

# Fight! Winning the Internal Conflict

## *Part 3: Resistance ISN'T Futile...and Will Happen!*

(preached 10/20/24)

Please turn to *Romans 7:7*.

LAST WEEK we needed to identify who the combatants are as follows: the body, the mind, the heart, and the spirit.

- The body wants to survive and feel good doing it: eating, drinking, resting, having sex, etc.
- The mind is our center for rational thought, logic, order, planning, solving problems, and analyzation.
- The heart is our emotional center, prioritizing how it and other feel, relationships, etc.
- The spirit wants the things not of this world whether God, other gods, any religion, any spiritual practice or revelation. It seeks to connect to and have relationship to a deity or higher power.
- Before the Fall each of these worked as a team with each other, all submitting to the leadership of the spirit who submitted to God.
- After the Fall they were cut off from the Lord and turned inward to themselves: each prioritizing their own desires and pleasures and competing with each other for them.
- The body now sought the pleasure of eating, drinking, resting, and sex and was willing to violate God's commands to do so.
- The mind saw the body and heart as weak trying to control them, other people, and its environment because it hates chaos. It sought to live life according to cold rationality.
- The heart became impulsive, elevating feelings over facts and truth, and desperately needing constant affirmation otherwise it fell into dark depression.
- The spirit sought to connect itself to other gods, religions, faiths, and practices and fell away from worship of the One True Lord.
- Jesus Saved us, regenerated our spirit, and sat it down on a throne at His right hand inside of us (heavenly place).
- Our spirit is US, made in the image of Christ, its desires aligning with His.
- Then we realized which part of ourselves we've TRULY been identifying with (body, mind, or heart) and repented: realizing that we are our spirit.
- We gently but firmly told the other parts of us: "I'm in charge now."

I've been a *Star Trek fan* since the mid-1970's and in the 90's, TNG came to TV. The most popular enemy of the crew of the Enterprise were *the Borg*: a massive collective of beings who were taken over by a hive mind who had advanced technology and power. The goal of the Borg was to "assimilate" every other species into its collective so that it could become larger and more powerful. If you're a TNG fan you remember the first time the crew of the Enterprise met the Borg, who then said *"Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated."*

IDK about you, but **sometimes it feels that way to me when I try to obey God**. Doing so consists of 2 things:

- Restraint from committing sins: “thou shalt not.”
- Taking actions that are good: “thou shalt.”

Here’s what can happen: **suppose it’s been awhile where we haven’t really been serious about the Lord**. Not following the desires of our spirit, but of the other parts of us. We finally decide to turn over a new leaf! We’re going to read our Bibles more, go to church consistently, and pray more often.

What’s more is we’re going to **start addressing OUR issues—work on ourselves!** Our sins, insecurities, fears...time to be free of them! So we “do” the 2 things I listed above: we restrain from a few bad habits and start doing the good things I said earlier.

**Then something really weird happens: we meet resistance.**

I have a revelation for all of us and, if we can accept this right now, we’ll have taken a step toward winning this battle: **the resistance we’re experiencing is NOT Satan.**

It’s our fallen parts who still want what they want, prioritize their own needs, and compete with each other to have them met.

*[Rom 7:7-12 ESV]* 7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." 8 But **sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness.** For apart from the law, sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. 10 The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. 11 For **sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.** 12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

CONTEXT: “the law” consists of 2 things: 1) the commandments of God themselves which is both “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not” and 2) “The works of the Law” which mean obeying/doing both “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not.”

Paul is telling us here something really important: **sinful desires use God’s commandments to try and get its own way and LIES to us to do so.**

The Body is not evil...but its **priorities are short-term gratification resulting in sinful desires**. It tells me it wants cookies and chips and when I give it what it wants, there is no resistance. No pushback, no outcry, no pressure, only satisfaction.

Suppose I watch a video *that tells me all the terrible things the cookies and chips are doing* to both my physical and mental health and then I declare a commandment: **“I’m going to cut this junk out of my life!”** I go through the house and get rid of my junk food—yay me!

Later on my body says *“I want cookies and chips.”* I respond *“we don’t have any’cause this is bad for us and we’re not eating this stuff any more.”*

**Guess what happens next? RESISTANCE.** The same one that Paul just described in verses 7-12 I just read. **Let’s walk this out:**

1. At first eating cookies and chips wasn’t a sin.
2. I watched a health video and decided it was.
3. I declared a commandment *“I shalt no longer eat junk food.”*
4. Maybe my willpower lasts for a bit....
5. Then sinful desire lies to me & giving me hyper-inflated desire for junk.
6. It used a GOOD commandment against me!
7. I eat the junk food then feel guilty & ashamed.

