

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you here this morning. It is good to know that there are those of you watching online as well. And whether you are from Life Fellowship's family, or whether you are watching from around the world, we are glad that you are here today. One of the things I like to do as I start off a message is find a point of agreement that we can all agree on. It kind of gives us a foundation to move forward on, so can we all agree that 2020 has kind of been a bummer? *(Yes.)* It just hasn't lived up to expectations.

Ben and I were having lunch earlier this week and we were saying things like, *'Hey, do you remember when we were sitting up on the stage on the first Sunday in January talking about all the cool things we had planned. How we were going to have these things going on in the summer on Sunday nights. And the youth were going to do a big thing. We were going to have watermelon and ice cream and all these good times.'* And none of those things have worked out. Every time we think, *'Okay, let's put a few things on the calendar now,'* then the bottom drops out again.

I mean if 2020 were a candy it would be those orangey pink circus peanuts. Do you know what I am talking about? If it was a drink it would be served in a solo cup and it would be unsweetened tea without ice and a couple of lemon seeds in the bottom. Am I right? *(Yes.)* I mean if it was a presidential candidate - well, I am not going to go there, okay? *(Laughter.)* I don't want to lose anybody.

The reality is 2020 just hasn't been what we all thought it was going to be. I have been on quarantine for the third time, and I am so glad to be free again. But during my quarantine I tried to keep focused. And really it is not that big of a deal because a lot of us are all used to working at home anymore, so my life continued on. We have lived in Zoom world and all of the other things, and the only main difference is I haven't been driving back and forth to work, and I don't meet with people face to face. So it really hasn't been that big of a difference.

But while I was in quarantine I just kind of took a little bit of inventory of myself. And I reached some conclusions that I am really unhappy with myself about, because you know when you go through challenging times you hope to emerge better, stronger, and more equipped. And if I am going to be honest I have developed some bad habits because of the pandemic. I used to get up at a certain time, and a lot of times lately I haven't had to do that, because I don't have an appointment, and people aren't coming in my office. So I could just roll over and take another snooze. I looked in the mirror the other day and saw some pounds that weren't there nine months ago. And no, I am not expecting, it is just the pandemic. *(Laughter.)*

I also realized I had been on social media too much checking out who was saying what and so forth, and quite frankly it got to a point where I decided I needed to go on a Facebook fast. I haven't been on for a month, except just to pop in every once in a while to post something about the church on my church Facebook profile. I needed to stay

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

away from it for a while because there was no discipline. I was on it way too much. I had watched Netflix a lot and I shouldn't be doing that either. It was just a waste of time, because there are things I could have been doing better. And during this time of some level of testing I am afraid I have flunked in too many areas. And I am taking some steps to turn that around quite frankly.

And I think we all have to admit some things, and I am not talking about any of you, but over the last few months I have heard this many times: *'Yeah, I have kind of gotten used to watching church in my pajamas.'* And I am not scolding you if you are watching in your pajamas right now, I am just thankful that you can see me but I can't see you. I am not scolding you if there is a legitimate reason, but you know it is easy after a period of time to just kind of quit going to the gym because it is closed.

And we are going to read a passage this morning about this battle of discipline that even Jesus Himself was aware of. Two weeks ago I preached on the topic of *'Satan Has a Plan.'* He has a plan for your defeat and my defeat. He absolutely has a strategy. I kind of focused on his plan, and now today I want to talk about our response because every one of us is going to have to fight the battle within. We are going to have to fight the battle within.

So let's look if we could at Luke Chapter 4. Let me tell you what happened in Chapter 3. And by the way we find this passage twice in the gospels, but in Luke Chapter 3 we have the baptism of Jesus. Now this was a big deal, I mean this was the culmination of John the Baptist's ministry. Jesus went down to the River Jordan and John the Baptist was there. In front of witnesses Jesus was baptized and the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove. I mean it was a big deal. And the voice of God said, *"This is my Son in whom I am well pleased."* So this was a triumphant moment.

