

"How to Walk in Victory"

A Bible Study for Christian Twelve Step Recovery

As God's redeemed people working the steps of our 12-Step Recovery Program, we need to understand what God's word says about sin in our lives. Do we have a "sin nature" that we will NEVER be rid of until we get to heaven? Is there NO hope that the battle against sin will let up - will it EVER get easier? Let's look at what God's word has to say, because **until we REALLY KNOW who we are in Christ Jesus, and KNOW that our "old sin nature" was CRUCIFIED with Him, and is DEAD**, we will only have an up-and-down, roller coaster Christian life. We will have some periods of success and victory, but we'll have just as many periods of failure and slipping back into carnality and sin. Even worse, some Christians get so discouraged, that they just give up and fall back into sin altogether. That's not what the Lord wants for us and promises us in His word! The Lord has something for us that is SO MUCH BETTER than "just getting by" in our spiritual walk, and that is VICTORY!! Romans 8:37 says, "Yet in all these things we are MORE than conquerors through Him who loved us." So how do we experience that victory, where do we begin? We begin with a death - the death of our old sin nature.

•**Romans 6:1-5** "What shall we say then? Shall we CONTINUE in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who **DIED to sin** live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into His death**? Therefore we were **BURIED with Him** through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in NEWNESS of LIFE. For if we have been **united together in the likeness of His DEATH**, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His RESURRECTION."

What does it mean to be "BAPTIZED into Christ Jesus" and to be "BAPTIZED into His DEATH"? The word "baptized" in the Greek means immersed, placed INTO, IDENTIFIED WITH. **We are PLACED INTO CHRIST** by the Holy Spirit the moment we believe (Eph. 1:13, I Cor. 12:13, John 14:16-20) and **IDENTIFIED with Him in His death**. Because **we are IN CHRIST**, and **CHRIST ALREADY DIED to sin FOR US**, then **WE HAVE DIED to sin**. It is NOT a process, it is a ONE-TIME ACT that happened almost 2,000 years ago!

•**Romans 6:6-7** "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. For **he who has DIED** has been freed from sin."

What exactly is the "old man" that was crucified with Christ? The old man is your human nature, warped by sin. It is the person you were BEFORE you were BORN AGAIN - your old sin-loving SELF, who felt comfortable and at home with sin. Colossians 2:11-12 says God surgically removed the old, dead sin nature from your spirit when He raised you up to new life in Christ. But then Rom. 6:6 says **"that the BODY of sin might be DONE AWAY WITH."** The literal meaning of "done away with" here is **"RENDERED INOPERATIVE"** (not functioning). God has provided a way for us to be FREE from the POWER of sin, to actually have it "NOT functioning" in our lives, when we come to understand that **the power source for sin** (the old nature) has been cut off. The POWER of the sin nature over us has been broken, but we STILL have to **ENFORCE the CRUCIFIXION of Christ on our BODY of flesh**, our mind and our emotions by being OBEDIENT to God and saying "NO" to old sinful desires. We enforce it one DEED at a time.

•**Romans 8:13** "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."

•**I Corinthians 9:27** "But I **DISCIPLINE my BODY** and **bring it into submission**, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (lose my testimony)."

•**Galatians 5:24** "And those who are Christ's **have CRUCIFIED the FLESH** (body) with its PASSIONS and DESIRES."

•**Matthew 16:24-25** "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, **let him DENY himself**, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

What does all this mean, "DENY himself" and "lose his life for My sake" and "put to death the DEEDS of the BODY"? These all mean the same thing: to get rid of, GIVE UP, DENY (say "No" to) the desires of your old sin nature; to DISREGARD the INTERESTS of the old man (**why should you pay attention to his interests? he's dead anyway!**). By doing this you fulfill God's will in your life - you give up the "lower" life in order to live the "higher life" with Christ (Phil. 3:12-14). Praise God! **We have a CHOICE!** We can PUT to DEATH, or **KILL those IMPULSES** and temptations coming from our FLESH (the "deeds of the BODY"), and Romans 8:13 says **we do it "by the SPIRIT** - by the POWER of the HOLY SPIRIT in our lives (Eph. 3:20). The alternative, **the other choice**, is to GIVE IN to the temptations, **ACT OUT on the impulses**, and suffer the consequences. For a true, born again **Christian who CONTINUES to LIVE in sin** and according to the desires of his FLESH, an EARLY physical DEATH may be the consequence. God may CUT SHORT the life here on earth of one of His children who continues in DISOBEDIENCE, but they will still go to HEAVEN (I John 5:16, I Corinthians 3:15, I Cor. 5:1-5).

