

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

### **The Key to Spiritual Victory**

Scripture: Romans 8:12-13

Code: 90-171

We're looking at the eighth chapter of Romans. We are plumbing the depths, I might tell you that. We're digging deep into the riches of our gospel. We're looking beyond the surface. This is not a portion of Scripture for those who want a once over lightly treatment. I find it difficult not to go down and stay down because there's so much depth, there's so much meat in the text of this immense chapter. And as I said earlier in this series the truths in this chapter are so grandiose that words seem feeble vehicles to convey them.

But we're looking at the eighth chapter of Romans which I've titled "Life in the Spirit". Life in the Spirit. Describing how we who have the Holy Spirit live a Spiritual life. And this chapter on "Life in the Spirit" begins with an amazing and wonderful promise in verse 1; let me remind you of it. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." That's how the chapter begins and that's really the summation of what's been said from chapter three right on through to chapter seven. Like a pardoned criminal on death row we have been given no condemnation status. And this is the sweetest sound of any words that could possible come from God. We were condemned to eternal punishment in hell. We were sitting already on death row, occupying a cell in the prison of our iniquity, already declared by a holy God, the Judge of all the earth, as guilty. Simply waiting the day of our execution when the Savior delivered a pardon, placed that pardon as it were in the hand of God and having paid our penalty for sin moved us into a no judgment, no condemnation position. He was killed for us. He was executed for us. And this was the joyous news that introduces this great chapter. And if doesn't thrill your soul then you are cold, you've lost the warmth of a thankful heart.

This promise of no condemnation in fact is the last pearl or the pinnacle pearl, the most prominent pearl in the string of pearls that our the benefits of justification. The other pearls would be peace and grace and hope and love and life and holiness and freedom and fruit and Spiritual service and then the glory of all glories in this beautiful string of pearls no condemnation. Through the marvelous person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ our sins are paid for in full. He bore our punishment; He was condemned in our place for us so we by faith in him are free from ever having to be punished for our sins. That is settled. That is settled. Punishment is a settled issue.

And that's how this chapter is launched. We are in a no condemnation status and that is how it is for those who live in the Spirit. And from there through the end of this chapter really there is a celebration of the Spirit's work in our behalf. He frees us from sin and death, He enables us to fill the law, He changes our nature, He empowers us for victory, He confirms our adoption, He guarantees

our glory and He intercedes for us. And then at the end of the chapter is a burst of praise starting in verse 28 and running till verse 39, for this great reality.

So the Holy Spirit plays a part in our no condemnation status. It's as if he applies that status to our lives and brings to us all its benefits. We've already looked at the first point in verses 2 and 3, He frees us from sin and death. Secondly we looked at the fact that He enables us to fulfill God's Law. We saw that at the end of verse 3, "Because God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as an offering for sin condemns sin in the flesh." Because our sins were paid for Christ's righteousness was imputed to us and we were enabled to fulfill God's law. We then found, thirdly, that He changed our nature. And at the end of verse 4 it says, "We do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." We are not minding, verse 5, the things of the flesh but minding the things of the Spirit. We are not headed for death, verse 6, but for life and peace. We are not hostile to God but we are subject to the Law of God. We no longer displease God, verse 8, we please God and that's because of verse 9, "We have the Spirit of God dwelling in us." "We are alive," says verse 10, "we have been raised from the dead," says verse 11. All of that speaks of the change in our nature. We have been freed from sin and death, we have been enabled to fulfill God's Law and we've had our nature changed by the Holy Spirit. Tremendous truth.

That brings us to the fourth work of the Holy Spirit, the fourth aspect of life in the Spirit and it's in verses 12 and 13. He empowers us for victory over the flesh. He empowers us for victory over the flesh. Now we are already in a no condemnation status; that is we will never have to pay the penalty of sin. We have been freed from the penalty of sin, which is death, eternal death. We have been enabled to keep God's law because the righteousness of God has been imputed to us. We have had our nature transformed so that we are new creations who are in the Spirit, minding the things of the Spirit, enjoying life in peace but we still have a battle with the present flesh on a day to day basis. And so the Holy Spirit must empower us for victory over the flesh. This is the result of a changed nature.

