

Audio file

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Transcript

00:00:00

Now we're turning again this morning in our Scriptures.

00:00:03

Please turn with me to James, Chapter 1, to James, Chapter 1, these two verses, verses 14 and 15.

00:00:15

Let us hear the word of God.

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Let every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.

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Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.

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and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

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Now, this morning, we're turning to this text again, and in many ways, it's a heavy message to share with you, but I hope and pray that it will help some who may be struggling in this very area that we're going to look at this morning.

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We are going through a very short series

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And I do smile at that.

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I thought it would be only two sermons, but I hope it's helping the battles that we all face.

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So this is very realistic.

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This is very practical Christianity.

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This is experimental Christianity.

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Not experiencing Christianity, but experimental.

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Or the old writers would speak about experiential Christianity.

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And that's something that we need to realize about being Christians.

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It's not our experience of God, but it's God's working through us to will and to do for His good pleasure, as the apostle tells us.

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And in that working through us, we will face battles.

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The realistic view of Christianity is of a soldier

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who is in a war zone.

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Not a holiday maker on a sunlit beach.

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Some people have this idea that as Christians, once we become Christians, we may as well just sit back in the armchair, fold our arms, put our feet up, and relax.

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The problem with that is we face a mortal enemy called Satan.

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We've introduced him earlier in our series.

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And you may not realize this, but once you become a Christian, you become a marked man or woman.

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You have a target on your back.

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And Satan's aim is not to destroy your faith, because he cannot, but to rob you of the joy of your salvation.

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That is why Peter speaks about

00:03:17

Satan being a roaring lion, going about or prowling, seeking whom he may devour.

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We are so vulnerable, and in many ways so defenseless, against such a powerful enemy.

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and the battle is lifelong.

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Now there are times when the battle loses its intensity, but it won't disappear.

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The modern Christian idea in lots of teaching is that Satan is either so powerful that we're powerless,

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or Satan is irrelevant, so therefore, we don't need to fear him.

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It's always good to have a balanced approach.

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Our forebears realized how much their congregations were struggling with this issue.

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And what I've done this morning is really just taken a little phrase from this text, and we'll be looking at many other texts of Scripture this morning, because I've given this message the title, Resisting and Fighting.

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Resisting and Fighting.

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Now last week, we looked very briefly at the dangers of sin.

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The dangers of sin.

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And then we looked a bit more in detail at the examples in temptation.

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And we looked at two, Joseph, who resisted temptation to sin, and David, who surrendered to the temptation to sin.

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The gospel is not salvation from pain and suffering.

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The gospel is salvation from the power and eternal consequences of sin.

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Both Joseph and David knew God.

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They were truly believers.

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They didn't have the same access to truths as we do.

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But they were both believers.

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One resisted, the other succumbed.

00:06:02

And one writer puts it like this: We must be killing sin

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or it will be killing you.

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Another puts it like this, Be ashamed of nothing, dear believer, but sin.

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Another man puts it like this, Either sin will keep us and damn us, or we must be free from it through Christ Jesus.

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In this text, James uses some very interesting imagery.

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In verse 15, notice with me, When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death, James 1, verse 15.

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The Christian life is not meant to be lived in a passive avoidance of sin.

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It is intended to be an abundant life of loving submission,

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to God of fighting sin and pursuing righteousness.

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In this text, James uses some very interesting imagery.

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He uses picture language.

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He's most like our Lord Jesus Christ in this matter.

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He used the picture of the life, we call it the cycle of life.

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We are familiar with this language, conception, bringeth forth, you could put in there, birth, finished, mature, and then the end.

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The word here for lust is also used in verse 14.

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and it speaks of the language of desire.

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Now, there are good desires, a desire to love the Lord, to honor the Lord, to serve the Lord, to read His Word, to make His name known.

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They're all good desires, but there are also bad desires, loss, passions, even

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The desire to have a wife is a good desire, or a husband.

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If you're a man, to have a wife.

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If you're a woman, to have a husband.

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But we couldn't go any further than that.

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It then becomes tainted.