We've learned that our old sin nature is DEAD, but if that is so, where do temptations and desires to sin come from in the life of the Christian?

•**James 1:13-16** "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted **when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed (tricked)**. Then, when DESIRE has conceived, it gives birth to SIN, and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth DEATH. **Do not be DECEIVED** my beloved brethren."

Satan is the "Tempter" (Matt. 4:3, I Thess. 3:5), and he will try to DECEIVE you and trick you into thinking those are really YOUR desires. He knows that **what you BELIEVE about who you are determines your behavior**, and he DOESN'T want you to know that your old sin nature is dead. He wants you to still think that is the real YOU - that you're still just a rotten old sinner, because then you will think it is NATURAL to still sin! But it is NOT "natural" anymore for you to sin - you have a NEW NATURE! You are **a new creation in Christ in your SPIRIT**, the POWER of sin has been broken over you, but your FLESH (human body) is still unregenerated (un-born again) - it has not yet been changed (see I Cor. 15:50-54). SIN still resides in your fleshly BODY, in the form of uncontrolled bodily appetites. Your BRAIN is part of your body, and it is still filled with **sinful thought patterns**, until you renew it with the word of God. Your emotions are weak, because they are affected by bodily functions: how much sleep you've had, hormones, stress, etc. Body, mind and emotions, with all the **habits and behavior patterns you trained them to do**, are referred to as "the FLESH" (Romans 7:18 & 23). Some Bible versions use the word "CARNAL" which simply means "of the flesh, or PHYSICAL BODY" - used most often to refer to a Christian who is NOT controlled by the Holy Spirit, but is CONTROLLED by his or her emotions and physical APPETITES and DRIVES - the five physical senses.

James 1:14 says "one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires." You might say, "How are they 'my own' desires, then, if my old sin nature is dead, and I am a new person in Christ?" They are **"your own"** in the sense that **YOU EXPOSED your flesh** (your physical body, or mental-emotional makeup) to something, whether it was alcohol, nicotine, drugs, certain sexual behaviors, pornography, **negative destructive thoughts**, over-eating, or other "compulsive" behaviors, until a HABIT was developed, and after enough times of exposure, **your FLESH was TRAINED to DESIRE or want those things**. The OPPOSITE is also true: TRAIN your flesh to do the right things, the things of God, and eventually the sinful desires which kept you in BONDAGE will subside and no longer be able to affect you. Satan, or the old "tapes running in your mind" or your uncontrolled emotions will keep bringing up "old desires" **AS IF you were still subject to them**, telling you that you are NOT free, but still in bondage to old habits, and that you CAN'T HELP YOURSELF, you **can't stop** committing that particular sin, etc. **You have a CHOICE of WHO you will believe - GOD or SATAN!!** In dealing with the "flesh" there is a

three-fold way to resist temptation: **(1) BODY** - Discipline your body, keep it in submission to your will - tell IT what to do (I Cor. 9:27), **(2) MIND** - renew your mind with the word of God, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (Romans 12:2, II Cor. 10:3-5), and **(3) EMOTIONS** - refuse to live by your feelings - your feelings and emotions are highly unreliable (Jeremiah 17:9, I Cor. 3:1-3). Then, you must do what Romans 6:12-13 says "Therefore **do not LET sin reign** in your mortal body, that you should **OBEY IT** in its lusts. 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." "Reign" means to have authority or **CONTROL OVER**. You have a CHOICE of whom to obey, and the flesh or "mortal body" is referred to as an "IT" — it is not the "REAL YOU." The REAL YOU is your SPIRIT within you which was born again and is a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Why do so many Christians behave like the old man and ACT like the old self is still alive? It's because they have not been taught or they do not BELIEVE what God's word says about the old self being crucified and DEAD. They ALLOW Satan to deceive them and accuse them, because **they have believed their FEELINGS** or past performance record rather than God. In reality, that "old man" has already been crucified and is dead, but they keep hauling it around, as if it were still alive and a part of them. When Satan attacks you and shoots his fiery darts at you, all he can really do is flap around and make "shadow puppets" on the wall, and DECEIVE you into thinking you ARE that "old man" or OLD SELF, and still under his control. Picture yourself **throwing off** that old dead body you've been lugging around. Or another way to picture this TRUTH, is to think of yourself like Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. You received NEW LIFE when you were born again by faith in Jesus Christ, and Jesus brought you out of the tomb, but **you still have the stinky, old graveclothes of your OLD LIFE** wrapped around you, tripping you up. Ephesians 4:22 says "**concerning your former CONDUCT**" put off the old man. In other words, PUT OFF the CLOTHING of the old man, the deeds and behavior patterns of that old self that is now dead - old habits, character defects and shortcomings, and whatever else is still clinging to you from your old sin nature. Take off the graveclothes!

