

Life's Tough Questions, Part Three
Why Do I Still Struggle with Sin? Colossians 3: 1 – 17
June 14, 2009

As a Christian, I want to grow stronger in my relationship with God. And as a part of that growth process, I need to battle against sin. Honestly, I struggle with sin, and one of the questions I ask God is, “Why do you seem to allow sin to be such a difficult enemy in my life?” When I think about it, it is a natural question to ask in my series “Life’s Tough Questions.” Why do I still struggle with sin?

I know this experience: It is difficult to bring any life controlling sin to a dead stop. If you wake up one morning and the thing you have struggled with for years is gone, get down on your knees and thank God for delivering you. But for most of us, it doesn’t happen that way.

Each of us is unique in our make-up, in our life experiences, and in so many other emotional and spiritual influences. Therefore, it shouldn’t surprise us that each of us often has spiritual areas where we are more vulnerable to the pull of temptation, whereas others may be unfazed by that particular temptation – and they are vulnerable to another entirely different temptation.

I also know sin does not just surrender that stronghold it has in my life simply because I make a decision to welcome a new boss into my life; instead it hunkers down, burrows even deeper within me, and stubbornly persists in attacking my resolve to honor God with new principles and values.

I am in pretty good company when it comes to struggling with sin. I give you the example of the Apostle Paul. He gives us an eloquent – and poignant – dissertation on his personal struggles with sin in romans Chapter Seven.

Romans 7: 14 – 24 is Paul’s admission of his personal struggle with sin.
Colossians 3: 1 –17 is God’s answer to this dilemma. Let’s examine Colossians 3: 1 – 17 and find why we struggle with sin.

1. I struggle with sin because I am more earthly minded than I am heavenly minded (Colossians 3: 1 – 2).

A. If you know more about what is happening in Brevard County FL – or in Hollywood, or in Washington, DC, or in Wall Street – than you know what is going on in heaven, I can promise you that you are struggling with sin.

1. God says, “Set your heart...” He understands us more intimately than we know ourselves, and the truth for most of us that we have a form of spiritual ADD instead of a laser-like focus on our Lord Who is in heaven ruling and reigning for us.

B. For most of us, heaven is an occasional, brief visit by prayer.

1. We don’t spend a lot a time in heavenly places, often because our spiritual spectacles are set on an earthly prescription.

2. When we spend more tiem on earthly things and less on heavenly things, we will struggle with sin.

2. I struggle with sin because I put some sins to rest, but I don’t put them to death (vs. 5 – 7).

A. Unfortunately, we have a dangerous game we play with our sins: we simply put them to rest – out of sight sometimes but not out of mind.

1. This is what can happen when we just have “turned over a new leaf.” The spiritual virus of sin is just on the other side of that new leaf, sort of like the bear who goes into hibernation for a season; he seems harmless enough snoring away in his dark cave. But then he awakens, hungrier and more ravenous than before.

B. God tells us to put it to death. If needed, hold a memorial service and declare it dead!

1. Bury the bones of your sin in the grave of forgetfulness.

Periodically, replay the documentary on your personal History Channel about how your freedom from sin was won at Calvary; celebrate your personal D Day when the God of Glory landed on the beachhead of your soul and wrested control of your heart and life from sin and death. Sing Victory in Jesus loudly – and off key – to reinforce the wonderful new life in Christ.

2. When a sin is put to death it does not rise back up. Only put it to rest and it will come back on you.

3. I struggle with sin because I struggle dealing with people (vs. 8 – 9).

A. Until I learn to deal with people the way God’s Word tells me to deal with people, I will struggle with sin. The truth is that people are sometimes at the root of my struggle with sin.

1. The issues Paul brings up in verses 8 and 9 touch on elements of relationships between people: Until I learn to forgive people like Christ does I will struggle with the sins of anger, rage, malice, and slander, I will struggle with sin; until I learn to serve others as Christ commands, I will struggle with the sins of lying, filthy language, and all the greed and pride that are a part of my old self.

B. That is why I am convinced the starting point for any new Christian is to study the so called Sermon on the Mount of Jesus found in Matthew Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

1. Nearly every issue pertaining to a Believer’s personal life is addressed in practical terms – moral and ethical behavior and conduct, Jesus gives priceless guidance.

2. Jesus gave to His followers this wonderful discourse for the same reason you and I need it today: Believers need to change the ways they relate to their neighbors, enemies, families, and the authorities so they would continually struggle with sin because of those relationships.

4. I struggle with sin if I remove it but out nothing spiritual in its place (vs. 12 – 14).

A. The first section of this chapter deals with how to remove sin from my life – and

keep it gone. Having successfully accomplished the removal of that sin, I must put something in its place so the sin has no place to return.

1. The principles of twelve step programs such as AA and NA work because they incorporate this godly direction. They couch it in largely nondenominational language: You remove the addiction, and bring faith in a higher power in. If you replace the addiction with nothing of value, the addiction is sure to return.

2. Jesus tells a cautionary parable in Luke 11: 24 – 26 of an unclean spirit that has been cast out of a man, and after wandering in search of rest, returns to find its former home swept clean; it then brings seven spirits even more evil than itself and reclaims its place.

B. A Christian must go further than just expelling the sin; he must engage in spiritual replacement therapy.

1. Fill the empty spaces with Christ's presence; fill the void left by habits and toxic relationships that only harmed and brought death with relationships and activities the Holy Spirit brings into your life. Then that sin which once seemed so essential will now seem so worthless.

5. I struggle with sin because I am not satisfied with my life (vs. 15 – 17).

A. People who are not satisfied with their life open themselves up to the sins of greed, envy, and pride.

1. Perhaps the key word for the believer should be “thankful,” or “peace.” A person who is thankful for what they have in their life – as opposed to what they do not possess – is not likely to be constantly envious of the possessions of others.

2. A person who is at peace in their life – as opposed to being in a place of turmoil and conflict – is not likely to be filled with anger, resentment, and hatred.

B. Sin has the capacity to take control of my emotions and thought processes. The natural result is that sin can then control my emotions, control my thinking, and eventually override my better impulses.

1. Then I will struggle with that sin, because I have not taken control of the situation; instead the sin controls me.

C. The antidote to sin controlling me is to immerse myself in the things of God:

1. Let the peace of Christ rule my heart;
2. Let the Word of God dwell in my inner being, creating wisdom and discernment;
3. Cultivate the inner music of the Kingdom to instill gratitude;
4. Remind yourself constantly that all you do should be done *for* Jesus, *in* Jesus, and *through* Jesus. It not about you, it's about Jesus!

God's loving intention for His children is that they experience freedom from the guilt and oppression of sin. Yet many Christians live defeated lives, which is precisely opposite God's plan for them. Today, claim your victory; it has already been won on your behalf at Calvary.