



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ROMANS 8:12-13

#### Part 10

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup>For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

The following material is actually a supplemental study specifically related to the second part of [Romans 8:13](#) and what it means to “put to death the deeds of the body”. The goal is to provide some very practical insight into how a believer actually goes about this issue of dealing with sin in their life and how they actually fight it, or as Paul says – how do they put it “**to death**”.

The prevailing principle in [Romans 8](#) is that if someone has been called by God and saved, then sin has been dethroned in their life. It does not mean that sin is no longer present, for it surely is. What it does mean, however, is that believers are no longer slaves to sin because sin has been overcome by a greater power, and that power is the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. [Romans 6:6-7](#) expresses it this way,

<sup>6</sup>knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. <sup>7</sup>For he who has died has been freed from sin.

[Romans 6:14](#) says,

<sup>14</sup>For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Now, what is important to appreciate about this verse is that this victory over sin that Paul talks about here is either actual or it is nothing. I.e., it is not just that Christians have the “potential” to overcome sin. Paul is really very dogmatic here when he says that “**sin shall NOT have dominion over you**”. This idea of the believer being able to be victorious in their battle with sin is just as actual and as practical as any other aspect of salvation. It is not something that is achieved by some spiritual process in the believer’s life, or just living by a set of rules and principles and guidelines. Not at all! It is not something that is achieved because they are striving and working and struggling to that end. Not at all! Obviously those things are important and are a part of the Christian life, but this issue of sin not controlling the believer’s life and not having dominion over their life is the result of their union with Christ and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit within them. If victory over sin depended on the believer, then no one would ever be able to overcome it.

In simple terms, this victory over sin is something that the believer actually possesses right now. It is an actual part of their salvation and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit within them. The clear teaching of Scripture is that when someone is saved that at that moment there was in their life a radical breach and breaking with the power of sin and the love of sin that formerly characterized their life. At the moment that the sinner is united with Christ, they are set free from the dominion of sin.

It is important to understand, however, that this deliverance from the power of sin that has been secured for us by Christ does not eliminate sin from the believer’s heart and life. That will not occur



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

until they are with the Lord and have been given glorified bodies. There is still within each believer what is called **indwelling sin**. [Romans 7:14-25](#) is the classic passage on this truth. **The believer is positionally holy, but not practically holy**, and it is this practical aspect of sin affecting their lives that primarily concerns sanctification. The fundamental principle, the governing disposition, and the prevailing character of every born again believer is that of holiness. He is someone who delights in the law of the Lord in his inner man. In [Romans 7:22](#), Paul says these words,

**<sup>22</sup>For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.**

As mentioned earlier, and this is a given, no Christian is sinless. The very presence of sin in the believer creates an extremely real conflict in both their heart and their life. If I can say it this way, it hurts us because in our hearts we know that we are sinning against Christ – and for someone who is truly saved, that just hurts. It creates a spiritual tension, a kind of spiritual contradiction within that Christian – and it should! The more someone has grown in their Christian life and the more conformed they have become to the image of Christ, the more they just simply recoil when sin raises its ugly head in their life. When a believer is convicted of sin, it is really a great encouragement to them that they are truly saved. That is exactly why Paul, one of the greatest Christians ever, cried out in [Romans 7:24](#),

**<sup>24</sup>O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?**

Please appreciate that there is a great difference between what is often called **remaining sin in the believer** and **reigning sin in the unbeliever**. It is one thing for sin to live in the believer, but quite another for the believer to live in sin. The believer is someone who must realize that sin does not have dominion over their life, and that the spiritual forces of redemption and God's sanctifying grace have been brought to bear on their life in both their spiritual and moral being. Paul says it this way in [Romans 6:11](#),

**<sup>11</sup>Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

So, then, understanding that truth, Paul follows with [Romans 6:12-13](#),

**<sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. <sup>13</sup>And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**

Now, what should be the practical result of all of this? For a genuine believer, sin in their life should be decreasing and holiness should be increasing. This is not sinless perfection, but simply growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

In the last analysis it is important to understand that Christians do not sanctify themselves. God is the One who sanctifies, and He is the One who is the agent of sanctification - and there is some air of mystery about all of this. There are some people who just seem to have a deeper hunger and thirst for God and for the things of God than other people do, and how the Holy Spirit created that deeper



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

### Part 10

hunger is not always evident. It is not proper to just sit around and analyze His inward workings and analyze exactly how He does everything. We know that He uses His Word, and that He uses other Christians, and that He uses the church, parents, teachers, difficulties, etc., but how does all of that come about more in some people than others? No one actually knows.

The bottom line is that **a believer must realize their utter dependence on the Holy Spirit.** Obviously, each believer has a part to play. He leads, we follow. He speaks, we listen. He commands, we obey. Stated another way, God's work in the believer is not suspended because they work, and their work is not suspended because God is working in them. The work of sanctification involves the concentration of thought, of interest, of heart and mind and will, but even in that, the believer simply cannot rely on their own strength, resolution, and purpose to sanctify themselves. [Philippians 2:12-13](#) is the classic Scripture on this,

**<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**

So, why say all of this? It is simple. It is because in studying these practical aspects of mortifying sin, if we are not careful we can fall into the trap of depending on our own strength and eventually ignoring the God of grace who sanctifies. The more persistent we are in working **with** God, the more persuaded we will be that He is the One who gives the grace and strength that needed to live above sin.

The great Puritan writer John Owen wrote a wonderful little book called The Mortification of Sin, and in it he made this statement – “*Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you*”. He fully understood that the believer is engaged in a relentless war with sin. The very nature of sin can be summarized in one word – **deception**. Sin entices people with lies, deception, trickery, dishonesty, and craftiness. It promises pleasure and fulfillment, but only delivers pain and sorrow and ultimately eternal death.