And now we are going to shift into Chapter 4, and we are going to see one of the most important stories that we find in the gospels about Jesus on a personal level. So look if you would in verse 1 of Chapter 4. *"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit. On a mountain top, Jesus had just heard His Father declare not only His love, but His pleasure in Him. What a wonderful reminder to be affirmed by your father. "Returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days."*

"And when they were ended, He was hungry. The devil said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered him, "It is written. Man shall not live by bread alone." And the devil took Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to Him. "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN
Power Struggle Series - Part 5
Dan Burrell

“And Jesus answered him, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.” And he took Him to Jerusalem and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, “He will command His angels concerning you, to guard you.” And “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.” And Jesus answered him, “It is said, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.”

This morning I want to talk to you about the battle within; the battle that is personal; the battle between you and Satan himself. The battle that Satan wages on us trying to get us to live short of the glory of God, trying to get us to live in a way that is unworthy of the name we bear, trying to get us to stumble and lose our reputation or more importantly to damage the reputation of Christ.

I want to stop here for just a moment. I have debated all week long whether I was going to address this or not. I am just not the kind of guy that can see an elephant in the room and not say, ‘Hey, there is an elephant.’ And if you have been reading or listening to the news this week you have seen yet another prominent evangelical leader be revealed to be a mess. And it has been disgusting and disappointing and messy. And I have heard from some of you about it. Now I realize not everybody follows the news, and not everybody may be informed about it, and that is why I kind of had this struggle. But many of you have contacted me because you know this guy has been my boss for fifteen years.

Fifteen years ago Jerry Falwell Junior’s father, Jerry Falwell Senior, who was a friend of mine, knowing that I wanted to enroll my son at Liberty University, and knowing that I could not afford it on a pastor’s salary first offered to pay his tuition. I told him that I had a principle that I didn’t want to be owned. And then he said, ‘Dan, let me give you a job in an online school that I am starting that I think has the potential to take off.’ This was about a year or a year and a half before Dr. Falwell Senior passed away.

And I thought, ‘Well you know sometimes famous people make promises and they don’t always remember them.’ So I thought nothing would come of it, but a week later I got a phone call that said, ‘This is so and so from Dr. Falwell’s office and I need to start your employment processing. I understand you are going to be one of our professors for our new online university.’ So I became an online professor at Liberty University. I have a background in education, and I began teaching at that time for the school of education and I would eventually would move over to the seminary which became the school of divinity.

And for fifteen years while other people play golf, watch TV or do other things, I sit in my recliner and I interact with students around the world. I love it, and it is

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

something I really enjoy doing. I have networked with tens of thousands of young people and older people both in the ministry, or going into the ministry. The average age of my student is between 50 and 60 years of age, because it is graduate school and it is doctoral level. So that is my relationship with Liberty University. I met Jerry Falwell Junior about a year after I became a professor when I was at the Billy Graham liberty dedication and he sat behind me. His dad had just died and I exchanged a few words with him at that time.

That was the only time I ever met him, but we all know who he is. Turn on the news and you see him. Liberty University - over a hundred thousand students - Jerry Falwell Senior's dream took off. And yes, some of you have your kids there. Some of you are planning to go there. Some of you are graduates from there. Two members of our staff are graduates from there. And then the curtain gets peeled back, and we see something that is horrifically disappointing and ugly.

I am not saying all of that because I want to point the spotlight on someone's sin. But let's be honest, this is the latest in a series of public failures that just hurt. We are from Charlotte, North Carolina and if you are old enough to remember the 80's and 90's you remember PTL and a guy by the name of Jim Bakker. The Charlotte Observer got a Pulitzer Prize for exposing his fraudulent and illegal activity, and his immorality.

Why does it seem that almost on a regular basis people that we hold in esteem, who hold positions in the community as spiritual voices, are revealed to be hypocrites and frauds and disappointments and sinners? I want you to know why. It is because Satan has a plan for our defeat. And if you are a believer there is a battle within that we must wage. And if you are a believer, understand this, this battle isn't just about you, it is about the reputation of Christ and His church and the gospel. It is a big deal.

