

Basics of the Christian Life Series

The Battle for the Christian Life

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The Battle for the Christian Life

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: The Battle is Real¹

1. George, involved in an illicit sexual affair, tried desperately to break this relationship. He had prayed to God for strength to overcome this liaison, earnestly pleading that his lust for this particular woman would evaporate. He was submerged in guilt, fear, and shame because he couldn't break the relationship. Eventually the affair was discovered, he divorced his wife, and brought shame and hurt to both families.
2. Ken was a truck driver who promised his wife he would quit smoking. He decided to decrease the number of cigarettes he smoked each day until he was free from the habit. He failed so many times that he gave up. Today, he is convinced he can never quit and has no intention of trying.
3. Susan's first husband died young of a heart attack. Two years later she was married to a Christian man. After twenty years of marriage, she discovered that her husband was involved with another woman. She tried to forgive him, but could not. She prayed for hours at a time that God would dissolve the bitterness and anger, and He didn't answer her prayer. Eventually she and her husband were divorced.
4. John was a man with an explosive temper. Sharp words shot out of his mouth, shattering his wife's self-confidence and affection. He overdisciplined his children, usually in a fit of anger. As a Christian, he knew better and even decided to change. Once, after a particularly sharp exchange with his wife, he put his fist through the wall. Humiliated and guilt-ridden, he asked God for deliverance from his temper. Vowing to change did not help; neither did his praying. Months later he gave up saying, "I can't help myself. That's just the way I am."

B. The battle is real. All of us live in a spiritual war zone. All of us are personally familiar with an internal struggle to do what is right. Each of us knows the sting of failure and guilt. This is the battle for the Christian life. We all step on the battlefield every day we open our eyes. What is your attitude and perspective toward the sin or sins you are struggling with? Have you given up? Do you think overcoming the harmful desires and tendencies of your life is impossible? Have you experienced some victory for a while only to be sucked back into what you thought was a dead issue?

C. When a person commits themselves to Jesus and begins following Him, they are caught in the middle of the "old self" and the "new self" (Eph. 4:17-24). The individual is a new person and they start to live a new life because God puts His life in them and they are given access to the resources of God. However, this is where the battle begins. A person who attaches themselves to Jesus will soon discover they have a hard time moving from the old way of life to a new way of life. They identify more with the "old self" than they do with the "new self." Even those who

¹ These examples come from Erwin Lutzer *Winning the Inner War: How to Say No to a Stubborn Habit* (Colorado Springs: Victor), 41-42

have been living for Jesus for a long time will have moments of stumbling back into the “old self”. Why do all of us experience this? God describes the moral condition of humanity when He confronts Cain in Genesis 4:3-7. In this passage God explains a foundational aspect of the human condition that each of us has experience with: the internal struggle to do what is right.

- D. When we attempt to do what Jesus says to do, we will soon discover how difficult it is for us not only to DO what He says but also to DESIRE to do what He says. We may even feel like Jesus wants to take something “good” away from us. Following Jesus involves painful participation in an internal war. Those who experience spiritual growth must accept the fact that ground is gained only with great effort and difficulty. Every individual who believes in Jesus and lives for Him will deal with this internal struggle for the rest of their lives. There won’t ever be one minute of one day in which they will not be engaged in this internal battle; the only release will come when death arrives and they are finally released from the corrupted human condition.
- E. Since this is the reality that we all face, we must be informed about the battle for the Christian life. We must learn how victory is achieved, what victory looks like, and what to do when we have moments of failure. Failure will happen, repeatedly. God’s words to Cain are so important for every disciple of Jesus to understand because it sets the overall tone of our entire Christian life along with our expectations of what life with Jesus looks like.