Remember I was telling you earlier it's not just that we're declared righteous, that's justification. We are also transformed, converted, regenerated, born again so that we have a new inner man and that new inner man has been totally changed. We are a new creation but that new inner man, as we saw last time, is incarcerated in unredeemed humanness which Paul calls flesh. And there's a great battle going on there as we saw in Romans 7 and the Holy Spirit empowers us for a day to day victory over that flesh. That is contained in versus 12 and 13.

Here's one of the most important sections, it's a brief one but an important one in the chapter. Verse 12, "So then brethren we are under obligation not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh or if you are living according to the flesh you must die. But if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body you will live." Now what those two verses tell us is that Spirit of God has come into our lives, changed our nature, taken up residence and now provides not only a no condemnation status but the

power to put to death the deeds of the body. Now these two verses can be misunderstood and so I want us to understand them very, very carefully. This focuses on what the Holy Spirit does in us. For us, the Holy Spirit provided a no condemnation status. By the work of Jesus Christ being applied to us, both His suffering for sin and His righteous life applied to us, He also changed our nature through conversion. This point looks at what He does for us in the day to day struggle with our flesh which we still have because we have not yet received our glorified body.

Now the key to understanding these two verses is the little phrase in verse 13 "by the Spirit". By the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body. We're talking here about an ongoing life in which we win the battle with the flesh and we do it by the Spirit. Apart from the Spirit there can be no victory. Let me put it as simply as I can, flesh cannot overcome flesh. Humanness cannot overcome humanness. You cannot pick yourself up by your own bootstraps. You can't change yourself. All that flesh can do is serve the law of sin, that's Roman 7. It's all it can do. Back in Roman 7:18 I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh. There's nothing there that's good. You still have a component in your makeup that is all evil. Flesh can't do good. Verse 9, "The good that I wish I do not do but I practice the very evil that I do not wish." Verse 21, "I find then the principle that evil is present in me." Where is it? It's in my flesh. Verse 23, there's a different law or principle or members of my body waging war against the principle of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. There is clean to me, verse 24, a body of death. And down at the end of verse 25, "with my flesh I serve the law of sin." The flesh can't change the flesh.

Through the years I have grieved because there has been misunderstanding about the ministering of the Holy Spirit. And when anybody gets into a process in their Christian life where they do not understand the true means of victory over sin, where they do not understand the true resource of the power of the Holy Spirit any false understanding of sanctification literally cripples the process. Because if anything is left to the flesh, if anything is taken out of the control of the Spirit then no sanctification takes place. The flesh can only serve the law of sin. Flesh can only do what is evil. Flesh cannot overcome flesh. So we must understand the work of the Spirit, that new nature to express itself. That new creation to express itself and we are one new person to express the life of that new person there must be a triumph over that incarceration around us, that shell of flesh around us that debilitates, expression, and the way that that is shattered so that the newness can be expressed is by the power of the Holy Spirit. And we must understand how that power is exercised and expressed.

It is then in this passage that the apostle Paul defines for us victory over the flesh by the power of the Spirit. Now we know that the Holy Spirit is powerful, Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Ephesians tells us very straightforward text, the apostle Paul is praying a prayer in the book of Ephesians and he is praying for exactly the right thing. He is praying that his people, verse 16 of chapter 3, would be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man. The inner man is the new creation. It's the real you. It's the truest expression of who you

are. And the Spirit of God has taken up residence there, he lives in you. And he is power personified. You remember that it was said of the Deacons in Acts 6, certainly true of Philip and certainly true of Stephen, that they were full of faith and full of power and full of the Holy Spirit. In fact, you remember that Simon tried to buy the power of the Holy Spirit when he saw it.

So we have residing in us the spirit of God. Zachariah said, and I think that this is a comment on all Spiritual life in all times, "Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord." Even in the life of Christ power was synonymous with the Holy Spirit. "And Jesus said that I do what I do by the power of the Spirit," Matthew 12:31-32, "and if you deny what I as being the work of God then you're blaspheming the Holy Spirit who's doing it through me."