- John 11:44** "And he who had died came out **BOUND hand and foot with graveclothes** (like a mummy), and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, '**Loose him, and let him go.**'"
- Ephesians 4:22** "That you PUT OFF, concerning your former conduct, the OLD MAN, which is **CORRUPT** according to its deceitful desires and lusts."

Then are we to believe that the physical body is evil and sinful? No, because Jesus came in a human body, in the likeness of sinful flesh, but without sin - without the sin nature (Rom. 8:3, Heb. 2:14-18, John 1:14, Heb. 4:15). What we must do is **YIELD the members of our bodies to God as instruments for His USE, and PRESENT our BODIES** as a LIVING SACRIFICE (Rom. 6:13-19, Rom. 12:1-2). You must be willing to place on the ALTAR those things that do NOT please God, and completely, totally SURRENDER your BODY to God, for His use, and live your life to glorify Him, by the power of the Holy Spirit (whose temple your body now is). Give up trying to live for God in your own power, and give up your free will to Him. Rom. 6:4 says that "we should walk in NEWNESS of LIFE" and Gal. 2:20 tells us that our "new life" is actually Christ living His life in us! Colossians 1:27 calls it "Christ in you the hope of glory." Until you KNOW that the old self is dead, you will not be able to truly allow **Christ to express His life** in and through you. As long as you believe you are just a saved sinner, you will keep your focus on sin, not on Christ.

- Romans 12:1-2** "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you **present your bodies** as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

- Galatians 2:20** "I have been **CRUCIFIED** with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but **CHRIST lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh (in my human body) I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."
- Read Colossians 3:1-10** "If then you were **RAISED** with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set (focus) your **MIND** on things above, not on things on the earth. **For you DIED**, and your life is **HIDDEN** with Christ in God."
- I Corinthians 6:19-20** "Or do you not know that **your BODY is the TEMPLE of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore **glorify God in your BODY** and in your spirit, which are God's."

IN SUMMARY: we no longer have a NATURE that wants to sin - we have a "new NATURE" created by God in the image of Christ. That new nature (our spirit) wants to obey God, but it is still living in the BODY of flesh, and **our mind and emotions are still "in tune"** with all the old ways and desires of the flesh. The NEW YOU, born again and created in the image of God cannot sin (I John 3:9). It is your **SPIRIT** that is born of God, but your **MIND** still needs to be **RENEWED** and your **BODY** needs to be brought into **SUBMISSION** to God and under the control of the NEW YOU and the Holy Spirit. If you are still falling into sinful behaviors after you are born again, it is because **YOU are ALLOWING** your **UNRENEWED MIND**, emotions and **BODY** to be in **CONTROL**, rather than your **BORN-AGAIN SPIRIT**, the **NEW CREATION** in Christ Jesus.

- Ephesians 2:3** "Among whom also we all **ONCE** conducted ourselves in the lusts of the **FLESH**, fulfilling the **desires of the flesh and of the mind**; and were (**used to be**) **BY NATURE** the children of wrath, just as others."
- Galatians 5:16-17** "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall **NOT** fulfill the desires of the flesh. For **the flesh sets its desire against the spirit**, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary (in opposition) to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." •**Colossians 3:10** "And have **put on the NEW MAN** who is renewed in knowledge **according to the IMAGE of Him** who created him."
- Ephesians 4:23-24** "And be **RENEWED** in the spirit of your **MIND**; and that **YOU put on the NEW MAN**, which was **CREATED according to God**, in righteousness and true holiness."
- II Corinthians 5:17** "Therefore, if anyone is **IN CHRIST**, he is a **new creation**; old things have passed away (died); behold, all things have become new."