One of the primary strategies of sin is to excite lust within the individual. [James 1:14-15](#) says,

**<sup>14</sup>But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. <sup>15</sup>Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.**

The enemy and the flesh come to the believer with a temptation and a sinful impulse and excite a temptation within their mind. **Sin always begins with a thought**, and one can be assured that the enemy can place his strategic and harmful thoughts into their minds. Everyone has thoughts all of the time that are not their thoughts, and yet the enemy wants to make the individual think that they are their thoughts so that they will act on them. That is why Paul said in [2 Corinthians 10:4-5](#),

**<sup>4</sup>For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, <sup>5</sup>casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,**

John Owen described the conflict in this way,



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

*“Sin is always acting, always conceiving, and always seducing and tempting. Who can say that he has ever had anything to do with God of for God which indwelling sin had not tried to corrupt? There is not a day but sin foils or is foiled, prevails or is prevailed upon. It will always be so while we live in this world. Sin will not spare one day. There is no safety but in a constant warfare for those who desire deliverance from sin’s perplexing rebellion.*

It is important at this point to ask the question – what is the goal of sin, what does it want from the individual, or what does it want to do to the person? **It simply wants to rule over their life and to dominate and control their life.** It will never tell someone that, but that is exactly what it desires to do. In the story of Cain, God told Cain in [Genesis 4:6-7](#),

**“So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? <sup>7</sup>If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”**

**“ITS DESIRE IS FOR YOU”**. What an eerie statement that is. It means that sins wants you and is coming after you. It is the picture of a savage beast that is just waiting to pounce on an unsuspecting victim, and that is **exactly** what happened to Cain. Sin took control of his thoughts, controlled his emotions, and eventually dictated his behavior. And the result was that he slew Abel and was the first person ever cursed by God in the Bible. The sequence of events is **deceive, control, destroy. Everything that sin touches, it defiles.** It is like a cancer that is not seen, but all the time it is destroying and defiling the individual and leading to death. Everything it touches it contaminates and defiles and infects.

Someone is going to ask the question - *“Why did God not provide a full deliverance from sin when we were saved? Why do we still have to war against sin and the flesh?”* Certainly no one knows the full extent of God’s sovereign will and much of it will remain a mystery. However, what is known is that in God’s wisdom, He has sovereignly chosen NOT to fully remove the presence of sin from believer’s lives. In some way that they cannot fully understand, this idea of indwelling sin and of remaining sin somehow fits into God’s overarching purpose for the believer’s life, and eventually it all leads to His glory and will help conform the believer to the image of Christ. Indwelling sin is there and God has sovereignly allowed it to be there.

The following are some practical reasons why God may have chosen to allow Christians to struggle with indwelling sin. **The first reason is to make the believer more dependent on God so that God can be glorified in their lives.** Everytime that a believer struggles with sin in their life, it reveals their weakness, but magnifies God’s strength on their behalf. No wonder Paul could say this in [2 Corinthians 12:9-10](#),

**<sup>9</sup>And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup>Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

[2 Corinthians 13:4](#) speaking of Christ says,



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

**<sup>4</sup>For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.**

Speaking of the believer's body, Paul said this in [1 Corinthians 15:42-43](#),

**<sup>42</sup>So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. <sup>43</sup>It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.**

No matter the outcome of any particular struggle that a believer may have, they can give thanks to God that He allows them to see themselves as they really are apart from Him. They are spiritually weak and inept, they are prone to sin, and they are utterly dependent on God for true victory in their lives. So, who gets the glory in all of this? It is God who receives the glory for the strength that He gives to the believer in their time of need.

Secondly, the believer's struggles are an occasion to thank God for the help that He gives to them in overcoming sin in their life. Any committed believer can all look back on their life with just immense gratitude for all of the incredible victories over sin that God has already accomplished in their life. It may have been some besetting sin with which they always struggled. [Hebrews 12:1-2](#) speaks of this,

**<sup>1</sup>Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

Believers can thank God for His incredible forgiveness when they did sin against Him and the cleansing that He was able to give to them in spite of their failure.

Thirdly, the believer's struggle with sin should create compassion for those who are not saved. We were all lost and we all greatly struggled with sin before coming to Christ. [Ephesians 2:1-3](#) delineates the struggle that each believer had before their salvation,

**<sup>1</sup>And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, <sup>3</sup>among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.**

Each believer can understand the incredible impact that sin had on their lives and how they were held in bondage to that sin. And so, even as a believer struggles with sin on daily level, it should draw out of them a genuine compassion for people who do not know Christ. The flesh in them is so powerful, and yet so hidden from their spiritual view.





## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

Fourthly, the believer's struggle with sin should cause them to long more and more for heaven. They should long for that time when they are free from this thing called indwelling sin, free from its constant temptations and fightings within, and free from its deadly influence.

It is important at this point to discuss the issue of spirituality and what it actually means. The word "spiritual" simply means "of the Spirit". A believer cannot be spiritual without the spirit. They cannot have spiritual gifts without the Spirit. They cannot be godly without God. So, what makes an individual a Christian is their being rightly related to Christ. However, what makes a Christian spiritual is their being rightly related to the Holy Spirit. Now, why is that important relative to this issue of overcoming evil in our life? Well, it is important because evil cannot be overcome apart from the supernatural work and power of the Holy Spirit. Because of that simple truth, it is imperative that a believer exercise and maintain a right dependence on the Holy Spirit. It would be foolish not to recognize that because evil is ever present in the believer's life and in the culture that surrounds them and the power of the Holy Spirit is continually needed to overcome it.

Spirituality is not only a continual repression of sin in the believer's life, but it should also be a continual expression of the graces and character of Christ within them. [Galatians 5:16](#) expresses this dual truth in this way,

**<sup>16</sup>I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**

In [Galatians 5:19-21](#) there is the listing of the works of the flesh, and then in [Galatians 5:22-23](#) there is a listing of the fruit of the Spirit, and that listing of the fruit of the Spirit has nothing to say about repressing sin. Rather, every quality given is an outliving of the character of Christ that is being formed within the believer by the Holy Spirit.

