

# The Battle With Sin: Intro (Part 1)

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A Series on the Battle with Sin. A couple weeks ago I talked to you folks about the difference between being a slave of sin, and struggling with sin, and the fact that's life and death difference. If you are a slave of sin; It's death. But the true christian sometimes might feel that way, but it's not slavery. Because the Scripture says that sin is not going to have dominion over us. and I know that we've had a lot of new converts in the church over the last several years, and I know what's been happening in a lot of your lives. A number of you are getting to the place where the fight with sin is becoming an all out battle. And so I want to deal with that. I want to take the next weeks, and months, and I want to go through the major sins that christians struggle with.

And I want to talk about that warfare. I want to talk about how to win. How to keep going in the race in the midst of all of them. And obviously you guys can think of some of the big ones. Pride, unbelief, lust, dishonesty, idolatry. You can just keep going. Envy, jealousy, covetousness, greediness, worldliness. I mean these are the things, struggling with bitterness, struggling with anger. There is... There is any number of sins, that if you have been a Christian very long, you know that you have to deal with.

Now brethren, here's what... Basically, here's what I've seen happen, and maybe some of you can kind of follow this with me. Brethren, when I was first saved. I was saved up in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and I started going to a church there, and suddenly, I've got people in my Sunday School class who were sleeping with each other. I've got... There's guys in there that were drunks, and I'm thinking. What's going on? This is what lost life was like, and now I'm seeing this in the church. What's going on?

Well of course, I was saved reading John MacArthur's book on The Gospel According to Jesus. And so I was exposed right from the beginning, to the fact that there were people out there that believed you could live hellish lives. And be a true Christian, and go on your way to heaven. And I'll guarantee you, you will find the false profits lining up to tell people that today. And I was in a church where that was the case. And I thought, somethings wrong here. This doesn't square with scripture. Scripture says, "Be not deceived." People like this don't inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

And yet, there were pastors in that very church, that were saying, "Well you can't say that. You can't go there. Judge not, less you be judged." And you know, you got all this garbage. Brethren, my son and daughters play soccer typically for Alamo... What is it? Alamo Fellowship? Alamo City. And typically at halftime, they'll have different speakers get up. Well this year, towards the end of the season. They had a guy get up, and a lot of you would know his name if I said it. And he spoke, and the truth is He didn't mention sin. He didn't mention the cross. There was no cross in his message. No sin, no hell, no judgement. There was none of it. It was basically a self esteem message, and he talked about how you know if you get on God's good side. Basically God will take you out of the back row. And went on to brag about how he's been to all these different 14, 13 countries or whatever. And uh, it wasn't Gospel. And when he got done. It was the typical, "Anybody want to dedicate their life to Christ?"

Well, the guy that headed up the whole sports thing, he kind of drifted over to me after it was over, and he was all excited. And I just listened to him, and he said, "Did you see, there was a guy way out there in one of the fields. And did you see when he gave the invitation," he said, "I saw that guy out there, he raised his hand!" And I thought. "So what, he raised his hand."

And you know what's happened? Many of us, Many of us have realized. I know a lot of you young people. It's been amazing to me in the last 3, 4 years. How many people have come to the church. And they've been listening online to Washer, and they've been listening to Piper. They've been listening to this stuff. They've been listening to what true salvation looks like, and what the true gospel looks like. And of course, Paul Washer has really been hammering this reality of regeneration. And so, as a response to all this deadness, and all this garbage, and all the present day Joel Osteen type stuff. We've got a lot of... You know James is putting this stuff up on "I'll be Honest." Just Boom! It's this explosive in your face. Regeneration is this real, life changing, life transforming thing. And undoubtedly it is! And we go to the Scriptures, and we get hit by this again, that we must be born again, and we realize that's defective in so much of the message today. It's just: Believe. I remember that, there in that church in Michigan. The pastor in that big church would just stand up on Sundays, and he'd say: "Just believe, just believe."

Brethren, Jesus came along there in the Sermon on the Mount. when he started his ministry, and he didn't say just believe. He said, "It's not everybody that says to me, 'Lord, Lord.' It's those that do the will of my Father." And he wasn't saying you get to heaven by works. He was saying that true faith is not just knowing a bunch of head knowledge facts about Jesus Christ. The demons know that, but they're not saved. It's not just historical fact about Christ.

