

HOLY SPIRIT AND SIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 2

Dan Burrell

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you today. We are in a series that we kicked off last week that we call 'Power Struggle.' And it is dealing with the topic of spiritual warfare. Last week we kind of laid the foundation to it, and today we are going to get into more specifics. And when we deal with spiritual warfare we are going to be dealing with some pretty heavy topics over the next seven or eight weeks as we get deeper into it. War, Satan, demons, sin, death, destruction, damnations, bondage - these are terms that we may think of when we think about spiritual warfare, the great battle that we are engaged in against Satan and all of his forces, all of his influences and techniques and so forth.

And we are going to be talking about those things, but there is also on the other hand some terms that I think are important when you think of warfare in general and when you think of spiritual warfare specifically. We also need to know that at the end there is also the promise of peace, God, angels, holiness, light, victory, reconciliation, deliverance and freedom. So whether we are talking about the negative aspects or the positive aspects there are some really epic terms that are used to describe spiritual warfare, power struggle and conflict.

So this is a battle. It is a winner takes all battle. It is something that is a part of man's story, God's creation and the Fall, this epic story that we know exists in the universe today. And we are going to kick it off today with a heavy topic, a big topic, and that is the topic of the believer's relationship and interaction with sin.

You know sin is a word that we get kind of uncomfortable with in our modern culture, and even in churches. We have tried to redefine sin. Sin has left kind of this absolute set of right and wrong principles that we found anchored in the Word of God in places like the Ten Commandments and the statues of Scripture. And today it has become kind of a different standard. '*Does it make someone else feel bad?*' '*Or does it head to a goal?*' '*Or does anybody get hurt?*' Those have become the standard for right and wrong in our culture today. But those are contrary to what Scripture teaches us about things like holiness, righteousness, right and wrong, sin and all the impacts that it has on us.

Now I know churches are in kind of this place where we think, '*of course they are going to talk about sin.*' Right? It reminds me of the old couple where the wife would always go to church and the husband always wanted to stay in bed every Sunday morning. One morning she got up and she just wasn't feeling well and she said, '*Honey, I want you to go to church for me today. I want you to tell me everything that happens so you can tell me about it when you get home.*'

And the grumpy old man finally decides to do it. He went to church and when he came home his wife asked him, '*Okay, what was the topic today? What did the pastor talk about?*' And the husband said, '*Sin.*' And the wife said, '*Okay, don't spare a detail and tell me everything he said about it.*' And she is thinking how good this was that out

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of all the sermons possible her husband needed to hear this one had been on sin. So she asks him to tell her every detail that was said. And the husband said, '*They are against sin there.*' (Laughter.) So that is kind of like the reputation we have as Christians about sin. We are against it. But it is far deeper than that. It is far more than that. And quite frankly I am not so convinced that many of us as we kind of live out our lives are really even all that aware of it anymore.

By the way did anyone feel the earthquake this morning? (Audience - 'Yes.') I didn't feel a thing. I am a little disappointed that I didn't because I am sure that all of you California transplants felt it. But I didn't feel it so I googled it to make sure it really happened. Actually I was told that some of the staff were going to flip some chairs out in the lobby for me to see when I walked in and then tell me it felt really big here. And just because I didn't feel it, it was apparent we had a 5.1 quake this morning somewhere, and it rumbled through Charlotte causing a lot of talk for a few hours.

As I was driving to church this morning, and anyone who knows me knows I am a process guy. I get up at this time, I know how many minutes it takes to do this and that, like brushing my teeth and showering, all the things we do before leaving the house. Then I know about how long it is going to take me to drive to church, so this morning I am right on target, right on schedule driving up the road and there is somebody in a Honda Civic that is going seventeen miles an hour less than the speed limit. Yes, seventeen miles an hour less than the speed limit. I know the speed limit, I know how long it takes me to get to church so how dare this person drive seventeen miles an hour less than the speed limit.

And I am telling you that I don't know if it was the Missouri in me, the orneriness in me, or just the crankiness in me, but I thought I was going to blow a gasket. There was no one around so why in the world was he driving that slowly. I just got worked up, insanely so, and I don't know why. You know big things don't bother me, but these little things make me like the Princess and the pea, they just can really irritate me. And all of a sudden the Holy Spirit tapped on my shoulder and said: '*Hey Dan, guess what you are preaching on this morning? It is sin.*' (Laughter.)