So often believers talk about their three primary enemies – the world, the flesh, and the devil. The conflict that each has with the world is external and requires them to be in the world, but not of it. The conflict with the flesh is inward and calls for a complete reliance on the Holy Spirit. The conflict with the devil is in a supernatural realm, an unseen realm, and it too requires this utter dependence on the Holy Spirit. So, the believer's conflict with the devil is with the most deceptive, the most hateful, and the most despotic of all enemies. There is nothing that he will not do to try and completely destroy a believer's life. [1 Peter 5:8-9](#) is no meaningless figure of speech when it says,

**<sup>8</sup>Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. <sup>9</sup>Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.**

The believer's conflict with the world is against all of the influences that the world system tries to impose on them. The conflict with the flesh is against the believer's inner and fleshly impulses, their inner desires, and their yearning to always satisfy the desires of the flesh. [Ephesians 2:3](#), speaking of a person's life before they were converted, says,

**<sup>3</sup>among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.**



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

Now, what needs to be taken away from all of this is really very simple. At no moment in a believer's life are they free from any of the enemies of their spiritual life. At no moment in their life are they able to face even one of these enemies in their own strength – not one single moment. The enabling to be victorious comes DIRECTLY from the infinite enabling of the indwelling Holy Spirit. He is the only source of victory in the spiritual conflict. Not one of these foes – the world, the flesh, or the devil – is superior to the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. To discover this truth, to believe this truth, and to allow this truth to be worked out in the Christian life is the key to being victorious over these ever-present enemies. This truth simply cannot be minimized in any way. As long as these spiritual foes exist, the spiritual conflict will continue. What I am trying to instill within us by discussing all of this is simply how dependent we are on the Holy Spirit to overcome sin and evil in our life. Our personal resolve and determination and will may seem to be a good thing, but none of them are any match for any of our ever-present enemies.

Now, in this supplemental study, what we are doing is only looking at the believer's conflict with the "flesh". Once again, be assured that it is not within the range of the believer's human will power and personal resolve to overcome the flesh. The conflict has to be won "by the Spirit", and this continual conflict requires an unwavering faith and confidence in the Holy Spirit to do for us exactly what He has said He would do. For instance, [Romans 8:2](#) says,

**<sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.**

[Romans 8:10-11](#),

**<sup>10</sup>And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**

In every aspect of the believer's conflict with the flesh, they must live by faith in the empowering of the Holy Spirit. It is learning how to come to Him, learning how to depend on Him, learning how to trust His guidance, and learning how to receive His strength. All of these virtues are things that must be **LEARNED**.

So, the idea of "**putting to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit**" is really a reference to the daily practice of dealing with sin in our life. It is a result of being justified and a unique evidence that an individual has been justified. If a believer is consistently dealing with sin in their life, then they know that they are doing so "**by the Spirit**" for He is the only One who can effectively remove sin from their lives. In the believer's own strength, they are absolutely no match for sin at all. So, if the Christian is consistently dealing with sin in their life, then they can know that they have been united with Christ by faith alone and are a part of His family.

On the other hand, if someone is always living according to the flesh, if they are not making war on the flesh and its sinful impulses, and that is the norm, the practice, and the general tendency of their life, then there is no compelling reason to think that they have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit and united to



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

Christ by faith. Why? It is because one of the cardinal attributes of genuine salvation is this putting to death the deeds of the body or the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit. It is a normal, predictable, anticipated, and expected result and consequence of the Holy Spirit's ministry in the believer. It is God-ordained sanctification in the believer's life. Sanctification is much more than just learning and than just intellectually absorbing spiritual information. Sanctification always involves the Holy Spirit empowering the believer to overcome sin in their life. Romans 6 states clearly that sin shall not have dominion over a believer's life. It is a strong, emphatic statement of fact.

Obviously, putting to death "**the deeds of the body**" is not the method by which a believer is justified, but rather one of the primary ways that God reveals that they are justified. No wonder Paul exhorts believers to be killing sin in their life. If growing in grace and holiness means nothing to someone, then in reality they are just revealing that they probably have a very false profession of faith. Paul asks this penetrating question in [Romans 6:2](#),

**<sup>2</sup>.....How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?**

That is simply a rhetorical question for which the answer is clearly that the believer cannot continue to live in sin any longer. The faith that makes peace with God makes war on sin. If someone is not at war with sin, then they cannot be comfortable with Christ.

It is important to ask the question as to exactly what are "**the deeds of the body**" that Christians are exhorted to kill? Obviously, they can be many. [Galatians 5:19-21](#) gives a fairly comprehensive listing of them when it says,

**<sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, <sup>21</sup>envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

Paul also gives an answer to the question in [Romans 6:6](#).

**<sup>6</sup>knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.**

Anything in the believer's life that enslaves them, that controls them, and that brings them into bondage would be classified as "**the deeds of the body**". It could be a bad habit. It could be anger, bitterness, or a lack of forgiveness – anything in the believer's life that enslaves them to that which is not honoring to God.

Secondly, [Romans 6:12](#) says,

**<sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.**

Other "**deeds of the body**" are represented by the word "**lusts**", or when the believer obeys those fleshly "**lusts**". The believer's mind tempts them to do things that they know do not honor Christ, that they know will lead us into disobedience, and that they know are outside of the boundaries of God's





## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

Word. They are those activities that every believer would be deeply embarrassed about if Christ were to return at that moment. [1 Peter 2:11](#) says,

**<sup>11</sup>Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,**

Then thirdly, [Romans 6:13](#) says,

**<sup>13</sup>And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**

So, from this verse, “**the deeds of the body**” that believers are to kill can be those activities that they do when they allow their bodies to be used as “**instruments of unrighteousness**”. They knowingly and willingly participate in activities that they know are clearly sinful. It could be something like having an adulterous affair or knowingly cheating on their income taxes or willingly discrediting someone through slander. It could be almost anything.

[Romans 8:13](#) says that believers are to put sin to death “**by the Spirit**” – “**if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live**”. So, how does someone do this?

### **Step One: Set Your Mind on the Things of the Spirit**

Notice [Romans 8:5-6](#) and how Paul speaks there of the flesh and the Spirit (the same pair he contrasts here in v13),

**<sup>5</sup>For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.**

The first step in the answer is this - putting to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit involves “setting the mind on the things of the Spirit.” It is not that the believer just looks at the temptation and the enticement and says “*No*”. That can be done and that is okay. However, if believers are going to put sin to death “**by the Spirit**”, they have to do more. They direct their mind, their heart, and their spiritual focus another way, namely toward “**the things of the Spirit**”.

### **Step Two: Set Your Mind on the Words of God and the Realities They Stand For**

The second step is to define what are “**the things of the Spirit**”. If a believer is going to attach their minds and hearts on these things in the hour of temptation, then exactly what are they looking at? Here the key text is [1 Corinthians 2:13-14](#). This is the only other place in the New Testament where the phrase “**the things of the Spirit**” is used.

