Hey, the people who live after the flesh are the ones that are dead and dying. You don't want to act like they do cause you're not one of them anymore." He's not threatening a Christian that if you don't get your act together you're going to die. No. He's discussing the life of a non-Christian. If you live after the flesh, you die. And you remember earlier, don't you, that the one who lives in the flesh is already dead. He's already dead. Verse 6, "To be fleshly minded is death."

Now, what do we say about people without Christ? They are spiritually what? Dead and dying, that is heading toward eternal death. After the flesh, minding the things of the flesh, walking in the flesh, dead, unable to please God, eternally separated from Him and bound for eternal death, that's characteristic of an unbeliever. And what he's saying is you certainly don't want to act like that. I mean, what reason for that?

It's much like Galatians 6:8, "He that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Same idea. People who are in the flesh, of the flesh, after the flesh, minding the things of the flesh, walking in the flesh, sowing to the flesh are dead. People in the Spirit, after the Spirit, minding the things of the Spirit, walking in the Spirit are alive. And that's what he goes on to say. But if you through the Spirit are killing the deeds of the body, you give evidence of being alive. The old Puritans used to say, "If you don't kill sin it will kill you." And that's exactly what this text is saying. That's why Jesus said, "If you've got a sin problem, you'd be better off to hack off your arm or pluck out your eye than to go on in sin and enter into hell," right? You need to deal with sin drastically. That's Matthew 5:29 and 30; Mark 9.

So, Paul is making a powerful point. He says you owe nothing to the flesh, nothing at all. That is for dead and dying unbelievers. If you live after the flesh, you're spiritually dead, he says. You're not even a Christian so why would you want to act like that?

By the way, I might note here, this is another one of the myriad of what I call self-examination verses in the Scripture that call you to look at your life and see whether or not you are saved. The New Testament, by the way, is filled with them...filled with them. You see, the individual who habitually, present tense, lives under the dominion of the evil sin nature is unsaved and spiritually dead. That's

what he's saying.

I was talking to a fellow the other day and he said, "You know, we've got a guy in our organization who says he's a Christian. But," he said, "I don't believe it.' I said why? He said, "Because he has no desire for the things of the Lord and he habitually seeks the things of the flesh." But he claims to be a Christian. I said, "The claim is meaningless by virtue of the test of Scripture. If you live after the flesh, you give evidence that you're one on the way to death. That's what he's saying. No Christian can live like that. For we were created unto what? Ephesians 2:10. Good works. We've been made to do them. They are the product of regeneration. Oh, I grant you, there will be lapses of bad behavior, won't there?

You say, "Well, can a Christian ever do something fleshly?" Sure. Remember 1 Corinthians 3 where Paul writes to the Corinthians and says I couldn't speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto what? Carnal, fleshly, because there was division and strife and argument. And that happens to Christians. There are lapses.

And back to Romans 7 again,, it's a battle. And sometimes we win and sometimes we lose. But the bent, remember that? The bent of life is toward the things of the Spirit. Oh, this is such an important understanding in Scripture.

Look at Philippians for just a minute, chapter 3. Now Paul in verses 7 and 9 talks about being a Christian, how he's found righteousness in Christ. He's been made righteous in Christ. But he goes all the way down, he says: "Oh, I'm so glad that I'm found in Him not having mine own righteousness, but that which is the faith ... through the faith of Christ," and so forth. And then in verse 10 he does some interesting things. After having said that he possesses the righteousness of Christ, he says, "O that I may know Him.' You say, "Oh, you already know Him." Yeah, but I don't know Him like I'd like to know Him. 'And that I may know the power of His resurrection." You've already known the power of His resurrection. Yeah, but I haven't known all the power that I'd like to know. "And the fellowship of His suffering." You've already suffered. Oh, but I haven't suffered like I'd like to know the communion of suffering, and so forth and so on. And oh, he says in 11, "I want to attain the resurrection of the dead." And you say, "Wait a minute,, Paul, that's a gift from God.* Yeah, but I know there's a part for me to do,, too, to persevere to that end and I want to be faithful in my part of it and not as though I had already attained, verse 12. I don't want to live as if I've got some freebie deal and I can fall back and act anyway I want, I want to pursue that thing. I don't want to act like I was already perfect, I want to apprehend that for which I have been apprehended.