So in Christ we've been freed from the law of sin and death, we have been made alive to God, we have been able to fulfill the righteous law by the imputed righteousness of Christ, we have been granted a new disposition, a new creation, we are a new person, wherein resides the Holy Spirit in full power which power is available to us for victory over the flesh. It's not a coincidence that when you get to the end of chapter seven Paul has defined for you the battle. And when you come into chapter eight he launches into a discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit because it is the Holy Spirit who gives you victory in the battle. Here's the answer to the anxieties of chapter seven. Here is the answer to Paul's cry in 7:14, "I am of flesh sold into bondage of sin." And I do what I don't want to do and I don't do what I do and I'm a wretched man, verse 24, and I wanna be free from the body of this death. And I know God has made provision but I'm still struggling. On the one hand serving the law of God and on the other hand my flesh the law of sin. Where lays the victory? And he comes immediately into chapter eight and it is the Holy Spirit that is the source of that victory and he comes to say that specifically in verses 12 and 13. Now you may say well I'm not having too much victory in my life over sin, maybe I'm having a power shortage. No, the power is all there you just need to plug in. It's all there. It's resident within you. You will receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you and there are no caveats and there are no conditions. You have the power of the living God, the third member of the trinity is equal to God because He is God, equal in every sense, living in you. That is a remarkable reality. You are strengthened with might, with power by His spirit in the inner man. He's there. He's there. And you ought to be explosive and you ought to be experiencing triumph over sin. The power is there.

In Ephesians 5:18 he says, "Be being kept filled with the Spirit," and what he means there in one sense is to experience at all times the fullness of that power. He's commanding us to yield ourselves fully to the power of the Holy Spirit. To be being kept filled means to yield to the spirit totally. And that simply means to give up your own control, your own agenda and let the Holy Spirit habitually permeate your life and exercise full control by letting the word of Christ dwell in you richly. This means a saturation of the word of God, a surrendering of your will, your intellect, your body, your time, your talent, your treasure, everything to the Spirit's control. It's really the elimination of self; it's really the death of you. But the power's there.

Now let's look at these two verses and they define for us this tremendous reality of victory over the flesh. Now if I were to break this down to a little outline point one would be the power of victory. And I've already told you the power of victory is the Holy Spirit. So you can make that point number one. The power of victory is the Holy Spirit. Clearly we see that in the middle of verse 13. But let's talk secondly about the people of victory. And at the beginning of verse 12 they're introduced, "SO then brethren we are under obligation not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh." Brethren. There's the word that identifies the people of victory. It's a word of love, to sweeten the exhortation. It's a word of fellowship to show them that they're not alone. There is love here and there is equality here. Paul has the same struggle they have; he just defined it in chapter seven. But the people of victory are brethren; those redeemed in Christ, the rest of the world, may I say, never experiences victory. In fact for the most part they don't even experience the war, do they? Because it's just flesh and flesh and flesh and flesh. They get along fine. In fact, I don't wanna tread on someone's view point too heavily at this juncture but I would venture to say that it is reasonable for Christians to have higher highs and lower lows than unregenerate people. It is somewhat normal to a truly mature and Godly believer to experience the highest exhilaration of praise and gratitude to God for His mercy and grace and the lowest depth of remorse and sadness because of battles lost with sin. We have a greater potential for discomfort in life than the unregenerate do. I remind you of that so you don't run off all the time thinking you should go through life with a painless experience. Nothing should be as profoundly wounding to us as losing the battle with the flesh. It's what made Paul cry, "Oh wretched man that I am who will deliver me from the body of this day." It was like he had a corpse strapped to his back.