II. God Describes the Internal Battle

- A. The situation is as follows, both Cain and his brother Abel bring offerings to God for the purpose of worshipping Him. God reacted favorably to one and not the other. The reason? The heart condition of the individual who made the offering determined whether or not the offering was acceptable. The text tells us, “the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard.” (Gen. 4:4-5). The person and the offering are inseparable, as God views one—He views the other. What we do is a reflection of who we are. Some try to say that God accepted the offering of Abel because it was an animal sacrifice instead of the “fruit of the ground” (v. 3). In other words, it was the form and content of the offering that God found pleasing. However, this seems to be going too far and reading the later development of the sacrificial system into the present text (anachronism) is a mistake. Further, there were acceptable offerings that came from the ground (grain offerings) included in this sacrificial system which God looked at with favor. Just because an offering wasn’t an animal didn’t mean it was unacceptable to God. This being the case, the argument loses its force. I don’t think the form influenced God’s response but rather the individual made the difference.²
- B. As a result of being rejected by God Cain “became very angry and his countenance fell” (v. 6). Notice, if we choose to sin, our emotions and even our moods (emotions sustained over time) are negatively affected. Sin diminishes our emotional wellbeing. We will suffer wrong as a result of doing wrong (2 Pet. 2:13), not in the sense of karma but simply as a natural consequence. Happiness and peace are lost when we sin because God’s ways are best.³ Doing wrong causes emotional and moral pain as well as damage. It is while Cain is in this condition that God shows up and confronts him. God sees that Cain is on a dangerous path so He talks to

² This seems to be the indication in others texts as well (1 Jn. 3:12, Heb. 11:4, Mt. 23:35, Prov. 21:27).

³ See *Feelings and Faith: Cultivating Godly Emotions in the Christian Life* by Brain Borgman.

Cain about the reality of his condition and what he must do to turn things around. In fact, God already knows this trajectory will result in one of the most serious sins a person can commit: murder. However, the act of murder begins in the heart condition of jealousy and anger. Do you see the importance of the internal struggle and the seriousness of its consequences? God explains the internal condition of humanity; He tells us what is going on in our hearts. We get an assessment of our condition straight from the horses' mouth. God directly talks about the struggle of doing what is right.

- C. God approaches Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?" (v. 6). Long before psychology discovered that anger is a secondary emotion, God knew there was a reason for anger. God invites Cain to rationally evaluate his emotions instead of allowing them to blindly determine his behavior. What is the source of Cain's anger? God will address that in the next verse. God also asks Cain why he is depressed. Once again God wants to get to the source of Cain's emotional distress. Perhaps Cain was unwilling to answer. God continues to give Cain some counsel regarding his emotional and moral condition. God tells Cain how to fix what is going on in his heart, "If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." (v. 7). God informs Cain that he is in the middle of an internal battle and the results of this battle will determine the shape of his life. Not only that, but Cain is in a spiritually dangerous environment, "sin is crouching at the door" of his heart. We face the same danger every day we are alive. We do not live in a morally neutral condition, there are spiritual dangers all around us and we would be wise to watch out for them. Otherwise, our ignorance could harm us. Also, if we choose to sin, we willingly put ourselves under the controlling influence of sin. God told Cain "if you do not do well" he will be exposed to sin and its desire to control him. If we choose to sin we intentionally become hypnotized, we walk into the control of sin and give up our ability to influence our own life.
- D. Cain has a decision to make. Cain can choose to either do what is right and experience the restoration of his emotional state or continue to do wrong and become dominated by sin. Notice, that giving in to sin doesn't do anything to improve a person's condition or lessen sin's force, it actually makes it worse. Doing what is wrong only INCREASES the strength of sinful desires and their hold on us. Caving to temptation puts us in a more difficult position in regard to our relationship with sin. The greater the level of sin, the harder it is to overcome it and the more difficult it becomes to crawl out. Paul mentioned this in Ephesians 4, immoral behaviors do not satisfy our desires; they increase our desires. If we give in to sin, sin will only want more. The bottom line is this: the Christian life is a battle (1 Tim. 6:12).
- E. It is easy to get tired of constantly resisting sin but if we give in to it, things will only get harder. This perspective is important and it should become part of our foundational thinking about sin. Complying with sin only hurts us, immoral internal desires war against our soul (1 Pet 2:11). Sin shapes our internal world, our heart and soul, in a bad way. Our souls get damaged and corrupted when we do wrong which then makes it harder to resist next time around. Whether we decide to give time and attention to sin or the life of God, there will be consequences, "7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the

one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.⁹ Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.” (Gal. 6:7-9). The more we give in to sin, the greater will be the corruption in our soul. Since this is the case, do not get tired of fighting against sin. If we remain faithful over time, eventually we will reap the harvest of spiritual growth. Sin stunts spiritual growth. We can’t hold on to both sin and the Savior at the same time. A decision must be made.