**<sup>13</sup>These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. <sup>14</sup>But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

So here “**the things of the Spirit**” are the words of God spoken by the apostles. From this it can be inferred that when [Romans 8:5](#) says,

**...but those who live according to the Spirit, (set their minds on) the things of the Spirit.**

that it means that they set their minds on the words of God and the realities they stand for. These are “**the things of the Spirit**” that the lost person rejects and the spiritual person embraces. So to “**put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit**” is to set your mind on the things of the Spirit - which means embracing the words of God and the reality to which they point.

This is especially significant because the word of God is called “**the sword of the Spirit**” in [Ephesians 6:17](#). In fact, in that passage in [Ephesians 6](#) where we are told to “**put on the whole armor of God**”, the “**sword of the Spirit**” is the only offensive weapon listed. It is the only instrument with which to fight, and swords were used for killing. That is what the believer is to do “**by the Spirit**” in [Romans 8:13](#). For the believer to “**put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit**” is to fasten their mind, to fix their mind on “**the things of the Spirit**”. They welcome and embrace the word of God into their mind by taking the “**sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God**”.

The instrument of God that puts to death the deeds of the body is “**the Word of God**”, and the way the believer kills sin “**by the Spirit**” is to set their minds on “**the things of the Spirit**”, that is, the word of God in Scripture which is “**the sword of the Spirit**”. In simple terms, believers cultivate the practice of replacing wrong thoughts with God’s thoughts, and I can assure you from personal experience that none of this comes easy.

So the question we are asking and trying to answer is fairly simple - what can a believer do in order to bring the offensive power of the Holy Spirit into their life to help them with killing sin in their life? Now, in all of this there is an apparent paradox. In Romans 8:13 believers are told that **they** are to “**put to death the deeds of the body**”, but at the same time they are told to do it “**by the Spirit**”. If the believer is going to live the Christian life in a victorious way, and not just some imitation of it, then they must learn what [Romans 8:13](#) means for them in a practical sense. This is not just theological ideas. This is personal spiritual warfare at which they either win or lose. They must learn how to put sin to death in a way where it is decisively the Spirit which is actually putting that sin to death.

So from a practical perspective, what does a believer do to bring the power of the Spirit by the word of God into that spiritual environment that actually kills sin in their life? One answer is given in [Galatians 3:5](#) in the form of a rhetorical question,

**<sup>5</sup>Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—**

Here Paul answers the question “*How do you bring the Spirit into the arena of putting to death the deeds of the body?*” Is it done by “**the works of the Law, or by hearing of (with) faith**”? In other words, Paul is asking “*How does the Holy Spirit flow with His sin-killing power into believers lives?*”

He mentions two options: (1) by “**works of the law**”, or (2) by the “**hearing of faith**”. The answer he expects is clearly not by the “**works of the law**”, but rather by “**hearing of (with) faith**”. Why does



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

Paul say “**by the hearing of faith**” instead of just saying “**by faith**”? It is because what Paul is saying is that when a temptation comes, the believer must look to a word from God. It will never be enough to just pull up our boot straps and say NO! That may be good, but the power to overcome temptation is given to the believer by the Spirit in the Word of God. People who never seem to rise above a certain level of spiritual indifference and carnality are not able to do so because they never really embrace this thing of immersing their mind and heart in the Word of God. So, when just normal temptations of life come their way, they have nothing but their own strength with which to fight.

The Spirit comes and works mightily in the believer’s life in killing sin, not just "by faith" but by the “**hearing of faith**”. The “**sword of the Spirit**” is the “**word of God**”, and it is the “**word of God**” that Christians actually hear and believe. When the word of God is heard and believed, then the Holy Spirit is able at that point to begin to deal with sin in the believer’s life. In other words, the connection between the believer and the Holy Spirit is the word of God and believing the Word of God. They are like an outlet and a plug. When the plug of a believer’s faith goes into the socket of God’s Word, just like electricity, the Spirit is flowing, and when His work is flowing into their lives, then they are able to mortify the deeds of the body.

It is important to appreciate that believers kill sin in the same way that they were saved. For instance, [Ephesians 2:8-9](#) says,

**<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not of works, lest anyone should boast.**

Believing God is the way that a believer comes into a right relationship with God, and by the same token, faith is what helps them to overcome sin and temptation in their life. In order to be saved, the sinner must believe God’s Word, and in the same manner, in order to put to death the deeds of the body, the Christian also must believe God’s Word. The battle against sin is much too strong to simply overcome on our own. A Christian never outgrows their need to live by faith. They begin by faith and they continue by faith. They hear the promises of God and they believe them. By that simple, yet deeply spiritual means the Holy Spirit is flowing, sustaining, and sanctifying.

Most Christians are vastly ignorant of how easy it is for Satan to deceive them. The “**god of this world**” has been opposing God’s best for the believer’s life since the Garden of Eden. He is the father of lies and when given any opportunity, he will do everything in his power to deceive and bring believers into the bondage of not thinking God’s thoughts for their life. It is important to clearly understand that Satan cannot make a believer do anything. He can only suggest that a believer do something. If Satan can place a thought in the believer’s mind – and he can – then it is not much more of a trick for him to convince them that it is their idea. The issue of Satan’s work in the believer’s life is better represented by a variety of activities that range from mere suggestions to what could be called dominating and destructive influences. The very fact that a Christian can be influenced and overcome by the “**god of this world**” is a New Testament given. If it were not, then Christians would never be instructed to “**take up the whole armor of God**”, “**to stand**”, or to “**resist the devil**”.



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

Here is how some of this works. If a believer yields to his suggestions, then after a period of time, he is able to bring them into a mental bondage where they “ACCEPT” ideas and thoughts that simply are not true. And once we accept those ideas and thoughts, we begin to “ACT” on them. The strength of Satan’s strategy against the believer is determined by the amount of time and energy that they invest in entertaining thoughts and ideas that are contrary to God’s Word. So, exactly where do these thoughts come from?