And here I was ready to blast this driver with my horn, I am ready to speed around him, I am ready to just let him have it in my entitled, self-righteous, perfectionist, indignant way, and then I realized that many times a day I have this struggle between responding correctly and responding poorly, between acting like a believer and acting like the maniac that lives inside of me. And whether it is a big issue or a small issue, whether I am kind, or whether I measure my words, whether I give something a second look, or whether I let something take root in my mind, how many times do I really stop and engage in this spiritual battle against sin in my own life.

The reality is it is not frequent enough because your sins bother me, but I just like mine. I rationalize mine. If I know two things about Dan Burrell, it is this - I enjoy

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suppressing truth in my own life, and I enjoy rationalizing sin in my own life. I am a truth suppressor and I am a sin rationalizer. And if I don't get ahold of that, Satan will get victory in how I live.

And it is true for everybody in this room. It is true for the addicted person, it is true for the angry person, it is true for the racist person, it is true for the immoral person, it is true for the person who is greedy and pride filled, all of the different things that assail us, we have to decide whether or not our sin is as offensive to God as His Word says it is, and whether or not we are going to do something about it. It is a spiritual battle that we must fight.

Let me also add this, I grew up in a culture of legalism where I looked at sin as something that I needed to constantly be aware of, to get victory over, to deal with and to poke at it in other people. And it was a constant '*I must perform,*' '*I must work*' thought process, otherwise God was going to get me. Otherwise bad things were going to happen to me. Otherwise I am not going to be able to hear those words, '*Good and faithful servant.*' And so my view of sin was that I had to work harder, I had to be more diligent, because I didn't look at sin correctly.

And I want us to look at sin from a spiritual warfare perspective this morning. As Pastor Ben noted last week, the battle of spiritual warfare has actually already been won. Last week all over the news was the massive explosion in Beirut. And this week was the seventy fifth anniversary of the dropping of the bomb in Hiroshima. I have looked at those pictures over and over again. And for those people who were alive during that day of the World War II bombing, that bomb represented victory for the United States over the Japanese empire. It was a big deal, but you need to understand that for the believer the bomb that was dropped at Calvary on Satan and his forces declared victory over sin and death and separation from God. That was the war, that was the big deal, that was the big battle.

Now we are engaged in clean up. You know for years after the end of World War II they found Japanese soldiers that were on islands all across the Pacific that didn't know the war was over. And so one or two, or a handful of Japanese soldiers continued to engage others for years afterwards in these little skirmishes, because they had no idea that the bomb had been dropped, or that a peace treaty had been signed on the USS Missouri. So these soldiers would come out with guns blazing thinking they were still fighting for their country. And today you and I are still fighting the vestiges, the last battles that need to be fought, but understand this - the victory has been won - and God won. It is over. But we still have the cleanup.

You know when I was growing up there was a comedian; it may be been Flip Wilson, but I can't remember for sure who it was, but some of you who may have a few gray hairs like me may remember the guy who always said, '*The devil made me do it.*' (*Audience - Yes, that was Flip.*) And even today we kind of have a flippant attitude of

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saying, *'Well, the devil made me do it.'* We have seen the cartoon characters like the Looney Tunes, where someone would be in a temptation situation and there would be this little guy on his shoulder representing the devil. Some of you kids may still see that sometimes in today's cartoons. And there would be a devil on one side and a little cherubim angel on the other side. And they debate, they argue back and forth, and often the devil would knock the angel off and say, *'Let's go do it.'*

Today we have reduced this battle against sin and righteousness and holiness almost to comedic comments, and cartoonish caricatures. And we need to remember that sin is an affront to God in a very personal way. It was sin that separated us from His creation, it was sin that required a sacrifice, it is sin that dams and mars His incredible creation. It was sin that nailed His Son to the cross. It is sin that sows the seeds of death, pain, brokenness, conflict, hatred, injustice, mayhem, and violence that tests God's very patience and loving grace and mercy to the point that someday He is going to declare 'enough.' And at that time the time that we have to respond to His loving offer of reconciliation will be over.