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But here James uses this language, and he wants us to think really of the birth it has conceived, sorry, the conception.

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We know in human life cycle that that begins in the mother's womb.

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And so it is with sin.

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It's conceived.

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The lust is conceived.

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It's got action now.

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It's got life.

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It's got energy.

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And the old writers would say that that's when we need to deal with it.

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Because the next stage is to come forth to birth.

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It's not only conceived, it's now grown, it's now become ready to come out, to be produced, or whatever that, whatever way you want to see that, and then it matures.

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It matures.

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It becomes fully grown.

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It becomes powerful.

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And then the last thing is it bringeth forth death.

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Now, we've seen this last week, and I'm not going to dwell on this, but I just want you to notice that the death here is either for a person who's not a Christian,

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If sin has taken over our lives and we die in our sin, the Lord Jesus Christ says, They will perish.

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He will perish in your sin.

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But the hope and the joy of the gospel is that those who know that Jesus Christ has paid for their sins on the cross of Calvary, and they're trusting in that alone as their grounds for salvation,

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then though sin may bring forth pain and guilt and even coldness towards God, it cannot ultimately sever us from God.

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So perhaps somebody's asking the question, How can I resist sin?

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Instead of surrendering to my sin,

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I want to resist it.

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This is something that I had to wrestle with myself.

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I don't often talk about myself, but this is something I really wrestled with as a young Christian.

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I still do, by the way.

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But I had no information.

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I had no instruction.

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I didn't grow up in a home where the Bible was read and deep truths of the Bible were taught.

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I was religious.

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But I had no concept of the seriousness of sin and of the, how would I put this, the entrenched nature of it.

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So what I did was I started to read the Bible and I started to note places where the apostles, particularly John and Paul and also James,

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Bible writer began to explain these things.

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So I'm just going to share a few things this morning.

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But the first thing I want you to notice is this.

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The true believer, the true believer, one of the identifying marks of a true Christian is we want to resist sin.

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We want to.

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It doesn't mean we always do, but we want to.

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And I begin with this because I want us to be encouraged.

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If you're constantly facing a battle between the flesh and the Spirit, that's a very good sign of a true Christian.

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Isn't it wonderful?

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We want to resist sin.

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Isn't it marvelous that we want to walk with God

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And we want to live lives pleasing to Him.

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I know I could say we want to live holy lives, but of course that nowadays is misunderstood.

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To be holy unto God is actually to live a life that is separate and pleasing unto God.

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It's nothing got to do with religious ceremonies.

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It's certainly nothing got to do with any kind of ceremonies performed by fake churches.

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But we want to resist sin.

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We want to, we are in this battle.

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It's intense, as I said, at times, but we want to resist it.

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That's marvelous.

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That's wonderful.

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We face loss of passion.

00:14:01

Some of us are given to that.

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Others have a lust for immorality.

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Others have a lust for covetousness.

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Others have a lust for pleasure.

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And whatever battle we're facing, by the way, not everybody faces the same battles, but we want to resist this.

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One old writer put it like this, Temptation in general is a state, way or condition, upon any account, whatever is force to seduce, to draw the mind, the heart of a man or a woman from its obedience to God.

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We saw a few weeks ago that sin is the want of conformity unto our transgression of the law of God, the Westminster Confession of Shorter Catechism, question 14.

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But we have also this concept in the Bible that we enter into temptation.

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When any temptation comes to us and talks with us,

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and begins to reason with our mind and inform or perhaps even persuade our heart and entices and allures us, we then give in and we enter into temptation.

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And isn't it marvelous that we want to even resist that?

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The fact that we are tempted ought to humble us, but it also should encourage us.

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Friends, when we are tempted, this shows us how weak we are.

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But it also encourages us to go to God for strength.

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One of the famous old writers puts it like this, Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.

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You see, to kill sin is to clear the woods of sin in our heart.

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It's a critical part of the whole process of sanctification.

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The more we experience, the more assurance we have that our desires are Godward, and therefore that we are the children of God.

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These temptations can be dreadfully painful to the child of God.