That's a marvelous thought. He is saying yes I believe I'm saved by grace but I also know that everything in my being wants to pursue that with all my heart. And even though my flesh holds me back, that is the pursuit of my heart. Now that's a mark of a Christian, isn't it? And he says in 13, "I do not consider that I have gotten it already, but this one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind."

If you think about those all the time you're really get messed up. "I reach to the things that are before and I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." I'm not there, but I'm sure anxious to get there.

And then he goes on down here, talking about it, and finally he says, "I'm never going to get there till (verse 21) when the Lord changes my vile body and gives me one like His."

So, the whole idea of that Philippians 3 is that Paul has a tremendous passion to know God and to fellowship with Christ and to know all the power that's available to him. But he knows ... that's the bent of his life and there are times when he's interrupted in that pursuit by his flesh. So we're not saying that doesn't happen. But again, if you're a person who habitually, present tense, lives after the flesh, you give evidence of being on your way to eternal death. And that's a truism. The presence of holiness is an absolute in the life of a true Christian. It's an absolute. Very important.

So, Paul says here's the pattern for victory--you owe nothing to the flesh. Get that right off the bat. Don't give it anything. You owe it nothing. All the flesh does is mess you up. You owe it nothing, no debt, give it nothing. That's why back in chapter 6 when they said, "Well, shall we sin that grace may abound?" What did he say? "God forbid, shall we sin that grace may abound we don't owe the flesh anything. Then he goes into that thing, "If you've died with Christ and risen with Christ in newness of life, what in the world would you ever think about going back to walk in that old pattern?" You owe the flesh nothing ... nothing at all. And if you find the pursuit of your life the things of the flesh, if you like your fleshly activities and they are the bent and the pursuit, my friend, you give evidence of being a person on the way to death ... not life, not life.

Let's look at the other side, the pattern. But, "If you through the Spirit," now we're back to the power of victory, "do kill the deeds of the body, you shall live." Now this is another axiom. This is another truth. This is another fact. It looks at salvation from the side of the behavior of the saved. And may I encourage you that that is a valid look. You can look at salvation from the side of God and His sovereignty, or the side of man and his behavior. And this looks at the behavior. It says, "If you through the power of the resident Spirit are killing the deeds of the body, then you give evidence of being one who is truly a possessor of life."

So, what is characteristic of a Christian then? He's going to spend himself pursuing the things of the Spirit. He's going to desire to kill the flesh. Yes, he will have lapses. Yes, he will have times when he falls. But the pursuit is going to be to the things of God to stamping out sin in his life. That is a believer's pattern. And may I remind you that there is no argument for the security of a believer's salvation that gives the convincing assurance that righteous living does. No other argument is as convincing as the experience of victory over sin. You ask me, "How do I know I'm a Christian?" I'll say God promised His Word, I believed and He promises to save me. And the second reason I know I'm a Christian is because in my life I see victory over sin and that can't happen to one apart from Christ.

And that is the most convincing of all arguments.

Now notice it says that you must kill the deeds of the body. Now the body here stands for the flesh. And it has the idea of standing in the place of the flesh represented by the body which is the bridgehead to sin; it comes through our eye gate or our ear gate or whatever. Sin comes to us, tempts us through the body. The body is representative of the flesh. And if you go back into chapter 6 and 7, you see how Paul talks about the flesh, the mortal body, the body of sin, the body of this death. Our sin is in that flesh, that body, that mortality, that humanness. It doesn't exclude our mind and our feelings, that's all a part of it. But believers are those who are in the constant process by the Spirit's resident power of killing the deeds of the flesh.

You say, "Well, then that's not an exhortation, that is... that's a fact." No. it's both. It's a fact that we are doing it, it's also an exhortation that if we're doing it at all, we ought to be doing more of it than we're doing, right? That's the idea. It is an exhortation that if we're killing the flesh at all, we should be killing the flesh over all.