What happened? **My mind (having watched the health video) now tried to take control** and issue a rule (‘cause that’s what the mind likes to do). Like a strict parent, it told the flesh *“no more junk for you!”* The flesh (like a rebellious child) said *“oh yeah?! Watch this!!!!”*

**Our “resistance” to eating junk (or whatever we’re trying to stop/start doing) tends to only last for as long as our minds can maintain control (reign over!) the body and the heart.**

**[Rom 7:13-17 ESV]** 13 Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! **It was sin, producing death in me through what is good**, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. 14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. **For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.** 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, **but sin that dwells within me.**

I'm filling out what Paul said: *what he calls "sin" I'm calling "sinful DESIRES"* and don't fear: I'm not adding to what he said, merely clarifying.

**Why do we end up doing things we hate?** That we know are wrong and destructive to us and others? That take away our health or integrity all for a quick fix of something?

## **Sinful desires DECEIVE us.**

**Pornography is destructive** and goes beyond watching videos and looking at images online. Jesus quoted the commandment of not committing adultery, then upped the ante by saying that lusting after someone is still a sin within the heart! So why do we do it anyway?

**We lie to ourselves, believe the lie, and use it to justify our actions.**

*We're lonely, we're unsatisfied*, we're stressed, and we need relief.

- If we just had a spouse we wouldn't need to but since we don't, we have to.
- If our spouse would just cooperate, we wouldn't need to do this—it's her fault.
- If life weren't so stressful and hard, we wouldn't resort to it. But we deserve a little reward with all that life throws at us.
- What does it hurt anyway? What's wrong with "looking at the menu" as long as we don't order?
- We "need" to do this or we'll go crazy! We were born with this need and it's not our fault!

**These are the lies we tell ourselves.**

- This is how we deceive ourselves into doing what we know is wrong, or failing to do what we know is right.
- Sin takes advantage of us by telling us lies that we believe.

**By the time we're ready to implement a change, all of our fallen parts are used to operating in status quo.** Some of them are used to getting what they want, so there's been little blowback from them. I'm not just talking about simple physical pleasures, but this also holds true when we try and address our personal issues, insecurities, and trauma. *When we begin to stir up and expose those issues we've repressed, there will be internal resistance.* Maybe a lot. And it's not the devil.

**It's parts of us trying to "protect" themselves. To preserve their way of life.**

Have you ever watched shows where someone is **trying to rescue a trapped or wounded wild animal?** It's frustrating because the humans are trying to dress the wound or set the creature free, but it's growling, biting, clawing and trying to escape from the very ones who can help it. *It sees them as a threat when in fact they're allies.*

**So it is with our fallen parts** who are 1) used to getting what they want and 2) that have experienced trauma: it views the healing spirit as an enemy or threat and will claw, bite, growl, and try to run away from the very being who wants to free and heal it.

**When it comes to desires, think of our fallen parts like kids.** Our kids eat too much junk, play too many video games, and don't get too much exercise. As long as we let them do this there's very little pushback from them. *As soon as we try and change any or all of that BOOM! Temper tantrums, pouting, and arguments.*

To clarify: **our parts are not evil and shouldn't be treated by us as such.** But they are deceived which is why they do what they do. *We swing the Sword of the Spirit against the LIES they believe.*

**Effective sword swinging is to respond to our deceived parts with TRUTH.**

*[Pro 14:25 ESV]* 25 A truthful witness saves lives, but one who breathes out lies is deceitful.

**When our spirit responds to internal lies with truth, we're taking the first step of becoming FREE.**

*[Isa 28:15, 17 ESV]* 15 Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement, when the overwhelming whip passes through it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter"; ... 17 And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line; and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter."

I find these verses fascinating: ***we're able to take REFUGE in lies***, as though they are a shelter. **Are we doing this?** Are we hiding behind justifications as to why we do what we do, even though we know it's goes against God's commands and is destructive?

- If I tell myself I “need” the booze or drugs because I’m so stressed, am I lying to myself?
- If I say I “need” to gorge myself on junk food because I have so few pleasures in life, am I not deceiving myself?
- If I say I “must” have porn or commit adultery because my spouse isn’t cooperating & neglects me, aren’t I using this as a refuge?
- If I justify and defend my trauma and insecurity (instead of addressing it) then aren’t I using it like a shelter?

***How about we stop using justifying deception as a refuge and shelter?***

**Instead, let's do this:**

- Respond to the lies with truth.
- Offer righteous and healthy alternatives to our parts.