We need to understand that God does not tolerate sin in His presence. He does not like it. He does not want it. And He will deal with it. So we who now carry His reputation, carry His image, carry His Spirit have a responsibility to wage war against that which offends Him. So while we are now engaged in the cleanup, make no mistake it is going to be messy. There is still work to be done that requires attention and effort. Satan's fate is sealed indeed, sin has been defeated, God is victorious, but we are still cleaning up the details. And you and I have to deal with that in our own lives every single day.

So let's look at what the Bible says in Romans Chapter 8, as that is where we are going to be. I would just urge you if you have never done a systematic study of Romans Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, that you will do so because it will change your life. For me the study of Romans Chapters 5 through 8 when I was in my mid-twenties is what laid the foundation for me eventually becoming a pastor. And that is because it recalibrated how I viewed God and sin and myself, and it brought me to a point of brokenness before Him, allowing Him to take root in my life for the first time. I don't have the time to tell you that story this morning, but hopefully one of these days I will be able to share it, because these chapters in Romans are very powerful.

In Romans Chapter 8 we have Paul speaking to this powerful generation, this powerful civilization of those who have lived under this bondage, with this consequence of sin, and he has an important message he wants to give to them. Now this is a long passage, but let's read it together, and please think about the words. Let's begin in verse one.

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
Let me just pause there and look at those words again for those are some of the sweetest

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words you will ever hear. ***“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** You are not going to hell. You do not have to live the defeated life. You do not have to give into sin. You do not have to bear the consequences of your brokenness any longer, because in Christ there is no condemnation. You don’t get to have Satan tell you that you are not worthy anymore. You don’t get to have Satan tell you that you are beyond hope, that you are beyond forgiveness, that you are beyond grace, or love or mercy, because in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation. And when Satan accuses you and tells you that it is not worth the battle anymore, when Satan tells you that you can’t get victory, when Satan tells you that God can’t love someone as miserable as you, you can point at him and say, ***“There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** We don’t fight for victory today, we fight from victory, and that verse proclaims it. It is wonderful! (*Applause.*)

Verse 2: ***“For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”*** Notice that word ‘Spirit’ is capitalized. Who is that Spirit? That is the Holy Spirit. It is not ‘rah, rah spirit,’ it is not ‘I feel good spirit,’ it is not the ‘spirit of success’ or the ‘spirit of positive mental thinking;’ it is the Spirit of God that lives in us.

Verse 5: ***“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”***

Verse 9: ***“You, however.”*** And here is a transition. You are going to notice a tone change here. ***“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”***

So Paul is saying that not only are we free from sin but we are free for life. Now look at what it says in this third section because it is really important. Again we see another transition. In verse 9 he says, ‘However,’ and in verse 12 he says, ‘So then,’ here are the consequences. ***“So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 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. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back***

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into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children then heirs -- heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him."

Now I want to tell you when we read this passage - and I would urge you sometime this week to take this passage, these seventeen verses, and to read them out loud as a declaration. You will be surprised by the way how the reading of Scripture is a declaration and how it does something to us spiritually. I believe that it is an important part of spiritual warfare. Do you understand that when you speak the words of God the spiritual domain can hear those? And when we speak the words of God it reminds us and it reminds them of the truth that was settled in Heaven forever ago, and will always be true, which was declared and made evident at Calvary and emphasized at the resurrection.

So when we speak the words of God they ought to encourage us. That is why it is important we read the Bible as part of the spiritual warfare. We have this sword, this book that divides truth and encourages our hearts and points out the things that we need to know. So I want to real quickly look at this because here is an important principle we need to understand. Our relationship with the Spirit, and again we are talking about the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ that lives within us.

Our relationship with the Spirit ought to be what drives our relationship with sin. Our relationship with the Holy Spirit drives our relationship with sin. Here is how I often describe it. I grew up in a Christian home and went to a Christian school, so I did not live a wild life; and I thank God for that. I don't say that with any pride, because my parents were just very diligent for which I am grateful to the Lord for that. But with the kind of life I grew up in, I didn't have maybe the opportunities to be wild. For some of you your story may be quite different and we all need to thank God for His mercy and His grace.