And we can't be casual about it. Satan wants to use you as the casualty in somebody else's life that may not be on the scale of a Jim Bakker, or a Jimmy Swaggart, or a Jerry Falwell Junior, but make no mistake there are people who know you and your reputation and your profession of faith that if it is revealed that you are hypocritical, it will damage them and their perception of Christ.

This is a war. It is spiritual warfare. It is the power struggle. And we are not immune to it. And if we know it exists, would it not be wise of us to prepare ourselves for it? All of us have the ability to fall just as hard as any famous person we have ever known. In fact we are already seeing it as a result of the pandemic. Last week new research was showing that divorce rates have skyrocketed in 2020. We know that suicide rates are up. We know that alcohol sales are up. We know that more people are dying of drug abuse and opioids and those kinds of situations than are literally dying of Covid exclusively. These are real deals going on.

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

There is a war being waged and yes, it is physical, but don't miss the real issue of it also being spiritual. And Satan has a plan for your defeat as well as mine. And it needs to be humbling to us. And it needs to cause a response in us. So I want us to look for just a few moments at this passage in a practical way. I am always torn because I want to spend a lot of heavy time in a theological explanation, because we are a deeper church, and I get that. And I would really like to do that today, but I only get 30 or 35 minutes.

So today instead of doing the deeper theological study where we pick apart all of the different aspects of temptations, such as the theological implications of the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life the different ways of temptations, and cross referencing them with other passages in Scripture, I am going to ask you to be diligent students of the Word, to be like the Bereans, and continue to study that Scripture. Drop an email if you would to Doug Dunham, or to Brad Milks, enroll in our Thursday night study and get deeper. Or you can do it in your Small Group and your Life Community.

But today I want us to be a little bit practical if I could. You and I are going to be engaged every day of our life in a battle of temptation. And it is not just at a level of temptation that says, '*Yeah, I'm under quarantine, so I am going to eat all these chips.*' It is not the kind of temptation I am talking about whenever you say, '*I think I have reached the end of Netflix.*' It is not the kind of temptation that causes you to lose track of time and spend an hour or two on Facebook, or Twitter, or Instagram.

It is the kind of temptation that Satan would use to drive a wedge between you and the reputation of Christ. A kind of temptation that would cause you to be a casualty where your reputation is gone, where people are disappointed, disillusioned and cynical and they walk away from the message. Not because the message is less true, but because the messenger has become the distraction. So let's talk about that a little bit.

James Chapter 1 and verses 14 and 15 says this: "***But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.***" I want you to notice that phrase, "***His own desire,***" because here is the issue. Your desire may not be my desire and my desire is probably not your desire, but all of us have a desire issue. All of us have this weak vulnerability, this area in which Satan can absolutely exploit our natural tendencies, and cause them to lead to an addiction, to an action, to an attitude, to a decision that is inconsistent with the truth that we claim to believe. And we need to be aware of that. For some people it is pride; it is all about them. They feel entitled. They want attention. They want the power.

For other people it is lust. Every time they drive down the street they are constantly fighting it. When they get to the computer they are drawn to certain websites. When they see someone that is attractive to them they begin the conversation that in the back of their minds think it will never get there, but has the potential to lead them to immorality. They have this weakness.

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

For some people it is money. For others it is anger. For some it is an addiction to a chemical, alcohol, pot, meth, or whatever the chemical of choice may be. For others it is laziness and sloth and just a sloppy way of life. And I could go on and on and on. We could talk about the seven deadly sins. We could take a look at the Ten Commandments about which God warned us to be mindful. We could go through all of those things, but the bottom line is this - if you think you aren't going to struggle with sin, you are living in fantasy world.

And the question is - do you know where your weakness is? Do you know that area that Satan would love to exploit in your life? Have you considered that Satan indeed has a strategy for your life? And into that he will pour temptation so that he can cause you, maybe not on a national scale, maybe you won't make the nightly news, maybe people aren't going to call your home and say, '*I am a reporter for the Washington Post,*' but nonetheless people are going to say, '*Hey, did you hear about _____?*' So the question is - what are we doing to put up the fences and the guards so that when Satan pulls up in a seat alongside of us, and says, '*Hey, I have a deal you may want to consider,*' that we know how to respond.