Well, we know that very often they come from **our flesh**. Our flesh is that part of us that is programmed to live independently of God. Our flesh is something that we inherited when Adam fell. And the basic way that the flesh expresses itself is in rebellion to the things of God. The flesh is flesh and will never change. Another word for flesh is “self” – that incurable desire to place my personal interests above God’s will for my life. Jesus said in [John 6:63](#),

**<sup>63</sup>It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.**

The believer’s flesh always demands its way. It demands the right to choose how they live, what they do, where they go, what they become. It does not want constraints and boundaries. It simply wants to gratify itself. Here is a very important principle to understand relative to the flesh and how it works: When a person is not willing to resolve an area of sin in their life, the door is opened for Satan to control that part of their life through that sin. So, the more Satan can get someone to indulge in the flesh (personal thoughts, opinions, and ideas), then the more he can deceive them. The essence of this battle is for the mind and how someone thinks. Applying truth to our life is not a one-time experience, but a lifetime experience.

The enemy’s primary goal is to try and gain control of how someone thinks. He wants to find a place in their thought life where he can convince them that his ideas are better than God’s ideas. And once that mental position has been established, he will use it as a beachhead to **COMPEL** them and to tempt them to do things that are contrary to God’s will for their life. The perpetual reinforcement of these wrong thoughts and corresponding wrong responses to those thoughts will eventually lead someone to an almost involuntary response. However, thank God that the same is true for thinking God’s thoughts and responding correctly to them. So, the believer must learn to bring themselves under the complete AUTHORITY of God’s Word.

Let me state the obvious. The essence of our struggle with sin, with the flesh, and with the deeds of the body is spiritual in nature. So the degree to which we are going to be successful is the degree to which we are prepared to understand and fight the battle on a spiritual level. The real battle is with spiritual forces that we cannot see. We see the results of the enemy’s work, but we cannot see the enemy. [Ephesians 6:12](#) is the classic statement on this,

**<sup>12</sup>For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

The following is a very fundamental principle for spiritual warfare: EVERYTHING THAT WE SEE IN THE VISIBLE, PHYSICAL REALM IS CAUSED, PROVOKED, AND INFLUENCED BY



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

SOMETHING IN THE INVISIBLE REALM. Therefore, it is very important to understand the location of the spiritual battle and where it actually occurs. [Ephesians 6:12](#) says that it occurs “**in the heavenly places**”. The place of the actual spiritual conflict that has very real physical results occurs “**in the heavenly places**”, or in the spiritual realm. What is happening in people’s lives is always a reflection of and has its roots in something that they cannot see. Take for instance the break-up of a marriage. On the surface it seems that two people simply cannot get along with each other. However, in the invisible realm, there are spiritual forces at work – deceiving, irritating, manipulating, hurting, provoking harsh words, and tempting. The enemy suggests to one of the partners that maybe they would be better off with someone else and before you know it they meet someone who is nice to them and they become involved in an affair.

The enemy simply plants thoughts into people’s minds that are not their own, but he gets them to think that they are. For example, each day young people get discouraged and emotionally hurt at a very fragile time in their life, and so the enemy plants a thought in their mind that maybe they should commit suicide so that the pain will go away. Eventually and unfortunately some act on that thought and commit suicide. In [2 Corinthians 10:5](#) is the principle that we are to “**bring every thought into the obedience of Christ**”. Every uncomfortable thought is to be brought to the Word of God so that it can be evaluated against the truth. The Word of God is the governing factor in every decision and in every direction that a believer chooses and it is the standard by which all thoughts and all actions are to be measured.

I am personally amazed at how seemingly difficult it seems for many Christians to maintain both purity and a biblical lifestyle. If a believer does not stay close to God, sin will overtake them. It is the default position to not maintaining spiritual endurance in their life. Sin pollutes everything it touches. It pollutes our heart, our emotions, our conscience, our convictions, and our body. Satan always wants people to think that sin is not that bad. The reason is very simple – **it is so that the believer will become more and more tolerant of sin in their life**. He wants to entertain us with sin, he wants to make us laugh at sin on television, and he wants us to listen to sinful ideas in appealing music – just to mention a few. Before long he will destroy our conscience of what is right and what is wrong, and once the enemy finds an area of weakness, the believer can be assured that he will be relentless in exploiting them in that area until he brings them into bondage.

There are times when the temptation to sin will be so strong, and every believer will need endurance, a toughness, and a willingness to persevere through the temptation and win so that strongholds are not developed in their life. This is where many Christians really fail - no consistency, no endurance, off and on, up and down, faithful and unfaithful. They just continue right on through life somewhat thoughtless about what is happening, and they reach a point where they seem to think that they really do not need much more of God’s work in their life, and suddenly sin has taken over in their lives – and they never saw it coming.





## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

### Part 10

The principle is simple. When a believer compromises what they know is right, suddenly that compromise allows sin to take root in their lives. Just dabbling in sin exposes a person's soul to appetites that are capable of bringing them into the clutches of spiritual bondage - and almost without notice. **Each time someone yields to a besetting sin, the control that it has over their life becomes stronger and stronger.** Sin is never something to play with. It always leads to bondage, and ultimately will cripple the believer's life and utterly destroy their testimony. [James 1:15](#) states it this way,

**15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.**

The power of Satan is in his lies, and the power of God is in His truth. Applying God's truth to our life is the liberating agent, and because of their position in Christ, the believer has been freed from the tyranny and power of sin in their life. They are no longer its slave. That is very critical to believe. We will not act on things that we do not believe. There is no sin that has to be the believer's master. [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) says,

**<sup>13</sup>No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.**

Nothing that any Christian is going through is unique. Everyone faces the same things that everyone else does, and God has clearly stated that whatever it is that the believer is going through, that He has the resources to help them escape. A Christian will never win their battles with sin until they truly believe that God will deliver them from it. [Hebrews 11](#) says that "**without faith, it is impossible to please God**". If a believer concedes to the enemy that they cannot dislodge a particular habit or sin in their life, such unbelief will only lead to more disobedience.

The following is a very simple principle, but one that is very profound. What every believer needs to do is to **weaken and undermine sinful habits and tendencies by strengthening godly behavior and patterns in their life.** I remember reading an article by John MacArthur where he wanted his readers to imagine that they were facing an enemy on the battlefield. What was strange about this battle was that the night before the enemy had gotten a great night's sleep, had a wonderful breakfast the next morning, were given the best fighting equipment, and then placed on the battlefield in a strategic location that gave them a tremendous advantage. However, the catch in the illustration was that we were the ones who gave the enemy all of those advantages. His point in all of that was really very simple. Instead of positioning ourselves in a place that weakens the enemy in our fight against sin, we more often than not seem to empower the enemy by our actions and bad decisions. It is like we give the enemy the upper hand.