But even in the home I grew up in, and even in the culture, I had a lot of girlfriends. You didn't know that was coming, did you? But I did, and I know that is shocking looking at me now. At one point I was young and svelte, and I had a lot of girlfriends. And I enjoyed hanging out with the ladies, so to speak. Now again, it was in the most upright, Christian kind of way, but it was still fun. I knew that I wanted to get to the point where I found that girl I would spend the rest of my life with. I knew that from a very early age. I always had a thing for blondes, and they always caught my attention. I dated a few brunettes and redheads, but one day I saw my blonde. By that time I was twenty-two years old and I had just moved from Moberly, Missouri via Chicago, Illinois to West Palm Beach, Florida. *(Laughter.)*

Lots of people have asked me how I got from Moberly, Missouri to West Palm Beach, Florida and I tell them it took a lot of prayer and a lot of fasting because I had very spiritual reasons for wanting the beaches and the babes. I would like to tell you that

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I was very pious for choosing to go to West Palm Beach out of college, but I really went there for all the wrong reasons, and God blessed me in spite of that. I saw this little blonde history teacher and I was smitten immediately.

My sister was fourteen years old when I moved there, and she told me the other day that she knew I was in trouble when my parents helped me move down there. And when we were walking through the school hallways she said I told her to look over there at the history teacher because she is really hot. Well, I married her. And when I married my wife something changed. I was no longer interested in other women. I loved her so much that even though before I was constantly on the scout, always looking now it didn't matter anymore. And it was because I was smitten, I was in love. And on August 4th, 1984, which was 36 years ago last Tuesday, we stood in the Berean Baptist Church at 4200 West Australia Avenue in West Palm Beach, Florida and said, *'I do - forever.'*

And from that day to this day there has never been another woman that came along that would make me ever want to look twice because my love for her is so complete, so real, and so vibrant. Now you have to understand something, folks, when we love someone it recalibrates everything. And when we fall in love with Jesus, the way that He fell in love with us, it ought to recalibrate everything. The things that were appealing before ought not be appealing now, because the Spirit of Christ lives in us.

The issue of us sinning is not an issue of us not working hard enough; the issue of us sinning is that we don't love Jesus enough. When it comes right down to it we can work and work and work, but that is the history and the story of the law. The law could not do it. When you read that first third of this passage you see that the law could not control the flesh. The law could not conquer sin. The law could not reconcile us with God because the law was damned by our flesh. We weren't strong enough.

But then Jesus came and showed us what real love was. A love that was so great that He conquered the law, conquered death, conquered sin, took our penalty, our condemnation, our frailty on Himself and died for us so that the offense before God was paid. And now we are free. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. We are no longer a debt to sin. We are no longer a slave to fear. We are no longer in bondage to the flesh. We are free to love Him and to enjoy the benefits of His relationship. And when we love Him first and love Him most and love Him best our sin is not important.

And so if you are struggling with sin, and folks we are going to struggle with sin, okay? I struggle with sin. I struggled this morning on the way to church. And I only give you the easy ones. I am not going to tell you the dark ones because I need you to still listen to me. But I have dark sins I struggle with. And I know people think because I am a pastor I shouldn't struggle. Hogwash! I think sometimes we struggle more because Satan wants us more. There have been times in my life where I wanted to work harder, and the more I worked the more I failed. But when I pause and I think about my

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hopelessness, who I am, my depravity, I look in the mirror and I see the real Dan, not the Dan that you guys see, but the real Dan. And I wonder how anyone could love me - but God does. He loves me so much that He died for me. And when I start getting under the power of that, all of a sudden my heart changes.

I have a friend who struggled with lust and temptation. And this is in the days before the Internet, but he told me he would go to his hotel room and he couldn't wait to turn on the television so he could watch some free porn. He was so pathetic that even when they scrambled it He would keep watching it for a few seconds wishing he could see it. He said he was just addicted. And he said one of the things he decided to finally do was to travel with a picture of his wife and his kids in his suitcase. As soon as he opened his suitcase in the hotel room he would put that picture on top of the television, so that every time he looked at the television he would see his wife and kids. And he said it held him accountable, because he loved them so much, and he didn't want to destroy his relationship with them. So that is what he would do.

Sometimes I think if we would put Jesus front and center in our hearts and lives and remember what He did for us, it would help us with those battles. But we fight them, don't we? We fight them. It can come in a bottle, it can show up on a screen, it can rise up in our chest, it can come out of our mouth, or it can be impacted in our physical actions. We don't invite it. We don't want it, but it is there because we have a broken flesh. But if we have the right relationship with the Spirit there is victory.