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He cannot bear with the poisoned breath of sin when he finds that sin is knocking at his door, shouting under his window, pestering him day and night, as has occurred with some, I hope not with many.

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That's what sin is like.

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It's intense.

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The greatest temptation John Bunyan faced, you might be surprised at this, was this.

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He says it himself, The greatest temptation that ever I met with in my life to question the being of God.

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And the truth of his gospel is the worst and the worst to be born.

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When this temptation comes, it takes away my girdle from me and removes the foundation from under me.

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Oh, I have often thought of that word, having your loins girt about with truth, and of that, when the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?

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He's quoting there, of course, Psalm 11, verse 3, If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

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But isn't it marvelous that the true believer wants to resist sin?

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That's the first thing.

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Secondly, a bit more detail, the true believer must know certain things in this battle.

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Let me list them.

00:17:24

Number one, we must know our own hearts.

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We must know our own hearts.

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The Lord Jesus says in Matthew 12, verse 35, A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things.

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In Matthew 15, verse 18, he says, But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart.

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And they defiled the man.

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The heart here is not this marvelous cardiac organ that pumps blood around the body and then deals with the deoxygenated and oxygenated blood.

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Those who like our biology will know what I'm talking about.

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The heart is the inner person.

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In the Old Testament, the heart was the very reins or loins.

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In the New Testament, even the Apostle Paul brings this to the fore.

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It's the inner man.

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It's the inner person.

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It's the person we don't see, but God sees.

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We must know our hearts.

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We must reckon with our hearts.

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If we don't want to enter into temptation, we need to know our own hearts.

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One man says it like this, To be acquainted with our own spirit, our heart, as our natural frame and temper, our lusts and corruptions, this helps us to keep a distance from all sin.

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Be acquainted then, says another, with your own heart, though it be deep, search it, though it be dark, inquire into it, though it give all its decempers, all its wrong thinking, other names than that which are due, believe it not.

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Why?

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Because Jeremiah gives us very clear instruction.

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He says, the heart of man is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things.

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That's the unbelieving heart.

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But we still have that inner corruption in our own depths of our personality.

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And we still face this flesh, this sinful flesh.

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Or as one writer puts it, the indwelling sin in the believer.

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We must know our own hearts.

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Secondly, we must know our type of personality.

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You might be surprised at this, but this follows on.

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If we have studied our own hearts, then there will be certain ones of us that are quite soft and easygoing, and are not really wanting to be a soldier for Christ.

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We'd rather be a sailor on the peaceful sea of tranquility.

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But I'm afraid, friends, if we're true Christians, Christ has enlisted in us and His army.

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Others may be too forthright, too strong-willed, too impetuous, and we need to rein ourselves in.

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There's, of course, James and John, who are sons of thunder.

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But why not JS?

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They wanted to call down judgment of God upon the enemies of God as Christ was preaching.

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And you might smile at that, but there are some, and certainly in history, church history.

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where men have been very forthright.

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Perhaps you're gentle, you're easy to be entreated.

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You don't have a fighting spirit.

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You're quite pliable, like John Bunyan's character.

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You're like one of these little plasticine models.

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Some of us remember these on our television screens, we're amazed.

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And how these tiny little plasticine models were able to dance across the screen.

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We were only children at the time, of course.

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We didn't understand it all.

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We didn't understand the amount of work that went into getting these models to do certain actions that looked lifelike.

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Have you ever played with plasticine?

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But some of us are like that.

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We're very pliable.

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We're putty-like.

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If you like, if you know anything about DIY, you need to put putty sometimes in the old wooden windows to set the glass.

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You're not concrete.

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You're not rock solid.

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By the way, there's a weakness in concrete, but let's stick with the pliable character.

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And you're quite easygoing.

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Well, you see, Satan has certain ways and the sinful flesh has certain ways of taking you off Christ in certain ways.

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What about concrete?

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You're as hard.

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Well, I'm afraid under certain pressure, concrete cracks.

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Apparently, the Romans

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have developed a type of concrete that is still working today, unlike the concrete that was put into buildings in the 1960s.