- F. The battle being described by God is explained in much greater detail by Paul in Romans chapter 7. Paul explains that those who are attached to Jesus still have sin’s influence operating in their life. However, it is no longer the Christian who does wrong but rather the sin that is still living in them.⁴ Even though we still continue to sin, our true identity, our “new self”, is the core of who we are in reality. The sin that still lives in us is referred to throughout the Bible as “the flesh.” Although sin remains influential in our life even after we start following Jesus, it is not who we really are; it is contrary to what God has created us to be. One day, when we fully become the person God is creating us to be, “the flesh” will be completely removed from us; but until that day comes, we must continue to wrestle with our sinful tendencies that are inconsistent with our new life. Our behaviors will swing back and forth at times between the selfishness of the “old self” and the Christlikeness of the “new self”. In the midst of this struggle, our hearts have been changed by God so that we develop an aversion to what is wrong and a desire for what is right. The good news, even in the midst of the struggle and our failure, is, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Rm. 8:1). Our guilt before God has already been settled BEFORE we entered this battle! Our guilt and our forgiveness was permanently settled at the moment we believed in Jesus (Rm 5:1-2).⁵ God’s grace is incredible!

III. Battling Sin is About Mastery Not Perfection⁶

- A. God says sins’ “desire is for you,”. Thinking, feeling and doing wrong (sin) is not a subject, a person, that possesses desires. Sin technically doesn’t yearn to accomplish something but God personifies sin to make a point. The end result of doing wrong and following harmful desires is that they start to control us. God is telling Cain that sin will motivate, influence, and control his behavior. Sin is dangerous and we should be cautious of its power. God continues, “but you must master it.” Here is a key spiritual principle when it comes to a person’s relationship with sin: it is a matter of domination and influence.⁷ It is a mistake to think that a spiritually mature

⁴ This isn’t to say that the Christian is never responsible for sinning after they start following Jesus. It is only to make the point that participation in sin is no longer who they really are even though they continue to struggle with it. Christians do still sin but the source is no longer their foundational nature but the sinful influences that still exists in their corrupted humanity. Their core nature has been changed by God to no longer be comfortable living in sin; they are dead to sin in that sense (Rm. 6:1-2). Indulging in the flesh is a characteristic of those who don’t know God (2 Pet. 2:9-10).

⁵ As an analogy, God brought His people out of slavery in Egypt BEFORE He told them how to worship Him; before the law and before the requirements came into play. This was intentional. Freedom comes before obedience.

⁶ For more on how to battle against sin see Wayne Mack *A Fight To the Death: Taking Aim at Sin Within*, Erwin Lutzer *Winning the Inner War: How to Say No to a Stubborn Habit*, Jerry Bridges *The Pursuit of Holiness*, and John Owen *The Works of John Owen Volume 6: On Temptation and Sin* ed. William Goold (Also labelled *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers*).

⁷ The term “master” means to exercise authority over something, to rule.

person who is obeying Jesus will be completely free of sinful desires (Gal. 6:1). Many Christians are discouraged when they discover God doesn't remove their desire for particular sins. Sometimes this happens, but usually God leaves a few sinful desires in us which causes us to struggle with them the rest of our lives. He does this for His good purposes believe it or not!⁸ We shouldn't think overcoming the struggle with sin means that our lives will be completely free of all sin or even the desire to sin. A complete renewal of our human nature won't happen until we receive our new resurrected bodies. Weakness will be raised in power and dishonor will be raised in honor (1 Cor. 15:38-44).