I want us to look at three quick things this morning. Here is number one. Romans Chapter 8 talks about those who don't have the Spirit, and their consequences are condemnation. When we don't have the Spirit we are condemned and we are in bondage to sin. And I offer this today on the chance that there could be someone who is watching this on the Internet. Maybe you were scrolling through your Facebook feed and all of a sudden this message is up and you are wondering who this crazy guy is and what he is talking about. Or maybe it could be someone in this room. I don't know, but let me say this, if this morning you feel unworthy, you feel hopeless, you feel like God could not love you, you wonder whether there is a Heaven and a hell, and you don't know what life is all about, I want you to understand something. All of that feeling is God's invitation to you for hope, for healing, for purpose and for direction.

And you are not too broken for God. You are not too far away from Him that He does not still love you. There is no one here who is beyond the reach and the hope of God. And if you feel like there isn't any way, God is saying to you: *'Try me!'* His Spirit is available for you to give you victory over sin. We look at the Ten Commandments, we look at the Bible, we look at what poses as Christianity and some people think they don't even want to be like that.

But there comes a day where we have to decide what is really real, what is really truth, why am I here and where am I going? And when you hit that point, you have to

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ask these questions: *'Is there a God and does He matter?' 'Who put this in place?' 'Who gave me these senses?' 'How can I know anything at all?' 'How can I distinguish between right and wrong?' 'How can I know that some things are virtuous and some things are evil?'*

How do I know any of this? It is because God designed it, and every sensation you have points to the fact that someone designed you and created you. And if He did that there had to be a purpose because design does not occur apart from purpose. And God wanted you to hear this message this morning. God wants you to consider these truths today. The person who does not know Christ is a dead man walking. They are under condemnation, their debt still hangs upon them, and their body awaits execution. The only escape they have is from the judge, the creator of the universe. We can't escape, we can't save ourselves, and we have no hope in others. There are no appeals; it is just us and the judge.

And the judge allowed His Son to pay the penalty for our sins. And when that happens the Bible says we are adopted into the judge's family. We become His and His Spirit lives within us. The Bible says that we become heirs, we inherit all that He is, that He has created, and offers to us. So that is the first state you can have. It is where you don't have the Spirit and you are a dead man walking. You are condemned.

But here is the second state. And it is the one which I think many Christians find themselves living in. We have the Spirit and we struggle all the time. We have the Spirit and yet we struggle all the time. By the way I slip into this state quite frequently. I wish this was a state that once you left it you never entered it again. But the reality is some believers are constantly struggling with their sin. And we all will to some extent. I have talked to people who have worked with those who have been released from prison. And unfortunately there is a high rate of recidivism. Many end up going back to the same things that put them in prison in the first place. And while they are free technically, they are still in bondage. They are in bondage to their past, their culture, their habits and their addictions. And in the end even though they are free, they don't feel free, and often they get dragged right back into their old condition.

And sometimes I think that is true of us as Christians. We are free, we are on our way to Heaven, and yet we act as bad, and sometimes we act worse, than those who don't even know Christ. It is embarrassing, isn't it? It is embarrassing when you see Christian leaders acting worse than people who don't claim to know Christ. But the standard isn't each other; the standard is in the Word of God and our relationship with Him.

And there needs to be this desire in our hearts to experience the fullness of our relationship with Him. When we receive the Spirit of God it is possible to continue to struggle with the ramifications of our previous state of condemnation, the life of sin and bondage and all that comes with it, and our powerlessness, because it was the only life we knew and it draws us back over and over and over.

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Sometimes our past haunts us with our addictions, our habits, our scars, our wounds and when we look in the mirror we see what we were and not who we are now. If we aren't careful we will succumb to a different kind of bondage. Sometimes believers erect systems to deal with their lack of understanding about the spiritual freedom and so they create a new sets of rules. And sometimes it is legalism.

In the day of Paul when he was writing this letter, many people believed in asceticism or Gnosticism or other kinds of 'isms' that created this illusion of righteousness and holiness because they were disciplined, they worked hard, or they had good self-control. But until we fully grasp that we are no longer under any obligation to sin, that our sin has no power over us, nor does our sins in the past, we will never fully gain the benefits of our freedom in Christ. There are many today who are struggling. They have the Spirit, they know Christ, they have trusted Him, they believe the Word of God, but they still struggle.