I Corinthians Chapter 10 and verse 13 says this: "***No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.***" And by endure it He means win over it, be victorious. There is nothing that Satan can throw your way that requires you to yield to it, because the victory was won at Calvary. Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. The fact is that you and I have the ability to stand and withstand against all that Satan has to throw at us. The outstanding question is - will we use the tools that God has given us?

There are some ways that Satan attacks us, and I am just going to go through these real quickly, but I think they are really, really important, and I challenge you to jot them down and think about them a little bit later. If you have ever studied the story of Elijah you will see one of the things I think we need to understand. And that is that often when things are going really great, and things are really amazing, whenever you just got baptized and your Father says, '*Good job,*' and you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you better realize that is a great time for Satan to come ring your doorbell. That is a great time for Satan is going to come and say, '*Hey, it's 2020, what a cool year.*'

I talked to some of our young people that were graduating and they said things like, '*All my life we were proud to be the Class of 2020, and we thought it was going to so cool,*' and then they didn't even get to have their prom. There is something about 2020 that I think a lot of us had this sense of anticipation, and man, did the rug get pulled out from underneath us. There is going to be some things and times in our lives when we think, '*Man, this is sweet, this is a great opportunity. I am looking forward to this,*' and all of a sudden Satan is going to appear.

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

This is what happened to Elijah. Elijah had just won an amazing battle. He had fought against all the prophets of Baal, the prophets of the Grove, and God had sent fire down burned up the sacrifice, and even lapped up water and the soaked wood around it. And all of those prophets had been not only defeated but dispatched. I mean they were dead. And this was one of the greatest victories Elijah ever saw. It is an amazing story in the Old Testament and we should all go back and read it again.

Then you go over just a couple of chapters and here is what we find - a lady by the name of Jezebel and her wicked husband Ahab. Ahab was the king and Queen Jezebel had put a death sentence on Elijah which caused Elijah to go into a spiral of depression whereupon he ends up in a cave saying, ***“I, only I, have remained faithful.”*** *‘I, only I, have been the one that stood and now look at me. I am alone and I am hiding in a cave because Jezebel said she is going to kill me. I have been abandoned.’* Elijah went from a mountaintop experience to the depths of depression. If you study that passage you will find several things that Satan does. And if he did that to Elijah he will do them to us.

Here is the first thing he will do - he will isolate you. Isolation is one of his key things because he wants us to feel alone. He wants you to feel like you are the only one who is left. You are the only one who has kept his marriage vows. You are the only one who tries to run his business by biblical principles. You are the only one that doesn't curse at your kids. You are the only one that doesn't get smashed on Wednesday nights. You are the only kid at college that isn't partying their brains out every weekend. You are the only one who is still a virgin. You are the only one who doesn't swear whenever the pastor or mom and dad aren't around. You are the only one, and Satan wants you to think that you are the last one, so why not just give in.

And God said to Elijah, *‘Get up. There are thousands, there are thousands who have not bowed their knee to Baal. You are not alone.’* But even if Elijah had been the only one, he was not alone because God Himself had just delivered the greatest victory that Israel had ever seen under those circumstances. And Elijah was not alone. We know that God ministered to Elijah and had mercy on him. He sent an angel to give him something to eat and something to drink and He spoke to him several times. And eventually Elijah got up to serve God again.

And by the way if you think you are immune from discouragement and depression and from Satan's attacks, if you think that you are so strong that you are never going to feel like giving up and quitting and throwing in the towel because you think that you are alone, that you might as well just go with the flow, if you think that you are not going to be that person at some point in your life - I have a sad but true statement that I need to make for you: *‘You are living outside of reality.’*

You can be a pastor, you can be a missionary, you can be a parent, you can be a dedicated person and there is going to come a crisis in your life at some point that makes

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

you wonder whether God really does love you, whether or not the Word of God matters, whether or not this is really real. And whether you are 17, 27, 47 or 97 years old when that happens, the bottom line is this - it is part of Satan's plan. And he wants you to feel alone.