- B. The key notion when it comes to living in sin and living "free" from sin is: mastery. What is the general and prominent orientation of a person's life? What rules in their life? Are they focused and active in following sinful desires and behaviors or godly desires and behaviors? Victory in the struggle with sin is a general mastery of life directed toward godliness and moral purity. There will always be times of weakness and failure, but the overall orientation of a person's life who is victorious over sin will be heading toward obedience to God. Jesus used the imagery of slavery to describe people's relationship with sin. He said that He is the One who provides freedom from sin to those who believe in Him and continue in His Word (Jn. 8:31-34). As a person remains in the words of Jesus, they come to know and understand the truth, and it is the truth that makes them free when it is connected to Jesus. For Jesus, living in the truth by putting it into practice is what frees a person from sin through the power He provides. Paul described sin in the same way, whatever we offer our lives and bodies to is what is our master (Rm. 6:6-18).⁹ Mastery is the primary source of power and the strongest influence in our life, it is what we obey and what our heart is set on.¹⁰ Being victorious against sin means that the greatest influence and motivating factor in our life is the Holy Spirit and the life of God which orientates our lifestyle around God instead of sin; it sets the general direction of our life (Rm. 8:5).
- C. It is in our struggle with sin and our journey toward spiritual growth that many Christians, including myself for a time, make a major mistake. This mistake needs to be cleared up before further progress will be made with Jesus. The common mistake is: trying to live the Christian life by our own effort. We think that since God has created a "new self" in us and we know that we have the Holy Spirit, it is common to attempt to overcome sin UNDER OUR OWN POWER AND SELF-DISCIPLINE. This mistake is so common it seems almost a natural part of the growth process. God allows us to make many false starts as we fail over and over again in trying to overcome sin by an exertion of our own effort until the truth settles into our soul that we can't live out the Christian life even when we try really hard. Perhaps some of you haven't yet learned this lesson, I can relate because it took me a long time to figure this out.
- D. When we are trying to overcome sin by our own effort we go through a typical pattern of doing well for a while and feeling good about ourselves thinking we are really making progress. Then,

⁸ See Lutzer 13-17

⁹ 2 Peter 2:18-19

¹⁰ In Romans 6:12 the term "reign" is used which means to act as king while in verse 14 the term "master" is used which means to command and dominate. Thankfully those who are connected to Jesus have been transferred from one master to another (Col. 1:13).

in a time of weakness and temptation, we return to old habits and we sin. We feel frustrated with ourselves because we did something that we knew was wrong in an area where we were “doing so well.” We are ashamed that we didn’t do better, which is actually a form of pride. We reignite our determination to do what is pleasing to God and begin again with a renewed passion only to stumble again later. This cycle replays itself over and over again until we learn our lesson. If we try to overcome sin by our own willpower, we are going to fail. It won’t work. We are the source of the problem that needs to be fixed. We need God to overpower sin for us.

- E. An important truth needs to be understood before we can move on from our self-effort: our effort needs to be directed toward God instead of sin.¹¹ We DO need to put effort into overcoming sin but we don’t point it toward the sin itself, we point our energy toward the RESOURCES OF GOD which overcomes sin ON OUR BEHALF. We need to realize that victory only comes BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.” (Gal. 5:16-17). If we try to overcome sin by our self-determination and effort, we are attempting to overcome the flesh with the flesh and this won’t work. The alcoholic can’t overcome drinking by going to the bar. I spent years in pride and self-effort in my interaction with sin, always thinking I’ll do better next time. I’m embarrassed to say it took me a long time to realize that I couldn’t overcome sin by the effort I put into defeating sinful tendencies in my heart and life. I couldn’t do it; I don’t have the capacity in me. But when I started to direct my effort toward being dependent on God, staying attached to the Holy Spirit, and relying on God instead of my own moral character, then my slipups became much less frequent and the “tone” of my relationship with sin changed dramatically. When I finally released my pride and admitted my moral vulnerability and the content of my heart, God stepped in and did for me what I couldn’t do myself. He started to change my heart and desires.
- F. Although not in reference to overcoming sin or spiritual growth (the reference is to doing ministry), Paul teaches us an important spiritual principle about how God accomplishes His work, “For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.” (Col. 1:29). Our effort must be connected to the power of God that is at work in us if we are to succeed in overcoming sin. Our effort is required to see spiritual change but it is insufficient by itself to produce the change we desire. Our effort must be executed in the resources of God. It is the combination of our part and God’s part that produces the change.
- G. Unfortunately, many Christians unconsciously live the Christian life under their own power and unintentionally battle sin on their own without accessing the resources God provides to overcome sin. They miss the warning offered by Paul about how to live the Christian life, “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:3). If you believe that you can live the Christian life productively by your performance and effort before God because you are a good moral person, you have misunderstood the nature of the Christian life altogether (just as I did). You will never reach spiritual maturity by