Now, let me talk about the word *mortify," and I'm hurrying to draw this together. The word "mortify" is used in 1 Peter 3:18 of the death of Christ. So it talks about a real death, it's not a reckoning of death; it's not an assuming of death, it's an actual killing. You've got to kill sin by the power of the spirit; I mean, kill it dead. That's what we're called to do. By the power of the Spirit, we've got to execute. We can't be like Saul, you remember, when he was told to wipe out everybody, kill everybody, don't leave anybody left. And instead of that, he didn't kill the king, he didn't kill the animals, he brought them back. Well, there cannot be any bleating sheep in our lives to betray our disobedience. We have to kill sin. You have to be willing to do that. And I really believe, beloved, I want to be honest about this, I believe this is the Achilles heel of most Christians, that there are sins that we court and they're the ones we don't confess to God because we don't want to kill them. We like them. We've grown accustomed to them. And that is so tragic. We owe nothing to the flesh. We'll do well with killing certain things, and then we'll leave some others alive.

In Colossians chapter 3, it says, "If you've been risen with Christ," here's our privilege again, "then seek the things which are above, set your affections on things above not on things on the earth for you're dead, you're life is hid with Christ in God," and so forth. Then verse 5, "Kill your members on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desire, covetousness," and so forth. And he goes down talking about anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, dirty talk out of your mouth, lying and just a whole lot of things. Kill them all. If you belong to Christ, kill off that stuff, he says, it's in your members. Same concept, in your flesh, in your humanness. He says since you have put off the old man, the old man was our former 1 if e, it's gone...it's gone. You put it of f, since you put it of f then make sure you kill off all that's residual. You've got to be busy killing sin.

So, when you came to Christ and you were forgiven of your sin, it didn't end your responsibility, just started it. Now you spend the rest of your life trying to kill off sin. Now have you noticed how hard it is? I mean, you could beat the stuff in the head to death, you think, and it will pop right up again. Boy, it is hard to kill sin. I always have to sort of chuckle at those people who give us the impression it's easy for them--the deeper life people. Have you met those people? I don't understand those people. The deeper life, the let-go and let-God who give us the impression that they've ascended to some level where the conflict never occurs. That is not true. They're woofing on us, folks. Sin is always at work in the human heart. And a temporary lull doesn't mean it isn't there, it only means it's getting armed and it will be back.

John Owen wrote: "Sin is never less quiet than when it seems to be most quiet, and its waters are for the most part deep when they are still." And sin would love to lull you into a sense of security and it does that. You knock off some of the big sins, you know, you don't have a problem with stealing cars, and murdering people and committing fornication and rape and armed robbery and all of that, but what you lose sight of is the fact that those other things in your life that mark your personality like anger and bitterness and ill will and all of that that you don't ever deal with, and sin is having a hey-day while you think you're having a great victory. Don't kid yourself; the battle will go on as long as you live. You will never in this world get out of Romans chapter 7 but you can know victory. You can know victory. And don't let anybody come along and say, "I have the spiritual secret. I've reached a place of consecration." That isn't true. They have reached a place of deception where they think or where they want us to think that there's a victory that isn't ultimate, or that is ultimate when the truth is it can't be. Practical sanctification is going to go on all our lives as we are in the progressive act of killing sin. And that's the key of what he's saying. The pattern is you've got to kill sin.

Now, how do you do it? Here we go. How do you do it? I put together a list, I hope it helps you.

Number one, recognize the presence of sin in your flesh. That's where you have to start. Recognize that it's there. Romans 7:21, Paul says, "I find a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me." You've got to know that, folks. I mean, don't delude yourself. Just because you've been a pastor or a deacon or an elder or you've taught a Bible study, you've been a Christian a long time, don't live under any illusion about the fact that sin isn't there in your life. It's there. If the Apostle Paul could say, "I have sin or evil present with me and I see it there, O wretched man that I am," then you've got the same kind of thing to deal with, you better recognize it. You'll never know victory over sin till you come to the awareness that it's there.

And understand this, it's a law and it is a law in the sense that it makes commands on you and it is a law in the sense that it is an operating principle within your humanness. It's there functioning, it's there doing its thing so that when you want to do good you can't do it. You've got to know that. It is powerful in a believer. Did you understand that? Sin is powerful in a believer. It is powerful. It's there; it's just that you don't have to succumb to its power. But sin in you is very powerful. John Owen put it

this way, "It has no doors to open. It needs no engine by which to work. It lies in the mind and in the understanding. It is found in the will. It is in the inclinations of the affection. It has such intimacy with the soul," end quote. It's there. It's in you. And you must recognize it. And you'll never know victory until you come to the honest awareness of the presence of sin.