But there is a third category, and I want to stop and emphasize that because we saw it as we concluded this passage in verse 12 this morning. And that is when the Spirit has us and we thrive. Paul spent much of his ministry reminding believers that we do not fight for victory, but from victory. We are no longer slaves to sin, shame, guilt, blame, temptation and condemnation, but when we live fully in Him loving Him first and best, by seeing ourselves as His, we walk in victory and in freedom.

Let's look in Colossians real quickly. That is Colossians Chapter 2 and verses 13 through 15. I almost used this as my text this morning, but the Romans passage has so much in it, so I decided on it. But please listen to these verses: "***And you, (Paul is speaking to Christians) who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.***"

Do you see what Paul is doing? He is making a legal case here. And he is talking to the Jews at the Church of Colossae. And the Church of Colossae was really dead into Gnosticism. And what he was saying to them was, '*Remember this? Remember when you used to think you were good because you were circumcised? Remember when you thought you were okay because you were circumcised? And that those who weren't circumcised were like the devil, and you were special? But even that did not give you a relationship with God because you kept sinning. You were dead in your trespasses and you were no better than the uncircumcised, because it was a flesh that you were dealing with. Now you have had a circumcision of the Spirit. In other words you have been set apart by God, you have trusted in Him.*'

So how did that happen? He forgave us all our trespasses, verse 14, and look at this legal statement, "***canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.***" We were damned by our sin legally before God. When God as the judge looks at us He sees that we were in debt, we had a contract which was broken, and we are

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guilty and must be punished. But Jesus paid the price for our sins and the debt and the contract was torn up.

Look at the imagery here; it is so beautiful. Listen to what it says in the last part of verse 14: “***This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.***” Can you picture with me what has occurred here? He took this debt we had, this mortgage of sin, and He walked over to the cross, blood dripping and hammered it with a nail, and He wrote in His own blood, ‘*Paid in Full.*’ And we look at that cross and we see our sin debt on it, and we have been made legally free before God by the judge, because of what He did for us.

Now look in verse 15: “***He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.***” I just have to teach this because it is so important. I am a teacher and I just have to do it, okay. Look at this phrase, “***by triumphing over them in Him.***” And right before that it says: “***He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame.***” Paul is using a very specific picture here. When you see the word triumph in Scripture it is not just this casual English word; Paul is referring to something called ‘*The Roman Triumph.*’

And the Roman Triumph was a parade that occurred and I wish I could give you all the details. But basically it went something like this - the culmination of a warrior, or a Roman soldier’s career was to earn a triumphal parade. And we see this mentioned in Scripture several different times, and this is just one of them. In order to get this honor which was a really big deal and it would be like receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom. It was an inauguration so to speak. In order to earn it you had to have expanded the land holdings of the Roman Empire, or of Caesar, you had to have captured and killed so many opposing soldiers, you had to have collected a certain amount of spoil, such as gold, silver and so forth, and then it had to go before the Senate for approval. Once that happened the triumphal parade was scheduled.

So there would be this big parade that would go through a certain route in the city of Rome. And the parade which was called the Triumph would involve the soldier in a chariot with a crown of laurel, of leaves, on his head. And the soldier would be up front and his family would be all around him. The chariot would be covered in gold leaf and would be pulled by four horses. The soldier would be standing in the front of the chariot, dressed in purple and in burgundy or deep red, and then behind the chariot would be all of your soldiers. And then there would be wagons carrying all the spoils of war that you would present to Caesar, as well as all the enemy soldiers and slaves that had been captured. Those that were not made into slaves would be taken down and executed publicly.

And right before the wagons with the captives would be the pagan priest and he would be waving incense all around. So you would be able to literally smell what was going on as well as seeing it. In the front of the parade there would be people throwing flowers which would smell good while in the back there would be incense which was the

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smell of death because behind the priest were the people who were going to be executed or sold into slavery. This was the Roman Triumph parade.

And we need to understand the imagery that Paul is making here in verse 15. He was saying that they had won the triumph. God humiliated the enemy and we have victory over Satan and his demons. They are the condemned guys at the back and Jesus is at the front. And He has defeated them, and He has humiliated them by nailing our debts to the cross which freed us.

Maybe you wonder why all this is important. It is because we are at war, folks, we are at war, and sin is keeping us from being as effective as we can be, and we need to deal with it, and deal with it seriously. We need to understand that when it came to our sin and our trespasses, our debt, our condemnation, and our damned destination, Colossians says in verse 13 (a) that God countered it. We were dead and He made us alive. He countered it.