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Some are earthy, proud, arrogant, careless, heedless.

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Some are so prone to putting their foot in it.

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Others are brooding.

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And sadly, sometimes the broody person becomes jealous and envious.

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Others are passionate, like Jehu, driving furiously.

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They have no time to think, because they're always doing something.

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And Satan has ways of keeping us too busy.

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Others are morose and depressive.

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And they're prone to complaining and murmuring and grumbling, and some of us are guilty of that.

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And you see, what I'm trying to show us is that we must know our own hearts, and we must know also our own personality.

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Third, we must know our weaknesses.

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This is so important.

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We must know our weaknesses.

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Oh, it's lovely to know your strengths.

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It's important also to know our weaknesses.

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Why?

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because the weaknesses that we have in our personality are also those that Satan will aim for.

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He makes a beeline for the weakness in each person.

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Perhaps you're familiar with Greek mythology.

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If you're not, let me take one example.

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There was this great giant called Achilles.

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or Achilles.

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And he was so strong and such a famous warrior that he couldn't be beaten.

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But he had one weakness, just one, and it was in his heel.

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And the story goes that one of his enemies discovered this, and of course, you guessed the rest.

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Aimed an arrow, some say a spear, at Achilles' heel.

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We all have an Achilles heel, even if we won't admit it.

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We may have peculiar lusts or corruptions, which either by natural constitution or education or other prejudices make us liable to surrendering to certain -- surrendering, sorry, to certain temptations.

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They have a deep root.

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Because that is our personality, and that is the type of person we are.

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Some are given to online viewing on the internet, or on your social media stream, or whatever you're looking at constantly.

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You know, it's interesting how some of these social media outlets now tell us how much time we spent on a certain social media channel last week.

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If it's anything over an hour a day, it's quite serious.

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Imagine how we could spend that hour, and we're all tempted to do it, and we're all prone to do it.

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Of course we are.

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Let's be honest here.

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Let's be upfront.

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Others couldn't care less about the internet or social media.

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But they like complaining.

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They like spending their time criticizing others.

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That's because, perhaps, because they're morose or depressive or brooding or any of those things or all of those things.

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Others are given to excessive spending.

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It's quite astonishing how much money people spend on things that aren't important.

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One minute it's there, and the next week it's gone.

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pastimes, animals, pets, homes, luxury holidays, unnecessary clothes, shoes or things, gadgets or whatever.

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Satan knows how to tempt us in that way, and our flesh is led to it.

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I understand that some people who are shopaholics believe that they feel better when they're shopping.

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Well, they might feel better when they're shopping.

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They might even feel better when they've got a bargain.

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But imagine their bank account.

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So the first thing was, under this heading, we must know our own hearts.

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Secondly, we must know our type of personality.

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Third, we must know our weaknesses.

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Fourth, we must know-- and this kind of ties it all together-- what hooks Satan can use within our own hearts.

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And I'll leave the Holy Spirit to show you what hooks they are.

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And the third thing, and in some ways the most helpful, I trust, is let's look at some ways of fighting.

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And I've got a number here, and I'm just going to go through them very briefly, but I'm going to bring one example from a modern day, well, you could call him a spiritual guru, I would rather call him a

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a teacher of false theology.

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But he has this view that temptations are really an issue of dealing with strongholds.

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And he talks about oppression, and he talks about freedom, and he talks about all these things, and they sound good.

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until you start to unpack them.

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Temptation is far worse.

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And too many people, too many Christians, follow this kind of teaching.

00:29:01

Let me, first of all, look at the help.

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Number one, garrison our hearts.

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Garrison our hearts.

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Now, I've never been in the military, but I believe

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Two main reasons for a garrison is, number one, it's exposed to the assaults of the enemy.

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The enemy attacks the garrison.

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Secondly, it's a place of protection and defense.

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And so it is with us.

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In Philippians 4, verse 7, the Apostle Paul says that the peace of God shall keep our hearts, or better, garrison our hearts.

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shall keep us as in a garrison.

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Our souls are so exposed to temptations and assaulted continually that we need to garrison our hearts.