Bottom line, what the gospel shows us is true faith is that which sees Christ to be more precious than anything else, and is willing to sell all to have Him. It's coming to the rich young ruler, and NOT saying to him: Do you believe I'm a real person? Saying are you ready to follow me, and go sell the most valuable things in your life to have me? He said "No," and he walked away. That's the test of faith. And see we get hit by this: regeneration, a new heart, seeing Christ as precious. A new creation in Christ. Old things passed away. All things becoming new, we see that. We go into Romans; one of the most glorious demonstrations of the gospel, in all of the New Testament. And you have in the midst of it sin will not - I mean look, basically where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. No matter how much this, God gave the Law. And people just became more wicked, more wicked. All it did was arouse more, and more sin. But Paul says even when that Law came, and it just stirred up sinful passions, that grace much more abounded.

And somebody's going to say, "You talk that way, you'll just have people sinning all day long." He says, Oh no way. He says, "What do we say then. Do we sin, so that Grace might abound?" He says, "No." You walk in newness of life. You've been born again. Sin will not have dominion over you. You will fulfill the law, you who walk in the Spirit. Well brethren, we hear that. We hear texts like that, and we believe them. But brethren what happens is; We start thinking. Just listen to some of these. We come across these. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Well that describes those who make up the Kingdom. They hunger and thirst for righteousness. Say yeah, if I'm a true Christian. I'm going to go around all the time, and I'm

going to be hungry, and I'm going to be thirsty. Going to be panting for righteousness. I'm going to be really hungry for Christ. And I'm just going to be driven like that all the time.

We read a text like that, it makes us think that. Ezekiel 36. You know the very characteristic of the New Covenant. God says this, "I'm going to put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and be careful to obey my rules." Okay, here we have a picture of God that is going to make us careful to keep His commandments. He's going to give his Spirit to us, so we read that. We read hungering, thirsting, we have the Spirit, we're going to walk in His statutes. We're going to be careful to obey his rules. 1st John 5:3 It says, His commandments are not burdensome, or grievous. So not only is He going to right them on our hearts, and cause us to do them. But it's not going to be grievous. It's not going to be a hard thing. And then we hear Jesus say, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Wow! Easy. Light. That all sounds wonderful. Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus, have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. So, all my wicked corrupt desires are crucified. That's wonderful. Galatians 1:3, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age." So Christ gave himself, to deliver me from this present evil age. He says, 1st John 5:4, "Everyone born of God overcomes the world, this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith." So, we read and we see. Easy, and light, and hunger, and thirst, and crucified passions. And not burdensome, and God causing me to do it. And victory, and faith, and overcoming, and sin shall have no dominion. And you see, we were responding over here. Because of all this shallow gospel, and saying, "No! Regeneration looks like a new creation."

And if it's not that, you don't want to put your hope in whatever kind of profession you have. If it doesn't lead to something that resembles a new creation in Christ, and all these things we talked about. But you see brethren, what happens then, is we get these verses planted in our minds. We get this picture planted in our minds. And the new Christian comes in. Do you remember how Don Johnson described it? Some of us were out there, and heard him preach at Community Baptist. He said, when he got saved, it was just flowery beds of ease. Remember him saying that? He said, he "was just so overflowed, with the joy of the Spirit." He said, "It was just wonderful." In fact I think he even said, "He could just remember laying out on the ground, and looking up at the clouds, and just thinking this is wonderful. Life in Christ is wonderful!" And as he's telling the story, He says; "And it is! It is wonderful." But he said, "I just thought the Christian life was just going to be these repetitive baptisms of the Holy Spirit, and just joy unspeakable, and full of glory." And he said, "Then it happened one day." That day came when he was sitting in Church, and he said, "Suddenly, the most hellish thoughts came into his mind, and he was under an attack." And he said, "He had the most blasphemous, wicked thoughts of Christ." He said, "He suddenly was asking himself: Am I even saved?"