In I Peter 2:11 Paul says, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts?" then this, "which war against your soul." They're right in there fighting that battle. And so you kill the ... your enemy when you know who your enemy is, right? You've got to know who your enemy is. And so many of us never search out the poison in our lives. We never sit down honestly and look at the Word of God and read it and meditate on it and pray over it and say, "O God, search me and know my heart." And what David was saying when he said that was open myself up to me that I may see the corruption so I know what I'm attacking. And we allow sin to get hidden and camouflaged and we don't want to talk about it and we laugh it off and those little sins that are sort of Christian sins, we just sort of laugh about and say, "Well, I have a weakness in that area," etc., etc. And we don't hate sin, and we don't see the horrible character of sin so we don't ever get about killing it. And the problem of it is if it gets a foothold somewhere it will go into some other area. It assaults the mind, it assaults the affections, it tries to get in us and brew its lusts, as James says. It tries to foment out of temptation until finally it can bring us disaster.

No matter how righteous you are, no matter how long you've been a Christian, you're going to see some sins spurting its way through the righteous cracks: anger, bitter words, unkind thoughts, criticism, thinking you're better than someone else, self-conceit, lack of understanding, impatience, weak prayers, unfaithful in the study of the Word of God, unfaithful in coming to join with the people of God to worship, a heart that doesn't know worship. Listen, find out your weakness. You know what Haggai the prophet said in chapter 1 a couple of times? Consider your ways, he said, consider your ways, consider your ways, get a good understanding of what you're like. In 1 Kings chapter 8, 1 think it's verse 38, it says: "Know the plague of your own heart." Know the plague of your own heart. And you really need to take sin seriously, very seriously.

Second, how do you kill sin? Second point; have a heart fixed on God. Have a heart fixed on God. In Psalm 57:7, the Psalmist says, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." And what he meant was, I have an undivided heart committed to you, the Lord is ever before me. He was set on God. He was set on God. And that's where Paul is when he said, "O that I may know Him," see. I mean, have a heart fixed on God.

You know, the psalmist summed it up in Psalm 119 verse 6, he said: "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all Thy commandments." I love that. I'll never have to be ashamed of my life when I really respect all Your commandments. Have a heart fixed on God. It's the only preservative against a shameful life.

Third, first is be aware of the sin in your life; second, have a heart fixed on God. How do you get that? I tell you how you get that heart fixed on God, you get it through learning how to worship ... to learn how to worship. Thirdly, meditate on the Word of God ... meditate on the Word of God. David said, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not ... what? ... sin against Thee." When you hide the Word in there it doesn't mean you just read the page, shut it and can't remember what you read. It doesn't mean you just open up the Daily Bread every day, although that's wonderful, and that's your whole interaction with the Word of God for the rest of your life. It means you meditate.

And I don't know if we even understand that. People say to me all the time, "John, how do you come up with all this stuff? I mean, how ... you ... all these things you get out of the Bible. I read the Bible and I don't get it." You want to know something? I read the Bible and I don't get it either. I read the Bible; close it up, put it down and I don't get anything. You know where it comes? It comes from spending hour and hour and hour and hour after hour looking at the same portion of the Word of God until your soul is literally and extricably woven together with that truth. And then as you walk out of that place, it rings in your mind over and over, night and day. And as you meditate on that, the Word of God begins to ferret out of your lives the things it condemns. We don't know about meditation. But meditation is critical. And when you meditate on God's Word, you crowd out sin and you starve out the flesh.

Fourth, commune with God in prayer...commune with God in prayer. Watch unto prayer, 1 Peter 4:7, diligent watchful prayer with a strong sense of God's presence which flows from meditating in Scripture. When I'm in the Word of God, I don't know where my Bible study ends, my meditation begins, my meditation ends and my prayer begins. I'm in a whole thing going on where I'm looking at the Word, I'm meditating on the Word, I'm bringing it to the Lord and saying, "Help me understand, Lord," or else I'm saying, "Lord, I'm not making it on this principle, I've got to get my act together." In other words, there's a whole aura of life where you're communing with the living God, out of His Word in meditation and prayer. And I think true prayer has to have a strong element of confession, true prayer gives the heart the sense of sin's vile character. When you confess your sin, what it does every time you confess your sin specifically to God, it renews your hatred of sin. It helps you revitalize that. I'm not just concerned about the big gross sins that make the newspapers, I don't want to ... I don't want a ... I don't want to let sin live in any kind of form in my life.