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If there be a garrison in our hearts, then they be kept as in a garrison.

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Temptation shall not enter, and consequently we shall not fall into temptation.

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So that's the first thing, garrison our hearts.

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Secondly, be always awake.

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Be always awake.

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We should take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 2 Corinthians 10, verse 5.

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Why?

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Because the Apostle Peter tells us that we face a mortal enemy who never sleeps.

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He never sleeps.

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We have this mortal enemy.

00:30:37

who wants to destroy us.

00:30:39

Look at verse 8 and 1 Peter 5 verse 8, Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil.

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See, he names him.

00:30:48

Walketh about, prowls about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

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Look at those words, Be sober.

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That's not just speaking about not indulging in alcohol.

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It's being serious, being alert, be vigilant, be like a sentry on

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on a wall of defense.

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The alertness here, be always awake.

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Now that's impossible to be always awake, otherwise we'd all have insomnia.

00:31:21

But when we're awake, be always awake.

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Don't let our guard down.

00:31:29

Third, be alert, be vigilant.

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Don't let your

00:31:37

Your-- how would I put this?

00:31:39

Don't let your concentration fail.

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Be alert to that which you are tempted to.

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If a sentry-- certainly today-- if a sentry should sleep on the watch, especially in a military zone, in a war zone, it's serious consequences.

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They're arrested by their own

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platoon or battalion, and they are relieved of duty, and they are placed under arrest and reported to the commanding officer.

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Their discipline in a war zone is draconian, says one.

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Basically, they face a court martial, and they will be discharged.

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Lesser, perhaps, when you're in a peacetime, when you're at home in your own country, you may have a reduction in rank, you may have time in prison, but you may not be as fairly punished.

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Be alert.

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Be like the sentry on the walls.

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Fourth, be hating sin.

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Be hating sin.

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The apostle Paul says, I hate it, Romans 7, verse 15.

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What does he hate?

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And I'm sure you're familiar with all of this, but I just want you to notice, what does the apostle Paul hate most in chapter seven?

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He says, For that which I do I allow not, for that which I would not that that I do, but what I hate, that do I.

00:33:22

He hates it.

00:33:28

He doesn't make a contract with sin.

00:33:29

He doesn't make a peace treaty with sin.

00:33:34

He doesn't let down his guard with sin.

00:33:36

Now, it doesn't mean that he ever overcomes sin completely, but he hates it.

00:33:44

He hates the inner drive and the inner lusts and the inner desires.

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I don't know.

00:33:52

I look at myself and I think, Do I hate sin?

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Why should I hate sin?

00:33:59

Well, that's the whole purpose of the gospel.

00:34:03

God hates sin.

00:34:06

He hates it with such a distaste and such a wrath and judgment that he must deal with it.

00:34:14

He must deal with it.

00:34:17

My dear friends, he'll either deal with it in the sinner or he will deal with it in the Savior.

00:34:23

And there's no other extra.

00:34:25

There's no option.

00:34:26

There's no third way.

00:34:27

There's no option C.

00:34:33

How easy we fall into this comfortable way of seeing sin as just a little problem.

00:34:44

I weep, even thinking of how easygoing I am with my own sin.

00:34:50

You'd read the old writers.

00:34:52

They didn't have that kind of relation with sin.

00:34:54

They hated sin.

00:34:56

They detested sin because they knew what an affront it was to Almighty God, but they also knew how much it meant that Jesus Christ suffered in our place for our sins.

00:35:13

Often I found, especially as a young Christian, battling with all of these temptations coming at me all the time,

00:35:20

I often remember going into my bedroom.

00:35:24

I was still training, of course, and I got on my knees, and I pleaded that I would understand something of the cost of what Christ endured for me on Calvary.

00:35:39

You read the old writers, and they constantly point us to Calvary.

00:35:43

They constantly say, Is this what sin means to God?

00:35:48

that a holy, righteous, sinless, spotless Savior must die for sinners?

00:35:54

The answer is yes.

00:36:00

You see, the self-help mode is hopeless in this.