And brethren I think, I think we have a real danger - right there. Because what's happening to some of you. Is suddenly, all hell is breaking out against you, and you're shaken, "What's going on here?" I thought, "His yoke is easy, His burden is light." Well, it is. But brethren you have to remember, we enter in at a narrow gate. And the way is hard, and it is through much tribulation. That does not mean that his yoke isn't easy, and light. I mean; What He gives us to do, He gives us desires that long for it. We do hunger and thirst. But that doesn't make the way easy. Him being with us, is definitely a help, and he definitely brings joy to the soul. But

brethren I tell you, what's been happening, and I've been seeing it. Is some of you are getting to the place Don Johnson got to, and all the sudden all Hell is breaking out against you, and you're staggered. You begin to wonder. "Well am I even saved?" Many of you have been birthed into the Kingdom at such a time. When there is this radical emphasis, on the nature of regeneration. And you're being hit with it so powerfully. That then when all hell breaks out against you. You feel like; it's not easy, and it's not light. You feel like you're not overcoming. You feel like there's not victory. And you feel like, sin is having a degree of dominion over you. And you feel like all your passions aren't crucified, and it's staggering you. And what's happening, is I think sometimes, folks are thinking. "Well maybe I'm not saved."

And sometimes other people are looking at it. Other young people. And they're coming to the conclusion, maybe they're not saved. At just such a time, when somebody ought to be coming alongside you, and aiding you, equipping you, encouraging you, and pointing you in the right direction. We've got some folks coming along saying, "Well the issue is; You're not saved." And that's not helping. That's only compounding the problem. And so brethren, there's got to be this balance.

What I want to do in these months ahead of us is I want to look at these sins. Cause brethren, I remember it. I remember it. I remember coming to Christ. And I didn't have a good church, and I didn't have good pastors, and I was just kind of out there on my own. I was saved through John MacArthur's ministry, and I was basically being taught by it. And I was not in a good church, and MacArthur was a long way away from Michigan. And basically, the men I was going to in the church were not leading me in the truth. Brethren, I remember. I remember as a nominal Catholic, I never doubted the existence of God. Once the Lord saved me, I had such hellish attacks of atheistic thoughts. Just storming my mind. "God doesn't exist, God doesn't exist." I would go out in the fields at night, and I would just pray, and sometimes I would wonder; "Lord, why am I even praying to You if you don't exist?" It's like God had me already, and He was pouring faith into me that was stronger than all the devil - listen, when Christ binds the strongman, and takes you from Him, I guarantee - you remember Pilgrim's Progress? He ran into Appolyon down in the Valley of Humility. And he says if I recall right you're one of my servants, and I've come here in hopes of bringing you back.

And I'll tell you what. The devil will try to get you back, and I had hellish attacks of unbelief. And then, before that. Just thoughts stormed me, that I had committed the unpardonable sin. John Bunyan went through that too, the Puritan. I can remember having my head against the wall, just trying not to think the thought. "No, I'm not gonna think it! I'm not gonna think it!" You try to just create a vacuum in your mind, and I thought it, and it's done. I've committed it. I mean I went through these things brethren, one after another.

Brethren, just within the last four months, I've had such attacks. And it was right at the time when we sent the Flaspoebler's down to Peru. And James was just getting ready to release the Spanish version of "I'll Be Honest." And we were just getting ready to start this eastside ministry. John Sytsma experienced it too. Brethren it was a darkness, that I didn't know rather or not I was going to be able to make it, one moment to the next. It was just it felt like utter hopelessness and darkness. I tell you what.

Brethren, we're in a battle that's for real, and we're not going to walk through a flowery bed of ease. Now Christ said He'll be with us, and I guarantee, and I grant you in the midst of all

of it, there will be joy. There will be glorious manifestations of Christ. Brethren, I wouldn't trade this life for what I had before, for anything; not for anything. I want Christ more than anything; and having Him, though we have to walk through the crucible is better. Brethren, there is a battle to be fought.

Now I want you to look at this verse. 1st Peter 2:11. Before we read it. Peter says right in this same letter, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial, when it comes upon you, to test you. As though something strange were happening to you." Don't be surprised! Don Johnson was surprised. I was surprised. A lot of us are surprised, because we're young. And because it hasn't happened before, and even though somebody can tell us not to be surprised. We still are. It's kind of like the newlyweds right? You know, they're in their honeymoon, and you're trying to tell them, "Look guys, the day is going to come when you're going to have problems." Well, they don't really hear you, right? And when they come they're surprised. You say, "Why are you surprised? I told you they were coming."

Well, that's the same way when we first have the honeymoon period with Christ. And it's not that the fallout is with Him, it's that things get tough. But listen to this, 1st Peter 2:11, "Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Here these words, "Abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul."