When counselling with individuals who are struggling with pornography, I have a very simple rule for them - TURN OFF THE COMPUTER! It is really that simple. If someone feels tempted and they turn the computer on and think about it, they will eventually look at the pornography. If someone wants to stop smoking, then simply do not buy any cigarettes. If they buy the cigarettes, they will



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

smoke the cigarettes. If we do not want to fall, then do not walk where it is slippery. So, we weaken a bad habit by strengthening a good habit. The following are several examples from [Ephesians 4:28-32](#),

**<sup>28</sup>Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. <sup>29</sup>Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. <sup>30</sup>And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. <sup>32</sup>And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**

Example One: If your tendency is to steal things, then get a job and give some of what you made away.

Example Two: If yours tendency is to say bad things, make it a habit to only say things that edify and build someone up.

Example Three: If your tendency is to grieve the Holy Spirit with bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking, then develop a habit of doing kind things for people, being tenderhearted, and forgiving towards them.

Now, those three things may seem a little over-simplified, but they are exactly what a believer needs to do. If someone is struggling with a particular sin, they **must** develop a **mindset** that allows them to replace a bad activity with a godly activity. If an individual makes provision for the flesh, the flesh will be empowered to win – and will win! [Romans 13:12-14](#) reinforces this when it says,

**<sup>12</sup>The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us **put on** the armor of light. <sup>13</sup>Let us walk properly, as in the day, **not in** revelry and drunkenness, **not in** lewdness and lust, **not in** strife and envy. <sup>14</sup>But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**

Same principle – “**cast off, put on**”. Walk this way, do not walk that way. Put on Christ, make no provision for the flesh. I.e., do not feed that which we know is going to hurt us. Do not give sin any more help than it needs, do not feed it, do not strengthen it, and do not do things that provide provision for it to be successful in causing us to sin. If anyone feeds a bad habit, it will only become stronger. However, if they starve a bad habit, it will eventually die. Often when an ancient army would go to war, they would defeat their enemies by laying siege to their city and cutting off all supplies of food and water to them. Eventually, the sieged became so weak that they surrendered and were defeated. If someone has a sinful habit in their life, if they will simply stop making provision for that habit, whatever it is IT WILL DIE! If we do not put any gas in our cars, they will not run. [Colossians 3:8-10](#) says,

**<sup>8</sup>But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man**



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

with his deeds,<sup>10</sup> and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

Colossians 3:12-17 says,

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; <sup>13</sup>bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. <sup>14</sup>But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. <sup>15</sup>And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

The thrust of these words are to lay aside a sinful practice and replace it with a godly practice. It is really that simple. Put off the old man and put on the new man. Take off the dirty clothes and put on some clean clothes. If you drive too fast, drive slower. If you get angry easily, learn what self-control means. If these several passages are carefully studied, what will become readily evident is that in every case we MUST REPLACE the bad habit with something else. I.e., it is not enough to just stop something – even though that is good. The goal is to replace the bad thing with something godly. Let us see if we can figure this out in very simple terms:

If we are prone to lying, replace it with honesty.

If we steal, go to work.

If we are hateful, begin to love.

If we are bitter towards someone, be forgiving.

If we are harsh towards people, choose to be gentle.

If we are cold and indifferent, learn to be compassionate.

The issue for committed Christians relative to these issues is that God has empowered each believer to be victorious in these areas.

One of the most important things that any Christian can do is to fix their mind and their heart on God and the things of God. There are so many distractions, and the distractions have a way of becoming a normal part of our lives and before we know it our hearts and minds are fixed on the distractions. I know that at times that my students often think that I am a kind of spiritual dump truck just unloading a lot of doctrinal information on them. I have to be honest, though, that I am not just passing on information. Information is not the goal in any of this. The goal is transformation, and one of the ways that that is accomplished is by helping to shake us out of our spiritual complacency and lethargy help bring us back to a place where we become more and more aware of God and His plan for our life and His outworking of that plan in our life. I am here to help point each of us toward God, to pull us



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

toward heaven, to pull us toward the Word of God. These on-line classes are a time when we kind of shift gears to help refocus ourselves on God. Our lives are so busy and we become so distracted, and very often it causes us to change our priorities. We have jobs and family and home chores and finances to keep. We have the responsibility of raising children and preparing for the future. We have bills and recreational needs. The kids have soccer practice and football practice and karate and spending the night with their friends. We have meals to prepare, grass to cut, dogs to feed, cars to wash, food to buy, vacations to take. What we have to do is endless and just goes on and on and on, and my task in all of this is to try and shake us away from all of those distractions and to try and help us to refocus on eternal things, on the Word of God, and on God Himself. That is one of the reasons why we as Christians simply do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. [Hebrews 10:25](#) says,

**<sup>25</sup>not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**

At times I am personally stunned at all of the reasons that people give for not regularly attending a God-honoring and Bible honoring church. One of the things that a godly church does is to simply shake us back into spiritual reality as we drift away from it because of all of the distractions that life may bring. The problem for me is that I am the one doing the shaking! I am the one doing the pulling and doing the exhorting. If I do not make the effort as a teacher to help each of us to escape from our spiritual complacency and lethargy and to help us escape from our pre-occupation with trivial and worldly things, then in reality I have not fulfilled God's calling on my life. My job during this class and every other class is to help us focus on God and on His Word. It is not that someone may miss a class. The issue is that they miss the confrontational ministry of the Word of God in their life, and we all need that.

If a believer has sin in their life, and if they truly want to deal with that sin and to put to death the deeds of the body, then they cannot hide that sin. They may be able to hide their sin from other people, but it is still there. [Proverbs 28:13](#) is a very interesting verse,

**<sup>13</sup>He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.**

If an individual has strong areas of sin in their life and they try and cover those sins up, the controlling sin will eventually find a way to become very destructive in that person's life. If at a personal level you are struggling in an area, then find someone you can trust who can help you with that sin. There are great principles found in [Ecclesiastes 4:9-12](#) relative to not trying to do everything by ourselves.