Many people today who are Christians think that they - they've probably been told this when they came to profess Christ that Jesus was gonna fix their life and make them happy, happy, happy all the time. You know when you see somebody whose trivial and shallow and superficial and giddy you have to wonder whether they're really Christians because they certainly don't reflect the kind of attitude of someone who has such a war going on as defined in Romans 7, do they. The people of victory are the brethren. And sometimes we have deeper depths of sorrow and anxiety and remorse and grief than even the unregenerate would have in the midst of their meaningless, cope less life because we feel the pain of the flesh. But only the brethren know the joy of rising above the corruption. The world doesn't know that. It's just constant debilitation, it's just constant lack of fulfillment, it's just bouncing from one meaningless experience and relationship to the next. It's just never being able to overcome the punishing guilt and the unfulfillment and the hopelessness and the bleakness of the future. But for us there are those times of triumph and those great moments of exhilarating joy when we see the flesh subdued by the power of the Holy Spirit. So the power of victory is the Holy Spirit, the people of victory are the brethren, the Christians and we can be not like the ten spies who could only see the giants and never claim the victory but we can be like the two who see the giants and know the power of our God. Right?

Thirdly, and this is where we get down to the rubber meeting the road, the pattern for victory, the pattern for victory, how then do we engage this victory? Well verse 12 again says we are under obligation not to the flesh. Implied we are under obligation to that new creation. We're not under any obligation to the flesh to live according to the flesh. The pattern for victory then is simple: don't live according to the flesh because you don't need to. You're no longer after the flesh, verse 5, goes back to that; you're no longer after the flesh or according to the flesh. You're no longer with a mind fixed on the things of the flesh. You no longer have that mind fixed on the flesh that is hostile toward God and is not subject, verse 7, to the law of God. You are no longer, verse 8, in the flesh and therefore can't please God. That's not true of you anymore. You no longer have to live after the flesh. You no longer have to mind the things of the flesh. Now if you do that it's a choice. Sure the flesh is there hammering away with all of its seductive impulses but you no longer are the servant of the flesh, you are no longer the slave of sin, you have become the servants of righteousness, Romans 6. The flesh, just to define it for you, is that ugly complex of sinful desire, motive, affection, principle and purpose that exists in your humanness. And to live after the flesh or to walk according to the flesh, to go all the way back to verse 4, or to mind the things of the flesh is to be ruled and motivated and guided by that complex of sinful desires, motives, affections, principles and purposes. How ridiculous, how totally contradictory for brethren who have the privileges of justification and sanctification, having been freed from sin and death, having been delivered from debilitating wickedness to be able to fulfill the law of God, having been transformed in your nature, how foolish to reach back and serve your old master.

The beginning of Romans 7 Paul said you're really only under obligation to your husband as long he lives and when he dies you're not under obligation anymore. But you can take a new husband he was using that as an illustration of the transformation in the life of a believer who was once under the obligation of the husband of sin but sin has been destroyed in terms of that wonderful, recreated, new spirit and we now are servants to a new husband that is righteousness. Paul affirms the strength of his point by saying, back to verse 13, if you are living according to the flesh you must die. Now that's an axiom. He just puts that in as a truism. An axiom is a self-evident statement that needs no explanation; it's a fact. If you live after the flesh you will die. He's not discussing the Christian here; he's really discussing the life of a non-Christian. If you're after the flesh, if you walk according to the flesh, if you mind the things of the flesh you are dead. He said that in the prior passage. You're dead. He just repeats it axiomatically. If you're living according to the flesh you must die. If your life is dominated by the flesh and you mind always the things of the flesh and you fulfill the impulses of the flesh and your mind is set on the flesh and you're hostile toward God and have no desire to submit to His law there is evidence that you are on the way to eternal death. You're not saved. You're dead in trespasses and sin spiritually and you're about to die eternally.

One old commentator said if you do not kill sin sin will kill you. So Paul makes a very powerful point, he says you owe nothing to the flesh, you don't live after the flesh now, you don't mind the things of

the flesh now. That is your old, dead and dying life. Now this is another reminder and I put this in because it's always on my heart, this is another reminder of the need for self examination. Such reminders are all over the New Testament. The individual who habitually lives under the dominion of the flesh is unsaved and on the way to death. You have been transformed; you are His workmanship created unto good works which God has before ordained that you should walk in them. Now there will be lapses, there will be lapses of fleshly behavior regularly. As long as we're in this flesh we're going to do things we don't want to do and we're not gonna do the things we want to do but the difference is we don't want them.