Listen, what this means is that there are forces that are set... What does that mean? They wage war against your soul. Brethren, when you wage war against somebody, the enemy is seeking to destroy you. There are forces that are hell bent against your soul. There are anti-soul forces, that are pointed with their crosshairs right on you. You are to abstain, you are to fight, and you are to wage war. Because if you don't, and they take you down. It will cost you your soul. Here's a man walking with the Apostle Paul, by the name of Demas. And they came, these passions, and they pulled him. And they pulled him, and he gave place, and he didn't fight. He was there with Paul during his ministry, you can follow him, he's there, and then he's there. And then Paul has to say, "Demas is gone, he's gone back to the world." Being in love with this present world, it pulled him away. Brethren, it's happening in the midst of us. There are some young people that at one time were there with the rest of us, in our church. And these passions are pulling them, and some are falling. And it's going to cost them their soul, if they don't repent and come back. Brethren, I knew the day was coming, and the battle is going to be real. And it's going to intensify.

And you know what? I know it, it's just like a battle. You go out on the battlefield. I've been thinking about battle, what it's like. You know you go into the Marines. It's glorious, you get your uniform. You march around, you get all fit. And I can imagine that first time, the Marine went out into the jungles of Vietnam. And the first time they were hit with enemy fire. Suddenly it's real. Suddenly it's like, "What in the world is happening? This is not what I expected. People are being blown to bits around me. There are dead people on the battlefield." This is for real. This is for your soul. This is a battle for your souls, and you fight and overcome, or you are going to be a casualty on that field. And you are going to lose your soul. This is life, and this is death. This is not a time to play brethren. The passions of the soul are going to take some of you down, and some of you are going to fight through by faith in Jesus Christ, in the power of the Spirit, and you are going to make it. But it's not going to be easy. "Those who overcome,"

Christ says. "He'll give a place." You'll have a place there. You overcome, you'll sit on His throne with Him. You overcome, you'll be a pillar in the temple of His Father. But some of you, some are already fallen out brethren, and we've got to fight. You gotta fight with everything in you. Folks, there are forces that seek your destruction, and they are passions. We read them here. There passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

And brethren, people forfeit their souls, over sex, over a man, over a women, over money, over... inability to forgive somebody. They're going to be bitter, they're going to hate somebody. Over jealousy. Over a desire to be popular. A desire to have what you want, and have your way. And people lose their souls. Brethren this is a fight to the death. Jesus Christ says, "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and he forfeits his soul." You see how utterly foolish it is when somebody walks away from Christ for sin. And Peter says later, It would have been better that they had never known, than to know the truth, and to be like a dog going back to its vomit, back to its sin. And I know brethren, as we fight. There have been times, when I have literally in the last four to five months. I haven't known how I'm going to make it the next minute. The battle has been so strong in my own soul. But I have been determined in the midst of it. Whatever hell may come against me, whatever passions may rage. I want Christ, and I'm not giving up. Even though the rest of my life may be like this, and even though I may have to fight. The sun came back out, but sometimes in the middle of those things. It doesn't seem like it's ever going to shine again.

Brethren, we live in the midst of a world. I'll tell you what. All you got to do is watch the commercials on TV. Those commercials are bent on making you forfeit your soul. Look what they parade. Sex, pride, worldliness. Brethren, modern advertising keys on the passions of the flesh. That's what drives it. Can you imagine; Can you imagine brethren? If we could take every person in the face. If we could take all two and a half million people in San Antonio right now. And we could take them before the throne of God right now. To see something of His glory like Isaiah saw, when he fell on his face. And then we could take them to hell, and we could show them the damned there. And then we could bring them back to this text. And say, "There is a battle for your soul." Do you realize how things would change tomorrow? Everything in the Newspaper would be about this. Everything in the news would be about this. All the professors on the college campuses would be talking about this. Everything would be about this. And yet, you and I can walk around this city now, and there isn't a billboard that's about this. It's not on the radio stations. You might find a Christian one here and there, and even there it's mostly garbage. You go to the college campuses. Brethren, one of the most phenomenal realities that you and I are faced with, is a battle for our souls. And it's like; It's like the world is clueless. And we've got people that professed to be Christians, and they're dropping the ball. They're saying I want my sin more than Christ.