

## **From Section 4: Alluring Idols**

*"The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;  
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips." Psalm 16:4*

### **Victory Through Jesus: Our Sure Hope in Our Fight with Sin**

Now that we have taken a good, hard look at the sin that loves to cling to our feet and bring us down, let's finish up this section with encouragement about all that God has promised to help us fight our battles and to bring us to victory through Jesus.

#### **1. Jesus Died for Us. It Is Finished. The Victory Is Won.**

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."  
Romans 5:8

Our salvation rests upon what Christ did for us. He has taken the full punishment for our sin in our place. We are completely forgiven and stand clean before God because of Him. He became our Savior when we were still sinners. He will stay our Savior, even though we are still sinners. Our standing is eternally strong, even though our struggle with sin remains.

#### **2. Jesus Has Made Us Alive and that Makes Us Different. We Were Made for Victory.**

Ephesians 2 tells us:

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ... For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

As God's people, we still know sinful desires and are tempted by them. We even give into them. Maybe even daily. But instead of "walking in sin", instead of "living in the passions of our flesh, instead of "carrying out the desires of our body" because we were by nature "sons of disobedience" and "children of wrath".

But now, we have been "raised with Christ, seated with Him in the heavenly places." We are different. We have new desires. Yes, they may seem weak against the old desires that have grown strong and skilled from years' of practice. But these new desires are new life. They are our future, thanks to God!

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!  
--2 Corinthians 5: 17

God gives us the immeasurable riches of His grace. The grace of faith through by which we were saved. And the grace of good works, by which He helps us to do all He planned for us. We are here for a different

God gives us the immeasurable riches of His grace. The grace of faith through by which we were saved. And the grace of good works, by which He helps us to do all He planned for us. We are here for a different

### **3. Jesus Is Our Example of Fighting Sin.** **We Know What Victory Will Look Like**

"Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." 1 Peter 4:1-2

Peter tells us that Jesus's life sets the example for our lives. Though tempted in every way, just like we are (Hebrews 4:15), Jesus said "no" to sin every time. He had come to do God's will. He would not veer away from the plan for any easy out or temporary pleasure. He would live a perfect life. He would be the perfect sacrifice to pay our sins and suffer in our place. Jesus chose to fight the good fight against sin that He might win for us.

Now God wants us to take up arms like Jesus, not to pay for our sins, but to fight to live for God instead of our old desires. This will be hard! Our desires are our first-nature. They are deep-seated. To leave them unsatisfied will be (and feel like) suffering. The fighting will be fierce. Sisters, this is war, but it is worth it. We will get knocked down, but with God's help, we can get up again! Let's follow Jesus' example and forge forward in battle.

### **4. Jesus Has Changed the Trajectory of Our Life.** **We Are Headed towards Victory.**

1 Peter 4:1-2 says:

"He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God."

That doesn't mean quite as it sounds. "Suffering to "cease to sin," is speaking of the trajectory of your life, not that you will know "one-and-done" victory over sin in your heart if you have suffered enough or in the correct way. Peter is talking about the fact that you aren't being carried downstream on the raft of your sinful desires, but you are getting off that raft, jumping into the cold water and slowly, but steadily, heading upstream against it, by God's grace.

God, through Paul, promises:

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." --Romans 5:1-3

This will be a life-long battle against sin, but because of Jesus, we have been turned towards victory. Our fighting is full of hope!

## **5. Through Jesus, God Planned Us Our Salvation and Transformation.**

### **Victory Is Providential.**

God knew us and chose us to be holy even before the first "Let there be" came out of His mouth! He chose to save us and to make us holy and blameless in His sight:

"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."  
-- Ephesians 1:4

#### Such Good News

How amazing! I was dead. He loved me and brought me to life. He wants not just to give me a hope and a future for this life, but to bring me to be with Him forever so He can show me the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness in Christ. I lived in the passion of my flesh, but he has raised me and giving me good works to do. And because I'm his workmanship, he will see that they are done.

## **6. God Has Set Limits on Our Individual Struggles.**

### **Victory Is Particular.**

"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." --Psalm 139:16

#### Surprising Good Works

The pre-planned good works God gives us are not one-size-fits-all. They are custom-built for the frail frame He gives each of us. And with such love and care, He prepares us for these good works and them for us. But even in such careful preparation, God did not just choose the good works that phrase often brings to mind, such as caring for the sick, sharing the gospel, encouraging one another, etc. it also, quite clearly includes suffering.

"Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." --2 Corinthians 12:8-10

#### Good Work of Weakness

I love these words from Paul. If showing off Christ's power in our weakness isn't a good work, then I don't know what one is!

#### Good Work of Struggling Against Sin

I've come to see that even part of those good works he has me do not just the good works that we think of his good works such as being kind to somebody sharing the gospel with them, outward things that we all know to be good. But part of that good work that he's doing is the work in me. It's his workmanship. From Psalm 139 he knew me before I was born. From Ephesians I know he loved me and adopted me before the foundations of the world. And here in Ephesians 2 I know that at that same time he created good works for me to do even in my frail fallenness.

#### Favorite Words from Paul Tripp

This quote from Paul Tripp is on the white board in my office. I think I got it from his book, Broken Down House. Its truth has been so helpful to me: "I do not write my own story. It has been written for me. My job is to live inside of the plot that God has written for me in the way that I have been called by him to live."

### **Not a Sidetrack, but on the Superhighway**

Fighting sin is something God is in charge of. Something He's planned. It's not just a sidetrack that keeps me from doing what God wants me to do. It's actually part of the main superhighway of good works He's given me to do during my fleeting life in this fallen world.