1 Corinthians 3 reminds us that the Corinthians, though they were believers who came behind in no spiritual gift and had accepted the gospel and been baptized and making up a church there which Paul loved and they had been taught. He said I can't write unto you as unto the spiritual but as unto carnal of fleshly. They were engaging in fleshly behavior. You see that all through the apostles of Paul as he writes and confronts his churches about their sins. Of course. If we say we have no sin we make God a liar 1 John says. Romans 7 tells us we still are in the struggle and sometimes we lose the struggle. Paul said I don't do what I want to do and do what I don't want to do. Of course you will still have those lapses of fleshly behavior. Paul in Philippians 3 says, "Not as though I have already attained but I press toward the mark." Right? I haven't arrived. I'm not there yet. Paul's point is if you're living totally after the flesh you're one of those who will die. That kind of life is true of the spiritually dead not the spiritually alive.

So listen, since living according to the flesh axiomatically characterizes the unregenerate why in the world would you want to entertain the flesh? It's utterly inconsistent with your nature and that's why Paul is crying out in Romans 7 saying oh God, deliver me from this body of death which is part of the past. And what the passage here says is we should be living by the Spirit putting to death the deeds of the body. And if we do that we get evidence of being the people who will live eternally. That's the second axiom and it's in verse 13. If by the spirit you're putting to death the deeds of the body you'll live. You will enter into eternal life because you give evidence of being transformed.

Martin Lloyd Jones has written, "My old self, that self that was written in Adam was an utter slave to sin. That self has gone. I have a new self. I am a new man. The moment I realized that I am a new man I'm in a better position to deal with this old nature that remains in my body." And what Paul calls my mortal flesh. What I'm doing is asserting that that is no longer the truest expression of who I am because I've been transformed. And I owe no debt to the flesh. I do not have to serve the flesh. The flesh can do nothing for me; it can debilitate me, it can cripple me, it dishonors the Lord, it drags me down, it forfeits blessing, it could even bring chastening. There's no point in entertaining the flesh. Yes it has momentary pleasures, it brings momentary satisfaction but it's not the truest expression of who I am.

How can you tell if you're a Christian? If the sins of the flesh are foreign to your desires. If sin and iniquity is not what you want. If you don't rationalize all of your sins. So the first element in the pattern of victory, we talked about the power of victory, the Holy Spirit, the people of victory, believers, we're talking about the pattern of victory, the first element in the pattern of victory is to realize that we are not after the flesh, we no longer mind the things of the flesh, we owe nothing to the flesh. That was true of us in an unregenerate condition. First we have to realize we are new people with new desires. Then the second step, back to the passage, is a step of action. First is a step of recognition of our situation, understanding the character of being a Christian or the nature, the disposition. Then secondly acting upon it and that's verse 13, put to death the deeds of the body. And again this is another axiom, as I said, if you're killing the deeds of the body you will live. You say why, because you give evidence of overcoming the flesh and since the flesh can't overcome the flesh that proves the Spirit dwells in you. Right? And the Spirit only dwells in those who are God's. If you're the one that's killing the deeds of the body then you are the one who is spiritually alive. If you're enjoying triumph over sin - I want to quickly add you never really enjoy it except in moments of triumph because no matter how much you have victory over sin you'll always be heartbroken over the defeats. So really this is a test of your salvation.

Paul says you should be seeing victory over the flesh. The flesh again is that unredeemed humanness, that complex of attitudes and viewpoints and impulses and desires and longings and motivations that go along with being fallen and human. It's that part of us where sin has taken its residence. That's why in chapter eight as we'll see later on Paul just cries out for the redemption of his body to get rid of this fallen flesh. Believers are those who are in the battle, in the struggle. People always wanna debate whether Romans 7 is describing a non-believer or a believer. And I've wrestled with that for years and years and never been convinced even though I've read all of the best arguments that it is even possible for a non-believer to be in that battle. I really do believe that that's the struggle that a believer has. And the only hope is in the energy and power of the Holy Spirit. Believers are those who are in the process of the battle and they're winning. They're not winning like they would like to win; they feel the remorse that Paul felt but they're winning by the Spirit's presence and power. They're seeing victory over the deeds of the flesh. They win. They kill the deeds of the flesh.