In verse 13 it says that God having forgiven all our trespasses, not only did He counter it, but He forgave it. And then in verse 14 it says God cancelled it, He cancelled the record of debt. He nailed it to the cross. And then He disarmed the enemy, Satan and his rulers, and all of the demons of hell. And then what did He do? He shamed them. Look at that picture. He countered our sin. He forgave our sin. He cancelled our sin. He nailed our sin. He disarmed our sin. And He shamed those who caused us to sin. Wow! That is just in three verses!

And you tell me that we can't get victory over sin. We absolutely can. You don't have to be a slave to your past. You don't have to be a slave to your addictions. You don't have to be a slave to your shame. You don't have to be a slave to alcohol, or pornography, or anger, or lust, or pride, or greed, or sneakiness. We don't have to because we are no longer a servant to sin. (*Audience: Amen.*) The battle has been won. (*Applause.*) But here is the question - do you love Jesus enough to live like it? Do you love Him enough to claim that victory?

I will close with this. Number one - don't let Satan condemn you with your past. Don't let him condemn you with your past. You are free if you know Christ, free indeed. ***"There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."***

Number two - because He has freed you see yourself as free from the authority of sin. I see these funny t-shirts and so forth and some of them are trite but sometimes they are kind of important to remind us like, *'Not today, Satan.'* We ought to be walking around like that - *'Not today - Satan, I am free from your authority. You have no power here.'*

Number three - devote yourself to God in every area. Fall in love with Him again. If you find your eyes straying back to your old life, if you find your thoughts moving

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back to temptation, then put the picture of God in front of you front and center. Look at your wedding ring. Look at Jesus' scars. Remember the nails. You are free indeed. And then identify with Him more than anything. Identify with Jesus. You are a child of the king; you are not a servant to Satan. You have victory in Jesus; not defeat from the devil.

We don't have to give in. Sin is offensive. Sin nailed Jesus to the cross. Sin tried to damn your soul and it is damming people that you and I love this very moment. So when we walk in victory we are a light of the gospel of Christ. We are a testimony of the redemptive work of Calvary. We are ambassadors of the good news of Jesus Christ. And before Him Satan cowers and hearts are convicted. Before the gospel souls are changed, repentance occurs, healing is received, victory is claimed because it has already been won. And we have nothing to fear. Satan will give us his best shot, but his destiny was sealed at Calvary. We are victorious. Now let's live like it.

Our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed. No longer a servant to sin, no longer a slave to fear, we have been freed indeed. I hope this week that you will love Jesus more than you have ever loved Him. That you will look in the mirror of the Word of God and be reminded of how much He loves us. And let's deal with sin. Let's be the kindest people anyone has ever met. Let's be the bastion of holiness that the Spirit proclaims in us. Let's break the addictions. Let's stop the nonsense. Let's walk in unity. Let's demonstrate grace. Let's be generous in action and in deed. Let's sacrifice for others like Christ sacrificed for us.

Let us be known by our gentleness, not our curses. Let us be known by our generosity, not our arrogance. Let us be known by our holiness, not our addictions. Let us be known by the Spirit of Christ that lives within us, not the spirit of condemnation from which we have been freed.

This morning if you don't know Christ as your Savior, there is a table over here by the side, or one out in the front, and there is someone there who would love to pray with you and to show you what it means to be a follower of Christ. If you say you have been walking in sin, you are addicted, you are hurting, and you need victory, just come on over and let's pray. Grab me, or Pastor Ben, and let's go pray. Let's get you in a Life Community and into some discipleship to remind you of how much Jesus loves you and how much you love Him. And let's make progress together.

In the midst of this pandemic, in the midst of civil unrest, in the midst of a cranky election let's be lighthouses for the truth. Let's walk out of here different today knowing that we are victorious over sin. If you want to take communion on your way out it is available. And as we sing this final song, maybe even as you are standing, let's do business with God and let's let Him fill us in a new way today.

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Father, I pray that you would help us to be what you have called us to be, victorious, walking in victory, loving you first and best, winning over sin. We love you. Thank you, Father, for the victory that was won at Calvary, for the sins that you nailed to the cross, for the debt that has been paid, for the hope we have in you. Now, Father, help that truth to guide us this week. For it is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.