¹¹ We are instructed to “put to death the deeds of the body” (Rm. 8:13), but the question is how? It isn’t through our effort but God’s power, “if by the Spirit”. We put the deeds of the flesh to death BY THE SPIRIT. This is the same point made in Galatians 5:16.

performance. You will never be able to do enough to meet the standards of God. YOU will always be insufficient. Your willpower and your moral fortitude (your character) will fail. Maturity is reached only by a continual trust in and reliance upon Jesus. We can do nothing without Him (Jn. 15:5); this doesn't just apply to serving Jesus, it also applies to living for Jesus. If you don't have the power to change another person's heart, why do you think you have the power to change your own? Our hearts have control over us, we don't have control over our hearts. You can encourage change in your heart but you can't create it, that is God's part. It is God who works in us to produce that which is pleasing to Him (Heb. 13:20-21, Phil. 2:12-13). If we detach ourselves from God and the activities related to God, we will cut off the supply of our growth and power. Spiritual progress ceases when we live disconnected from God.

IV. What Should I Do When I Sin After Choosing to Follow Jesus?

- A. Even when we set our attention on being obedient to God and His moral will, it is only a matter of time before we mess up. What should we do when we sin against God after we've decided to follow Jesus? In short, get right with God as soon as you can. I want to specifically focus on our individual relationship with God here, what needs to happen between the disciple who sins and the God against whom they have committed the offense. Restore your fellowship with Him through confession and repentance as soon as possible (2 Cor. 12:21, Gal. 6:1-2). The more we develop spiritual maturity and the greater the extent of our victory over sin, the less we will live in sin. Our times of stumbling will be increasingly infrequent and they will be much briefer in duration. Our overall heart attitude toward God will also improve so sinful actions will become more intentional; that is, we will have to try to disobey because it goes against who we are. It will be harder to sin because it goes against the new self we are becoming.¹²
- B. The process we should follow to restore communion with God is found in 1 John 1:6-10. Here, John is countering specific claims made by false teachers who are having an influence on the church. John is discussing how to know if a person is truly following Jesus or only pretending to follow Jesus. If a person is attached to God, then they will be like Him. There is a consistency between the character of God and the lifestyle of those who are attached to Him. If a person lives the way they should, there will be practices they follow in regard to sin, "6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." (1 Jn. 1:6-10). John is telling us how a person can live in God.
- C. The one who is living the way God desires will experience cleansing, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." This is something that is happening in the present and it is ongoing;

¹² There may be exceptions to this in particular areas of weakness. Individuals struggle with different sins, although improvement can be made in these areas, it is common for these areas of weakness to continually be vulnerable. We can easily slip back into them.

the cleansing happens day by day as a person follows Jesus.¹³ As disciples continue to live in obedience to God, Jesus will continue to cleanse their sin. Jesus not only provides forgiveness, He also erases the stain of sin in a continuous process.¹⁴ What sin do those who “walk in the Light” (v. 7) need to be cleansed from?¹⁵ I thought Jesus already did that on the cross? It is the ongoing effects of sin in the life of those who are following Jesus.¹⁶ They still need to undergo a divine purification process even after they have been forgiven. This purification process is the Christian life. I think this becomes clear when we get to verse nine.

- D. John is talking about ongoing sin in the life of those who trust in Jesus.¹⁷ In this context we find that if we claim to have no sin (since following Jesus),¹⁸ we are deceiving ourselves. While true disciples can’t comfortably live in a constant state of sin “walk in darkness” (v. 6),¹⁹ on the other hand they can’t claim to be without sin either “If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves” (v. 8). Christians are somewhere in the middle between living a lifestyle oriented toward sin and being completely separated from sin. They live on the battlefield of their heart. It has been the experience of the holiest followers of Jesus throughout history that the closer they get to Jesus the more sinful they appear in their own eyes. Not that I put myself in the same category, but even in my limited experience (compared to theirs) with Jesus I have discovered the same thing. A true disciple of Jesus will actually grow in their awareness of personal sin as they become more holy. This is a counterintuitive reality but it’s true. The holier we become the more sinful we will feel. As a person grows in their knowledge of God’s standards, there will be a new awareness of the depth of their failure.
- E. What do we do when we sin? In general, we acknowledge and admit the reality of sin in us. We develop the accurate perspective that sin is still in us and respond accordingly by not treating sin lightly in our day to day living. We take proper protective measure to avoid sin while at the same time avoid thinking that we are self-righteous and can handle all temptation. A disciple with an accurate understanding of their own heart will never say, “I won’t be tempted” or “I can handle it”, they will acknowledge how vulnerable they really are (Heb. 12:1). I heard many times from the lips of young people in youth group who just didn’t know any better, “I can handle it.” They were confident in their own ability to avoid sin which is a very dangerous position indeed. We are quick to demonstrate true repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-11) by which we are cleansed (2 Cor. 7:1).
- F. Specifically, we follow the procedure outlined by John. We confess our sins to God (v. 9). We admit the wrong we’ve done to God. We agree with God’s moral evaluation of our thought,