Mortified. Look at that word there. Or kill, verse 13. It's translated in the New American Standard "putting to death". It's the same word, phanatahoe. It's the same word for death; phanatopsiskind of being a familiar poem about death. That is used - the Greek word used in 1 Peter 3:18 to refer to Christ's death. It's the same word used in Romans 7:4 to speak of our dying to the law. So it's not just a reckoning to be dead. It's not just to think of it as if you're dead. It's an actual slaying. It is in your power as a Christian to actually slay sin. To get into battle and come out totally triumphant. To engage in that temptation and impulse coming from the flesh and walk away the victor. These sins like the Amalachites of old must be utterly destroyed. You can read that in 1 Samuel 15. Saul, you remember, was rejected from being king because he spared Agade. And he spared the spoil. The



story is for the learning. Because he didn't do what God told him to do and slay it all and slay the king the Amalachites came back and won future victories. You have the power for victory over sin. The weapon is put in your hand. In the power of the Holy Spirit that weapon is delivered to you when you know the word of God. And the word of God dwells richly in your heart and when you're yielded and surrendered to the spirit and to His will and His truth and not your own agenda the weapon is in your hand and you will have the power over the flesh that has an unregenerate person you absolutely never had.

In Colossians there is a passage that calls us to itself for consideration. Verse 2 of Colossians 3, "Set your mind on the things above not on the things that are on the earth." That implies that you can do that. For you have died, your life is hidden with Christ in God. In other words you're a new person. Set your mind on the things that are in heaven above. Verse 5, "Consider the members of your earthly body as dead." Immorality and impurity and passion and evil desire and greed which amounts to idolatry, it's on account of these things the wrath of God will come. And in them you also once walked when you were living in them. I mean there was a time when that's all there was. but now, verse 8, put them all aside, including anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech from your mouth, stop lying to each other since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices and have put on the new self. Come on, you're new. Don't drag that garbage from the past. You have that power for victory.

The old man is not converted, he's not renewed, he's gone. You're a new creation by the creative act of God, nothing less. But the flesh is still there. You have the power in that new creation to kill the flesh.

So the believers being freed from sin and death and the believers being enabled to fulfill the law of God by imputed righteousness and the believers being transformed as to his nature doesn't free us from the battle because even though there is no condemnation because all of our sins are paid for we still battle them. And it is necessary for us to kill sin in the flesh and not only necessary but possible and that is life in the Spirit by the Spirit's power. Sin is still there. 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." Great insight. Another way to say that is just about the time you think you've really gotten the victory you've just stepped over the line of self deception. The battle is lifelong and no one gets out, Romans 7, in this physical body.

Some people you know they talk about your sin nature being eradicated. I heard just the other day, someone was telling me that a prominent person had made a claim that they hadn't sinned a willful sin in X number of years. Some people think they've reached the level of consecration, it's sort of the let go and let God where they've reached a deeper life, the higher life, the secret life, whatever it is, and they no longer sin. That is a deception. Sin is a battle that never ends this side of heaven and we have to be busy killing it and we ever get to the point where we're diluted enough to think that the

battle's over we are really in danger. Practical sanctification is progressive and it's progressive killing of sin.

How do we do it? Let me give you some practical things. How do we do it? Just a few things and we'll close. Number one, recognize the presence of sin, recognize the presence of sin in your flesh. Indwelling sin according to Romans 7:21, indwelling sin is a principle, it's a principle, it's an operative principle, it's an inward principle, it's a reality and you have to recognize that it is there. Listen to me, the problem is not outside of you, the problem is not the culture, the problem is not the absence of cultural morality, the problem is not education, the problem is not television; you are the problem. You are the problem. As Pogo said, "we have met the enemy and the enemy is us." The problem is not bad examples. The problem is not Satan. The problem is not demons. The problem is you. And if there were not any Satan and there were not any demons as will be true in the millennial kingdom there will still be rampant inequity. And the more people get educated it's not true that conversely the more moral they become. We're the most educated society in the world and we would rival the immorality of any era of human history. The problem is not our society, it's not our culture, it's not outside of us, it isn't a matter of chasing demons or creating public morality. The problem is inside; we still possess unredeemed flesh. You have to recognize you're the problem.