**<sup>9</sup>Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. <sup>10</sup>For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. <sup>11</sup>Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? <sup>12</sup>Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.**



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

[Proverbs 18:24](#) says,

<sup>24</sup>**A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.**

Let me give a small hint as to whether or not a believer has really dealt with sin in their life, or if they have simply swept it under the rug so that they do not have to deal with it. If their conscience remains defiled and gives them no rest on an issue, then they probably have not really dealt with the sin. Feeling guilty about something that we have done that is wrong and sinful is the right and normal consequence of sin that is not dealt with in our lives. That is why the conscience even exists. It is comparable to physical pain. Physical pain is God's way of letting us know that something is wrong somewhere, and guilt is God's way of letting us know that something is spiritually wrong somewhere. Now, just to balance this out, please do not forget that the enemy is more than willing to condemn us at any and every level. He is more than willing to over-magnify a sin in our life. And we must not allow him to do that.

For the most part, everything that a believer needs to combat sin in their life is really very simple. There are two essential elements that God has given to help the Christian be victorious. The first is the **Word of God** and the second is the **person of the indwelling Holy Spirit**. Scripture just lays it out there, and it is up to the believer as to whether or not they are willing to obey what it says. Obedience is the key. For instance, [1 Peter 2:11](#) says,

<sup>11</sup>**Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,**

[1 Corinthians 6:18](#) says,

<sup>18</sup>**Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.**

The point in those two verses is that they are not complicated – “**abstain, flee**”. The word “**abstain**” simply means to keep oneself from something that they know is detrimental to their life. We always abstain from driving on the wrong side of the road. Why? It is because we know that it would be very dangerous to our life. The word “**flee**” means to run away from, to shun, to avoid. Someone may be participating in something that is highly dangerous for their lives, and so they literally need to run from it. For many years I was very allergic to wasp and bee stings, and whenever I would get near some I would literally run from them. I knew that if I got stung that it could really be very health threatening for me. The word “**flee**” is actually the Greek word “*phugeo*” from where the word “fugitive” is derived. There are many other things in Scripture from which believers are told to flee – “**false doctrines, the love of money, fornication, disputes of words, envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, and wranglings**” just to mention a few.

Modern psychology has simply over-analyzed people's problems. The reason is because of their view of sin. It is really what could be called a non-view of sin, or one that is virtually non-existent. So, their only solutions are drugs and therapy and couch sessions and evaluating and psycho-analysis,





## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

when all along the issue is sin that has not been effectively addressed in the individual's life. The effects of sin, both short-term and long-term, can be very damaging, very harmful, and very destructive. Recently I have become very sensitive to how damaging wrong parenting can be to a child's life. Some children never seem to recover – never. I heard of a parent that was struggling with one of their children's behavior and the parent told the child that they had a devil inside of them. I was in shock! My heart just ached for this little kid. All I could think about was that it would have been better for that parent to have a millstone hung around their neck and them thrown into the sea rather than harm one of these little ones. I thought to myself when I heard this story that the parent was the one with the devil inside. We just never know where sin is going to take us and how damaging it can really be – even for a lifetime.

On a positive side, I am utterly amazed at how simple the commands of God are compared to modern psychological solutions. God simply says stop doing this. [Romans 6:12-13](#) puts it this way,

**<sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. <sup>13</sup>And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**

Those are two fairly simple and straightforward commands, and to be quite honest, two commands for which God will hold us responsible – “**do not let sin reign, do not present**”. Talking about simple commands, listen to [James 4:7-10](#),

**<sup>7</sup>Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup>Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.**

If someone is engaged in an activity that is outside of God's boundaries, then they must find a way to eliminate certain things from their life. If a believer furnishes their mind with opportunities for sin, or what God calls making “**provision for the flesh**”, that eventually will cause the individual to succumb to what they have entertained in their mind.

I am not sure that I know how to communicate this next area properly, but in whatever approach that a believer takes towards sin, it is critically important that they make Christ their ultimate focus. [Romans 13:14](#) is a very important verse,

**<sup>14</sup>But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**

“**Put on the Lord Jesus Christ**”. These are really very powerful words. The words “**put on**” are one Greek word “*enduo*” which literally means to enter into, get into, as into clothes. It is in the aorist tense, middle voice, imperative mood. A command in the aorist tense conveys the sense of “Do it now and do it effectively” and very often indicates a sense of urgency. The middle voice is reflexive which means the subject initiates the action and participates in the results or effects of that actions. In this case, the middle voice can be translated “**You yourself put on the Lord Jesus Christ!**” In other



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

words, it is a choice that has to be made, and it is in the imperative mood which makes it a command to be obeyed.

God is not going to force the believer to make the right choices. There is a bit of spiritual fortitude required here, a bit of spiritual stamina and determination that God is asking the believer to display. Sin is a very strong enemy, but the power of the Word of God and the indwelling Holy Spirit within them is much stronger – very much stronger. Believers must embrace those truths. It is part of putting on Christ. Christ thinks a certain way, and it is important that believers think that way as well. However, we can never embrace His thoughts if we do not have fellowship and communion with Him through His Word. When believers are told to “**put on**” Christ, it means that they are to be continually appropriating His sentiments and His manner of living by being in fellowship with Him. To the Hebrew Christians, to be clothed with a person signified to assume the interests of that person. It meant to enter into their views, to imitate them, and to be wholly on their side. In a literal sense, it is the idea of identifying with that person.

It will be helpful to appreciate that all of this requires a good deal of effort. Sin is a formidable enemy to say the least. We can walk away from this class and remain fairly complacent about this issue of dealing with sin in our life, and in some way have this unscriptural expectation that because we are busy and about that we do not have to give much attention to this area. However, in reality a life of godliness and uprightness will not just automatically follow. To the contrary, disappointment will follow. Every believer must be in step with Christ. They must give a kind of ceaseless vigilance and attention to this, because if they do not, the flesh will ultimately prevail. Though the language differs from the teaching in [Romans 6](#), the message is the same. If the believer’s union with Christ is to become practical for them, then it must be accompanied by a constant reckoning of themselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. [Romans 6:11](#) puts it this way,

**<sup>11</sup>Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

When we get up in the morning we put on our clothes, and we intend them to be part of us most all day - to go where we go and do what we do. They cover us and make us presentable to others. That is their purpose. In the same way, believers are to “**put on**” Christ when they get up in the morning. They are to make Him a part of their life that day. They are to intend that He goes with them everywhere they go, and that He can act through them in everything that they do. It is like putting on His team uniform so that when others see them, they know what team they are on.