***Example:***

**Lying Desire:** *“I need a drink! I’ve been stressed out and booze is the only thing that takes my mind off things.”*

**Us:** “Our drinking has caused us to gain weight and practically wreck our marriage. And we blow way too much money on it too. The Bible says ‘Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.’ It’s led us astray & caused so much damage. Much of the stress in our lives is here *because* of our drinking.

“Is this who we want to truly be? Someone who has to run to the bottle when things go bad? Jesus has made us into His image and given us His Spirit. We don’t need booze to have peace.

“I’ve thought of alternatives to how we can relax: deep breathing, prayer, a hot bath, coffee, doing dishes, going for a walk...***which one of those would like to do?***”

***What we see first is treating our body with respect:*** we didn’t shout it down or tell it to shut up which is called repression.

**Repression only leads to the rebellious process we read about today in Romans 7.**

Repression is the mind—not the spirit—trying to take control, issue commandments, and enforce them.

*Despite it's "good intentions" remember the mind is fallen too.* It sees the needs of the body and heart as weak and immature. The needs of the spirit are foolish to it and make no sense. It's not trying to work with them, but to rule over them. It will "force" the other parts to comply which always leads to rebellion.

**Imagine having two magnets of the same polarity** and you're trying to push them together. Suppose you have the strength to do so...but you can actively feel the resistance. Sooner or later your strength will run out and the magnets will repel each other. That's what happens when we try and force/repress another part of ourselves with the mind (willpower).

Second **we spoke truth to the desire of the body**, specifically its self-deceptive justification for drinking AND the result it claims to have (peace, relaxation). *We used a combo of God's Word and the brutally honest results drinking has had.*

Third, **we reminded ourselves of WHO WE ARE.** Made in the image of Christ. A Temple of God that's holy and consecrated.

Fourth **we offered multiple alternatives** to drinking that our bodies might find appealing, alternatives that were both righteous and healthy.

NOTE: said alternatives aren't going to be as appealing as the booze, junk food, etc. *You're not looking for enthusiasm from the part you're negotiating with: but agreement.*

Agreement isn't the same as being forced. It's not repression and won't result in the Romans 7 rebellion & pushback because the body will realize its been both heard and taken seriously.

**Isn't that what we all want from each other**, including authority figures?

- If we express our needs to someone and they roll their eyes, how do we feel?
- If they just say "no" w/o even giving it consideration, do we believe we're being taken seriously?

**By doing the steps above, we can literally reprogram ourselves.**

LYING REFUGE: *“No one will ever understand what I went through and I’ll never be freed from the trauma of my past. I’ll just have to manage it the best I can until I go to Heaven.”*

US: “What we went through was horrible and unjust. Yet others have gone through the same and they do understand—we’re not alone. Jesus once said: ‘So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.’ Jesus doesn’t want us living enslaved to anything, and that includes our past. He knows what happened to us and is grieved over it. He loves us and doesn’t want to see us suffering this way. Let’s stop using our pain as a shelter because it’s not working for us. Our fear has been a terrible refuge that only keeps people and the Lord out. We don’t have to live this way. We’re not trapped.

“Why don’t we ask the Lord if He’ll find us someone who **does** understand and can help us to start working through this? We can look up verses about being free and read them out loud. There are sermons and teachings on the internet which specifically address trauma because others have gone through these things. Let’s find them and listen. We can keep a journal and write down what our biggest obstacles are and what God’s Word says against them. Let’s seek out a counselor or therapist who gets it so that we can be free and not live in fear anymore?

“God created us to walk openly in His Light and to BE His Light! He’s never abandoned us and is here right now, inside of us! How about we let His Light shine into the darkness of our past and drive it out? We are a child of God!”

***King David had internal convo’s*** similar to these, where he responded with truth:

[Psa 42:5 ESV] 5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation

[Psa 42:11 ESV] 11 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

[Psa 103:2, 22 ESV] 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ... 22 Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!

[Psa 104:1 ESV] 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty,

#### EXERCISE:

- Let the red flags go up when a part of us presents a sinful desire and starts trying to convince us to indulge it.
- Identify the LIE it’s telling us to convince us to justify said desire...**and call it a lie.**
- Don’t repress it because that will lead to Romans 7 rebellion.
- Acknowledge that it wants \_\_\_\_\_.



- Speak the truth gently and respectfully to it in 2 ways: a) quote or paraphrase God's Word and b) be honest about the negative consequences past indulgence has had on you and others.
- Ask: "*is this (living the lie) who we want to be?*"
- Remind it of who you **are**: born-again, a Temple of God, a Christian, righteous, and made in the image of Jesus. A child of God.
- Offer righteous and healthy alternatives to the desire on a 5:1 ratio—at least 5 choices to choose from and then choose one.