### **7. Transformation Will Come as We Keep on Fighting.** **Victory Is Won, Battle by Battle Fight, Not as One, Big War**

"For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand... Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" –Romans 7:15-21,24-25

Those words from Romans were the apostle Paul! Oh, that I could be like him in his godliness! But even this godly man faced persistent pain of suffering and persistent struggles with sin. Fighting isn't just for failures. It's for all of God's people as part of God's good plan to grow them during their days in this fallen world.

### **Good Days and Good Fighting Days**

Fighting sin glorifies God. Fighting to trust him. That glorifies him. And he uses the struggle to transform us through the process.

Many sin struggles do come back over and over again. This can be so discouraging. As someone who frequently struggles with anxiety, I've found it so helpful to remember that the fact I'm fighting against sin is part of being victorious. I like to think there are only two kinds of days: good days and good fighting days. And who's to say which is more glorifying to God! Fighting for His glory against my sin might be the winner!

I love looking at the passage about the manna in the Old Testament. The Lord gave them bread from heaven every morning--enough for the whole day. Yet He let the leftovers melt off by mid-day. And, only on the day before the Sabbath could any extra be gathered and kept maggot-free for the next day. And remember: this is out in the wilderness where there are no other food options. God intended for their "safety" to be something they would have to come back to Him for day after day after day... for forty years. If that's not a lot of battles, I don't know what is!

That wilderness was no mistake. God made every day a training ground for fighting the lies of fear and distrust. And they had to go back and fight over and over again.

This was the Lord's good purpose in their struggles:

"And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." --Deuteronomy 8:3

Paul also sees this life as one of striving in a life-long race for the heavenly prize that he will receive. Exertion. Struggle. Setting down what lays behind and straining forward for the next day. All for a very good purpose—a very good prize:

“Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.” -- Philippians 3:13-15

### **8. The Transformation Will Be Dramatic.** **Victory Will Only Come with Great Help and It Is Promised.**

God asks for outrageous heart and life changes in His people. Here are just a few:

- “Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”
- “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”
- “Do not repay anyone evil for evil.”

Giving up your lives to serve God as living sacrifices? Loving and honoring others more than yourself? Blessing and being kind to our enemies instead of retaliating? How can we live selflessly like this, when we are so frequently tempted to do what serves ourselves? Even though these commands seem so impossible, we need not be discouraged. God would not ask them of us if He did not plan to give us what we need to do what He wants us to do. He raised Jesus from the dead. He knows how to bring about dramatic transformation! Even in us!

#### **God’s Power to Help Us Is Great**

“I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead.” --Ephesians 1:19-20, NLT

Did you catch that? The same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in us! He gives us the power to turn away from the temptation to serve ourselves and to serve others instead!

#### **God’s Prayers for Us Are Effective**

If you could pick just one person to pray for you what it not be God? Everything is yes and amen that God prays for us. We know it is according to his will. We know it will take place in his perfect timing. We know he knows what we need more than anyone else. He lives to intercede for us. He knows to pray when we don’t. That’s why we can even just pray help and we know he’ll take it from there with the kind of help we need.

“Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” --Hebrews 7:25

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” --Romans 8:26

## **God Helps Us Even on the Inside**

God's Holy Spirit lives and works powerfully within us. He is our Helper.

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

-- 2 Corinthians 3:18

"For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." --Colossians 1:29

My fight against sin is powered by God, Himself! This means our very fighting, even if it is wobbly and weak, is pleasing to God. It is on the vehicle God has chosen for much of our transformation.

### **9. God Will Use My Transformation to Transform Others.**

#### **Victory Together.**

God will use my struggle fully. Not just the end product, but every part of the process along the way. God does not know how to waste anything. Not even my struggle with temptation and sin. Every skirmish of this war is part of the good works he's prepared for me. Every skirmish will not just grow me to be more like Christ but will help me comfort others with the comfort I received from God. And that brings him glory not just at the end along the way.

This is one of the greatest ways we can be a good model to the other believers in our churches! We fight the same struggles they fight. We help each other learn how to fight better. We are encouraged as we see God help us fight and win. We know who we can go to when we are discouraged with our failures. God can and will use it all!

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." --2 Corinthians 1:3-4

### **10. God Has Set an End Date on This Struggle Against Sin.**

#### **Victory Will Vanquish All!**

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place[a] of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." --Revelation 21:3-4

The battles against sin may be fierce, but the victory will be won, one day, once and for all. won.

Until then, we can be confident that God will never stop helping us until we are formed into the image of his Son. Part of that forming will take place here on earth in those good works God has prepared for us. Ah, but the beautiful rest will come as quickly and completely as our salvation.

"Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when he appears, we will be like him because we will see him as he is." --1 John 3:2, CSB

Come, Lord Jesus, come. And until then, keep fighting, girls. And keep helping your husbands fight, too.

### **Two Parting Pep Talks**

#### **From “Coach David”: Remember Who’s Got Your Back**

“With [God’s] help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall...It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure. He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You make your saving help my shield, and your right hand sustains me; your help has made me great. You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way.

--Psalm 18:29,32,34,35

#### **From “Coach Hebrews”: Keep Your Eye on the Prize**

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”

-- Hebrews 12:1-3

You go, girl!

#### **Questions for You**

1. How does remembering Jesus’ victory helpful for you/your husband’s struggle with sin?
2. Do you have any other words of encouragement for people weighed down and discouraged over their sin?