This is what it means to let Christ live in you and through you. It is constantly being subject to His Lordship over our lives. It is accepting His moral standards for our life. It is living in constant fellowship with Him, and depending upon His strength to be given to us. In reality, this is the Christian life. This is what it means to be a Christian. This is what being a Christian entails. Faith is given for this very purpose, so that believers may claim Christ, that they may put Him on, that they may cleave to Him, and that they may glory in Him.



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

### Part 10

These are all **repeated acts** on the believer's part. Everyday requires it. We read his Word. We exercise our minds and our hearts to believe Christ and to believe His Word. We come to Him, we lean on Him, and we seek His guidance and His strength. We abide in Him, we put Him on, and we use His spiritual weapons. This is exactly what it means to **"put on"** Christ. It means that we clothe our minds with the truth and embrace His Words as our very life. This is putting on Christ and it is a very conscious and deliberate effort on our part.

We need to appreciate that sinful actions and sinful attitudes start with a single thought. They all have a beginning, a starting place, a place where they find an entry point into our lives. A temptation is simply an opportunity to plan to sin, and as harmless as our imaginations may at times seem to be, it actually drives and induces us toward our desires. The believer's imagination and thought life, if not controlled, will encourage them and stimulate them to sin. Sin always begins with a thought – always. There will always be temptations simply because we remain sinners even after we become saints. However, if we are truly a part of God's family, then we must learn more and more to control and subdue the ungodly and unhealthy enticements towards sin. Most likely, every person has some **besetting** sin and some sin that seems to pull them down more than other sins that tempt them. Because of that, believers should urgently and carefully put that besetting sin away. Why? It is because it will beset them, hurt them, overwhelm them, and plague them. [Hebrews 12:1](#) says it this way,

**<sup>1</sup>Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,**

The word "ensnare" is translated as "entangle" (NASB, NIV), "beset" (KJV), "clings to and entangles" (AMP), and "cling" (ESV). I like the idea of clinging – it is a sin that just seems to cling to us and just will not let go. So, every believer should mark those things toward which they have sinful propensities, and then exert themselves as much as possible to mortify and subdue those besetting and entangling sins. Everyone has some. Instead of just providing for the gratification of the flesh, believers should abstain from everything which gives opportunity for that sin to exercise itself against them. It dishonors Christ.

So, to **"put on the Lord Jesus Christ"** means, to take Him as a pattern and guide, to imitate His example, to obey His precepts, and to become like Him. To **"put on the Lord Jesus Christ"** means to become more like Him, to receive by faith all that He is for our daily lives. We grow on the basis of the food we eat. If we eat good food, we can stay healthy, but if we only eat junk food, we become weak and lethargic. This is why God warns believers not to make provisions for the flesh because if they feed the flesh, they will fail miserably. However, if believer's feed their inner man the nourishing things of the Word of God and of the Holy Spirit, they will be spiritually successful. If they really want their life to become pure, then they must focus on Christ. It is putting Him on every day when they get up and making it the goal of their life that whatever they think about, whatever they say, whatever they do, whatever they imagine, that they will not do it if it does not make them more like Christ and if they know that it does not honor Christ. **This kind of spiritual success will not happen**



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

**in a spiritual vacuum.** The believer must fix their mind on Christ and focus their heart on the things of God.

I know that what I am about to say will just seem elementary, but **the more that we focus on Christ, the more we become like Christ.** The simplicity of that truth is profound. In my old age I have finally stopped asking people how much personal time they spend in the Word simply because I am always so disappointed in the answers. It just seems to me that much too often people have priorities that deplete their time with God much more than enhancing it. What we need to appreciate is that the more we worship Christ, the more that we read about Christ, the more that we have personal fellowship with Christ, the more that we praise Christ, the more that we sing about Christ, the more that we look at the cross of Christ, then the more we will become like Christ. We cannot win these spiritual battles that we have been talking about without allowing our hearts and minds to be saturated with the Word of God and without allowing our lives to be saturated with Christ. A while back my wife bought me what I have come to believe to be one of the best gifts that anyone has ever given to me. It was an iPod. I take that iPod with me everywhere. I keep it in my car and listen to messages almost everytime that I drive anywhere. When I walk around the field for exercise, I take my iPod and listen to teaching by some of the world's best Bible teachers. It helps me to redeem the time and to saturate my life with the Word of God when I cannot be reading it. It was a great gift for my life because it helps me to keep my mind and heart on the word of God. For instance, recently I downloaded 118 messages by Wayne Grudem on his Systematic Theology book. It is a Sunday School class that he teaches at his church in Scottsdale, Arizona. They are wonderful studies on everything in the Bible. I listen to free courses from different seminaries. It is such a blessing to my life.

If an individual does not have the spiritual habit of spending time with God, then in essence all they are doing is cheating themselves of the incredible blessings that are found in Christ. Will you allow me to just encourage you to fill your heart and mind with the things of God? It will take some effort and some practice and maybe even some "technology" to help you, but still I encourage you to make the effort. Paul encourages us in Colossians 3:16 with these words,

**<sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**

And then lastly, I encourage you to spend some time in prayer each day. Just find a way to go into your closet and have some private time of prayer. Prayer is a preemptive strike against the flesh. This is one of the primary ways that any believer can draw near to God and bring their mind and heart under His control. Hebrews 4:16 says,

**<sup>16</sup>Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Why are all of these things that we have been discussing so crucial and so important? It is for one simple reason. It is because sin so very powerful, so very subtle, and so very deceptive. If we do not



## HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:12-13

Part 10

---

destroy sin in our life, it will destroy us. There is nothing passive about anything that we have discussed. John MacArthur describes sin as a stalker. That was the first time I had ever read that or heard that, but it seemed so accurate. It stalks its victim and then without warning just jumps up and destroys that person, destroys their life, and destroys their testimony. However, thank goodness, we can **“put on the Lord Jesus Christ”**. We can flee sin, we can abstain from sin, and we can put on the whole armor of God that we may stand, and in so doing Christ will be victorious through our lives for His glory.