And John Owen, again, who has written so much great stuff on the area of sin and temptation said, "He who pleads with God for the remission of sin, also pleads with his own heart to detest it." Isn't that good?

And so, as you go to God in prayer and you talk to Him about the sin of your life, it refreshes your mind about how much He hates it and you ought to hate it, too. And then as you go to God in prayer, it becomes a source of your strength because you go, it says in Hebrews, and you find help in time of

need and you go to the Lord and you say, "Lord, I'm having a struggle with this thing." And if you're honest enough to repent of it, and you're honest enough to name that sin to the Lord and confess that sin to the Lord, you're going to find a great amount of strength infused in the ability to kill that sin. By the way, you can kill some sins and they get resurrected later, so don't think it's going to be final. You'll just see the decreasing of their resurrections.

Another thing that prayer does, it unmasks sin's deceit. When you get into the presence of God, you open yourself to God's mind and God's vision and God's presence, He has a way of opening your own heart to you and unmasking the deceitful sins that you don't normally see and unless you'll spend the time it takes to pray and unless you'll interact in a meditating way with God in communion, you'll never uncover those things.

And fifth, if you're going to be able to follow the pattern of victory,, you must cultivate obedience...you must cultivate obedience. It must become the consuming passion of your life to obey. I love 1 Peter 1:22, it says: "Seeing that you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." There's that "through the Spirit" again. Through the power of the Spirit, as you obey, you purify your heart. You kill sin by obedience. Listen, it's no mystical deal. You have a choice. A temptation comes, you can choose to do the sin or obey God. You obey God, you've killed sin and you've purified your heart.

So, you recognize sin, fix your heart on God, meditate on the Word, commune in prayer, walk in obedience to His Word and you will be killing sin. Now that wasn't too profound, was it? You know what I found? It's still hard ... it's still hard. And it's slow. You notice that the same things you used to have trouble with in your life, maybe it's a quick temper or maybe it's pride or whatever, you're still struggling with. It's slow. And sometimes you get kind of angry about it. But you can get angry about that. That's all right. But you know, as you look at your life and you can see that God has given you victory and you have seen the decreasing frequency of those sins. Oh that's comforting thing.

You know, when I came to Grace Church, I was really early in my spiritual development, I was 29-years-old. And I went through a period of really wondering whether I was saved. And I don't think it was related to my theology, my theology was sound, it was okay. I think it was related to the lack of experience in my life of seeing a maturing process and the defeating of sin. And because I couldn't see that in my life, because I hadn't grown a great deal even though I was going through college and seminary, I was so busy learning facts I'm not sure I was really growing spiritually. But once I got into the ministry here and really began to take off spiritually, I've never had a doubt in my mind for a split second. And it isn't that my theology has confirmed my salvation, it is that the increasing sense in which I see the killing of sin in my life becomes a confirmation that God is there. Great encouragement to my soul.

May I just add another thing? It's hard to kill sin even using the right method because the more you're good at it in the power of God, the more you succeed, the more holy you become, the worse sin will

become to you and so the fewer sins in your life may appear to be worse than the ones that were many when you didn't understand how bad they were. So it's a battle all your lifelong. So don't anybody drop any big spiritual secrets on you and tell you they've arrived because they haven't. And if they have, they won't be talking, they'll be dead.

Now in the Bible you talk about growing in grace, you know what that means? Or in the Bible, talks about perfecting holiness, you know what that means? Or in the Bible, talks about renewing the inner man day by day, you know what that means? Killing sin. You grow as you kill sin. Listen to me, now. You do not grow by information, you grow by application. You understand that? Information will harden you into carnality if it is not applied. And the great fear that I have, I said this to a fellow on Friday, I was eating lunch with him, the greatest pain in my heart is that we would be dispensing good information true about God and when it is not applied people are hardened into rigid carnality. And they are not seeing the fullest kind of victory over sin they could see for the glory of God and the blessing of their own life.

Now listen and I'll draw this to a very personal conclusion. How are you doing? How you doing with yours? Your flesh? Are you killing it? The deeds of the body? The acts of sin? Attitudes of sin? I'll give you a little test, see how you're doing.