Well the best a non-Christian can do said John Owen is sin; the worst a Christian can do is sin. But the battle is really intimate. You're the problem recognize it. Don't blame everything around you. Start by acknowledging your own problem. Search out the poison in you. Find that hidden camouflaged darkness in your mind and your will and you will start to kill sin when you remember it is there in you, deceitful and violent, looking for an opportunity to conquer.

Psalms 139 will help you. the psalm is prayed, "Search me O God and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any," what? "Wicked way in me." Be honest enough to say God please uncover my sin. Let me see it. If there's any love of the world there, if there's any lust of the flesh, any lust of the eyes or the pride of life God show it to me. Don't be deceived that there isn't any there. Don't play games with yourself and say that the good outweighs the bad and you only have a few besetting sins and they're very private. Don't kid yourself; be honest - if you want to kill sin be honest and recognizing that it's there. The flesh is you is wretched, it spurts forth between the cracks of your supposed righteousness, it spurts forth in anger, bitter words, unkind thoughts, criticism, self conceit, lack of understanding, impatience, weak prayers, indifferent worship and public and private acts of sin. These are the deceitful lusts of Ephesians 4:22.

Secondly - first of all if you're gonna get on the path of victory you have to recognize the presence of sin in yourself. Secondly, have a heart fixed on God. And that's one of the ministries of course, the great ministry of the church in your life. I suppose you could say to me and it would be true that sometimes I give you more information than you really care to have and certainly if that is not true in a given sermon it's probably true cumulatively. Some people have called me a sort of expository dump

truck; they've characterized me as somebody who just backs up and dumps the whole deal and leaves you about eight feet deep in it. I'm not here to preach you sermons so you can have more information. As much information as I give you that's not what I'm trying to accomplish. I'm not here to offer you some oratory upon which you can render a criticism and an evaluation. I am basically here to jerk you out of your complacency week after week after week after week after week and yank you back to a God consciousness. I'm here to pull you back into Scripture. I'm here to pull you toward heaven. I'm here to refocus your thoughts. I'm here to shift your gears off of whatever it is you think about all week. Everything from your job to your family issues to the neighborhood to fixing the fence to the TV sitcoms and whatever it is you occupy yourself with; I'm here to jerk your mind back to spiritual reality so that you can fix yourself on God. And that's why we don't forsake the assembling ourselves together. You don't need to come to church every single Sunday morning and every single Sunday night to accumulate more information but you need to be jerked back to spiritual reality. And I'm the jerk. Now why are you laughing at that? You understand that that's the function that I serve to pull you out of your complacency and out of your preoccupation with trivial things and worldly things and everything else that floods your mind. My responsibility for the hour that we're together in the word of God and the time of worship and the hymn singing and all that we do is to focus you on God. And if you don't think you need that every Lord's day you're wrong. It isn't that you miss a Sunday, you miss some more information, it's that confrontive work of the ministry of the word and worship which pulled you back to a God consciousness.

Have a heart fixed on God. We want to assist you with that. You need assist yourself with that by reading the Word regularly, spending time in the Word, that's why we produce so many materials. We don't want you just to buy books and give them as gifts and stick them on your shelf so you can say you own them. The reason for books, the reason for our radio program, the reason for tapes, the reason for anything is to help you fix yourself on God.

One of the and the greatest side benefit of being in the ministry, the greatest side benefit of preparing to preach all the time is just spending all your time in the Word of God. Fixing your heart on Him. Thinking His thoughts.