¹³ William Barclay, [The Letters of John and Jude](#), 3rd ed., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 34.

¹⁴ John R. W. Stott, [The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 19, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 79.

¹⁵ John 8:12

¹⁶ In theology this is referred to as “sanctification”; which is distinct from “justification” (being made right with God, salvation).

¹⁷ Lin G. Kruse, [The Letters of John](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2000), 64–65.

¹⁸ Colin G. Kruse, [The Letters of John](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2000), 66.

¹⁹ Walking in darkness is also described as disobeying Jesus’ commands (1 Jn. 2:4).

motive, intention, or action. Instead of denying our sin (v. 10) we embrace its reality and tell God where we were wrong.

- G. Next, we should be convinced that God will forgive us (v. 9). We have confidence, not in our future performance to remain sin free, but in God's faithful and righteous character knowing that every time we go to God for continual forgiveness, He will provide it (Mt. 18:21-35). We forgive others generously because God forgives us generously. A genuine prayer humbly asking for forgiveness is pleasing to God (Lk. 18:9-14).
- H. Finally, we rely on Jesus to continue His cleansing work in our lives (v. 9). We need His help to be purified from this particular sin so that it doesn't gain a foothold in our life and become a habit. Ask God to heal your soul from the damage that was caused by the sin you committed (1 Pet. 1:22).²⁰ Ask God to put His heart and character in you to replace the weakness of your own. Develop a hunger and thirst for righteousness so that it can be satisfied (Mt. 5:6).
- I. When you fail in the battle for the Christian life and are consumed by feelings of guilt before God, turn to Psalm 32. Read it. Think about the truths contained in its words. Consider them true about yourself as you do what it says. Repeat. Let its message seep into your soul and become part of who you are. Learn to respond to your failure in a godly way. Ask God to, "teach you in the way which you should go; (Ps. 32:8). Allow God's Spirit to show you how to cut this sin out of your life. Do the same with Psalm 103.

V. Conclusion

- A. Remember that we have all the resources we need for living a life that is pleasing to God through the promises of God (2 Pet. 1:4). In light of the promises of God, Paul says elsewhere, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7:1). Our goal and aim in the Christian life is to overcome sin and be holy on the inside and the outside.
- B. While this is our noble target, we are in the midst of an internal struggle with sin as we live between the "old self" and the "new self". God tells us this struggle is real and it is His desire that we should master it instead of allowing the sin that is crouching at our door to master us. I want to encourage you to fight the battle of the Christian life and don't give in to weariness. You will reap the benefit of your effort in due time. God's power is sufficient, press on.

VI. Questions For Further Thought

- A. Romans 6 describes the proper approach to and interaction between the follower of Christ and sin, read verses 6-18.
- B. What does verse 6 say is true about those who are united with Jesus?
- C. What are the two intended purposes for this truth (vv. 6-7)?
- D. How should a committed Christian view their relationship to sin according to verse 11?
- E. How should this influence the way a person faces temptation?
- F. What should the truth of verse 6 and the outlook of verse 11 lead to in verses 11-12?
- G. What shouldn't be the case according to verse 14?

²⁰ Such as the increase of that immoral desire, the painful memory of regret, a mental image you can't get out of your head, a relational habit that needs to be broken, the tendency to believe something that isn't true, etc.

H. What is the master of those in Christ (vv.16-18)?