Number one, how's your zeal for God? Has sin made your heart cold? Can you take it or leave it when it comes to worship? Can you take it or leave it when it comes to prayer? Can you take it or leave it when it comes to the Word of God? You know what the psalmist said? Psalm 119:136, he said this, he said: "Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they keep not Thy law." Do you feel that way? Do you burst out in tears when you know you've disobeyed? How's your zeal? What's really important to you in life? Are you consumed with the desire to obey God and glorify His name?

Second question: how much do you love the Word and prayer? Is it your highest joy?

Third question: how much do you love to be with God's people? Is that really the priority for you? Or are you more into recreation? Are you here when His people are here worshiping Him? Or are you one of those like the Jews in Malachi's day who say, "What a weariness it is."

Very basic questions. How about this one? How sensitive are you to sin? Not only in your life but in the life of anyone else or in the church or in the world? A zeal for God's house eat you up? Does it tear up your heart? Do you see the smallest sin in your life and grieve? Pretty basic stuff. Pretty easy to evaluate where we are, isn't it?

Paul said it this way, Romans 13:14 "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh." None. Now go back to Romans 8, one final point. We could spend a series on this point. Verse 12, the passion of victory. We saw the power, the people, the privilege, the pattern, the passion. You

say, "Why, John? Why? Why be all concerned?" Here it is, verse 12, "We are ... what? ... debtors," not to live after the flesh but after the Spirit, is implied. We're in debt, my friend. You're in debt. That's exactly what it says and that's exactly what it means. You owe a debt to God and to Christ and to the Holy Spirit and you ought to be and I ought to be so utterly humbled by what God has done for us that we want so desperately to somehow repay in a small token way for that which He has given to us. You're in debt.

May I encourage you by saying it's a debt you'll never pay? But it's a debt you ought to feel and want to pay. I can never return to Christ, I can never pay Him back for my salvation, can I? But I'm sure going to spend my life making an effort to give something of response. I'm in debt. Christ bought me with His own precious blood. He paid the supreme price. I am in debt. He regenerated me, made me His own, brought me in His family, I owe Him something for that. And what I owe Him is not to live after the flesh that He delivered me out of but after the Spirit into whom He placed me.

You remember when Paul wrote a letter to Philemon? And he was trying to get Philemon to take back Onesimus this wayward slave that had now become a Christian. He says this to Philemon, verse 9, "You owe yourself to me." You owe me one, Philemon. In fact, you owe me you and your salvation. And what he's trying to say to the guy is you better do what I ask you, you owe me one. And listen, if Paul could tell Philemon you owe yourself to me because he had been the instrument of bringing him to Christ, how much more can Christ say to us? You owe something to Me. You have a debt and you owe that debt to Me.

And so, I believe we have a debt. That's what it says. Oh, it doesn't mean that there's any merit in our payment. Luke 17:10 says when you have done all that is commanded,, you say we are unprofitable servants, for we have done only that which was our duty. But we have a debt. We owe ourselves, all we are, all we have, all we ever hope to be to Him. And the longer we're saved,, the greater the debt because the more grace He gives, the more the debt increases. We have a debt.

Beloved, the text is simple. Kill sin ... kill sin. Let's pray.

Just a thought while your heads are bowed. After Julius Caesar was murdered, Antonius brought forth his coat which was all bloody and cut from all the knives that had plunged into his body,, and he laid that coat before the people and he said, 'Look, here you have the emperor's coat thus bloody and torn.'" Upon that, the people went into an uproar and cried out against the murderers and they took their tables and their stools and set them on fire. They ran to the houses of them that had slain Caesar and burnt them to the ground. What a terrible thing they had done to Caesar.

Sop, when you remember that sin killed the Lord Jesus Christ, would you remember to avenge against sin and kill sin that killed the Savior? If you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, this would be the great, great decision to make tonight.

Father, we pray that You'll work in every heart. This has been important and needful for us. We thank You. Thank You, Father, for the wonderful open heartedness and the hunger of these precious people who have gathered in a great multitude tonight, knowing what they would hear and wanting to hear that they may better be able to glorify Thee. And, Father, start with me to make me all that You want me to be and all of us and may we through the power of the Spirit of God, kill the deeds of the body and because we are Your children we know we will but we wish to all the more that we may be to the praise of Your glory. We have a debt in a small way. We want to pay that debt. We owe nothing to the flesh and sin. It killed the Savior. We seek only that it should die. And may we yield to that available victory in us for Christ's sake. Amen.

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