Thirdly I would add, meditate on the Word of God. Be honest about your sin, the sin that is in you, you're the problem. Secondly, fix your heart on God. And thirdly, mediate on His word. And here we move into what I was just saying a moment ago. You get beyond just us pulling you to God, helping you to focus, and David says, "Thy word if I've hid in my heart that I might not sin." And when Jesus was being tempted in Matthew's gospel chapter four by Satan, three times he answered the temptation and each time he quoted out of Deuteronomy, didn't he? Whatever controls your mind controls your behavior. Crowd out the garbage with God's word. It's a word saturation.

Fourthly, commune with God in prayer, diligent, watchful prayer. 1 Peter 4:7, look Satan's going around like a roaring lion and wants to chew you up; you better get on your knees and be watchful

under prayer. Be diligent with a strong sense of God's presence which flows from meditating on Scripture, true prayer that has entered the node of real confession and real honest repentance that gives the heart the sense of sin's violent character and the hatred of it. John Owen again wrote, "He who pleads with God for the remission of sin also pleads with his own heart to detest it."

True prayer unmasks Satan's deceit. True prayer forces honesty. Prayer exposes secret sins. Prayer weakens prevailing sins. Prayer fights off temptation. Prayer finds strength in fellowship with the Holy God. These are not new to you; you know these things but these are the steps to take. Recognize sin in yourself, fix your heart on God, meditate on the word and commune with God in prayer. And lastly and simply cultivate obedience to the word. Cultivate obedience to the word. Make it your goal to obey what Scripture says.

In 1 Peter 1:22 it says, "Since you have an obedience to the truth, purify your souls." Boy, that's where it all started when you came to the gospel you obeyed the truth. And that's the way you live your life. A life of gradual, habitual obedience. And when you are honest about your own sin, the sin that is in you and your flesh, when you recognize it, when you fix your heart on God, when you meditate on His word and commune with Him in prayer you'll begin to kill sin because you'll begin to have a pattern of obedience. It may seem hard and slow but hang in there and stay with it. And as I've said before there's a sense in which the more you kill sin the more you recognize its ugliness. The more you become holy the more sinful you will think you are. This is growing in grace. This is perfecting holiness in the fear of God. This is renewing the inner man day by day.

How are you doing? How are you doing in this battle? Evaluate your zeal for God honestly. Has sin made your heart cold? Evaluate your love for the Word and for prayer. Evaluate your delight in worship. How precious is it to be God's people, how precious is it to spend the Lord's Day with His beloved? How sensitive are you to sin in the world? Sin in the church? And more importantly sin in your life?

I wanna give you one more thought, the passion of victory. We talked about the power of victory, the Holy Spirit, we talked about the people of victory, believers, we talked about the pattern of victory, just very quickly the passion of victory. The passion of victory? Where do we get the motivation for this? Where do we get the inner motivation to drive us toward this triumph? Well, I really believe verse 12 has it and it says it in sort of a negative way. Verse 12, "So then brethren, we are under obligation," there it is, "not to the flesh but," you fill in the blank, "but to the Spirit." What's the motive? We're debtors. We are debtors to the Holy Spirit who convicted us of sin, who generated faith in us, who regenerated us. The Holy Spirit who gave us new life, we were born of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit who brought us into a no condemnation status, the Holy Spirit who on our behalf settled the issue of sin and death and the Holy Spirit who granted us the righteousness of Christ. The Holy Spirit who changed our nature, the Holy Spirit who has done all of that we're in debt to him. And this is how we repay that debt. This should be the passion of victory. Grace is free and salvation is by free grace

but in one sense that puts us in debt. We are debtors to the gracious God, the gracious Christ and the gracious Spirit. And it should be the discharge of that debt that motivates us to triumph in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Father we thank You for this tremendous passage of Scripture, the power of it is overwhelming to us. And its truth is penetrating and so foundational. Thank You so much for the richness that we have enjoyed tonight. Thank You for these precious folks. And oh God how I pray that You'll apply this truth in their lives that they might know the fullness of joy and bring honor to Your great name. We are debtors; we are under obligation not to the flesh but to the blessed Spirit who has granted us such glorious life. And in love to Him we desire the triumph that honors Him. I pray that You'll work Your work in every heart to conform us all to that virtue that was manifested perfectly in Jesus Christ. We pray in His name. Amen.

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