00:36:05

It's absolutely hopeless.

00:36:08

We need Christ, and this is the...

00:36:12

Well, the fifth thing is mortify the deeds of the flesh.

00:36:16

13, For if we live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

00:36:23

What does this mean?

00:36:23

It means to kill sin.

00:36:26

I can't kill sin.

00:36:28

Well, the picture here is of somebody bearing a sword.

00:36:33

There's this great dragon.

00:36:34

And this great dragon is so fierce, but the warrior, or the knight,

00:36:43

knows that if he cuts off the head of this dragon, then at least he'll have some rest for a while.

00:36:50

Eventually, the head will grow back.

00:36:52

Of course, this is all imagery, and that's what sin is like.

00:36:55

It eventually grows back.

00:36:58

But we must mortify sin.

00:37:00

Fifth, sorry, sixth, and perhaps most importantly, flee to Christ.

00:37:07

Flee to Christ.

00:37:09

What does this mean?

00:37:10

Well, the Apostle Paul speaks about this

00:37:13

In his epistle to Timothy, he speaks about fleeing youthful lusts and pursuing righteousness.

00:37:24

Both are important.

00:37:28

It's not one without the other.

00:37:31

It's not fleeing and just being at rest.

00:37:34

It's fleeing and pursuing.

00:37:37

It's not so helpful.

00:37:39

that we don't always put the two together.

00:37:44

As we flee, we're pursuing.

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I might come back to this next week.

00:37:53

But how can I know the reality of conquering youthful lusts, of conquering these temptations?

00:38:03

Urgently seek refuge, safety,

00:38:07

in Jesus Christ, urgently.

00:38:12

Why?

00:38:12

How can we know?

00:38:14

Well, Christ has been given all power in heaven and earth.

00:38:19

The Son of God, or God the Son, is the author of all creation, through Him all things were made.

00:38:26

Without Him, nothing was made.

00:38:28

But He's also our divine representative.

00:38:31

And as our mediator, the God-man, He, He,

00:38:36

can help us in our battles.

00:38:39

He has power over all flesh.

00:38:43

God gave him that power.

00:38:46

He has power to help us to say with the Apostle Paul, In my flesh dwelleth no good thing.

00:39:00

He can subdue, though we cannot.

00:39:03

He can control it, though we cannot.

00:39:06

He can bind it, tie it,

00:39:09

chain it, but we cannot.

00:39:14

He can acquit us, because He's not only our mediator, He's also our redeemer.

00:39:22

He can forgive us.

00:39:24

He judges it.

00:39:27

And finally, wonderfully and gloriously, He will change this vile body, that it may be fashioned

00:39:39

onto His glorious body.

00:39:43

Philippians 3 verse 21.

00:39:46

And I'll leave you with that thought.

00:39:50

He can do it.

00:39:52

He has the power, the authority, and the willingness to do it in us.

00:40:03

And by His Spirit, He can help us even this week.

00:40:10

with whatever battle comes against us.

00:40:15

And that's why it's marvelous to be a Christian.

00:40:21

Because the Apostle Paul tells us something else.

00:40:25

Christ in you, the hope of glory.

00:40:33

Just ponder that for a moment.

00:40:37

What Christ in me?

00:40:40

Christ in corrupt, tempted, yielding, succumbing me?

00:40:49

Yes, by His Spirit.

00:40:54

And He can help us by His Spirit to overcome all manner of temptations.

00:41:00

Next time we look at some helpful equipment or

00:41:06

armory that the Lord gives us.

00:41:08

Let us pray.

00:41:08

Father, thankful for this morning, thankful that in Christ we have this wonderful assurance that He's in us the hope of glory and that one day He will change, transform this vile body into the manner after His glorious body.

00:41:29

And help us, Lord, in the battles we face that we would arm ourselves

00:41:35

that we would equip ourselves, that we would know ourselves, that we would see our own weaknesses, but then seek the Lord's strength.

00:41:45

And by grace and grace alone, we would overcome those things.

00:41:51

We pray these prayers in Christ's name.

00:41:54

Amen.