Here is the second thing he will do - he is going to exaggerate. And here is why exaggeration is one of his techniques. It is because he wants you to feel overwhelmed. He wants you to feel alone and overwhelmed. He wants you to feel isolated and overwhelmed. And so he will exaggerate. And he will make you feel like no one cares. He will make you feel like the battle is too great to withstand. He will make you feel like it is really not worth it.

The third thing that happens is condemnation. Condemnation is what he uses to make us feel hopeless and without hope. *'You are going to get murdered. You are going to get fired. You are going to get ridiculed. I know your past. I know your heart. I know you haven't done it, but you sure want to. How could God love someone like you?'* Hey, does Satan ever do this to you - when you are lying in bed at night turn on the movie camera in your brain and say, *'Let me just show you for an hour or so all the stupid things you have done?'* He does that to me and I really hate it. I hate going to the movies with the devil. *(Laughter.)*

Believe me when I say that he has an amazing archive of all the stupid things, sinful things, wicked things, dumb things I have ever thought about doing, wanted to do, did do and everything in between. And he has them on a single reel and he has the ability to play them back for me and condemn me. *'Ha, Burrell, you are going to preach tomorrow?'* Maybe you wonder if he said that to me last night - yes, he did. *'Burrell, you are going to preach with your heart, with your struggles, with what you thought, with what you did, with what you said, with what you wanted to do and would have done if you could have done it except you were too afraid someone would find out?'* Satan has a plan for our defeat. There is a battle within and he uses condemnation. And yet, I will say: ***"There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."*** That is what Paul said and I know that, and yet Satan tests me over and over on that. And he will test you as well.

The last thing Satan will do is rationalization. This is my deadly one because I love to debate and I can rationalize just about anything. And we all can, can't we? Don't we just rationalize all over the place? Yesterday I rationalized my way through an entire bag of Cheesy Puffs. *(Laughter)*. And I am ashamed because I only meant to have a few. They are those little cheesy balls things, you know? But they are my Achilles Heel. *'I am only going to have three.'* *'More.'* *'I will quit after these three.'* *'And then after the next three.'* *'And now there is just a handful left in the bottom of the bag and they will get stale.'* *'I don't want to waste them because that is not being a good steward.'*

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

The next thing I know I am lying in a pile of cheesy ball dust with gunk on my fingers that has to be scraped off with sandpaper. I literally went in the bathroom and looked at myself and I had cheesy dust in my goatee and cheesy dust on my shirt, and I said, *'You disgust me, Dan.'* (Laughter.)

But I can rationalize it though. And you and I will rationalize everything. *'I am under pressure.'* *'I am under stress.'* *'No one knows what is going on with me.'* *'Hey, my dad was a drunk'* *'I know everyone else is going to get ahead, but not me.'* *'I am going to get this big deal even if I have to lie and cheat a little bit, but then I will be able to tithe more then.'* *'If I do this my wife will never find out.'* *'And by the way, I remember when she said this to me.'* And we make all these rationalizations over and over again, getting to that point where we cross the barrier and say, *'I win.'* *'I will indulge.'* *'No one will ever catch me.'* *'It is okay.'*

I have had people sit in my office and rationalize immorality and divorce. I had someone say to me one time, *"It is okay with God for me to divorce my wife because God wants me to be happy and I am not happy."* And I said to him, and I will say it to you, *"God is not nearly as interested in your happiness as He is in your holiness."* (Amen.) Any happiness felt apart from holiness is not real happiness; it is a temporary thrill, and it is not the kind of happiness that comes with the joy of Christ that says, *"Well done."*

So what are some tools that Jesus used? Let's look at them real quickly. Number one - He used prayer. Look in Luke Chapter 3 and verse 21 where it says: ***"Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying."*** Folks, one of the things we have to do is pray. Some of you are thinking, *'Of course you have to say that because you are a pastor.'* No, pray because it helps us to stop. It breaks the cycle. It recaptures the conversation, and it refocuses the intention. And when we are under temptation, when we stop and pray, it resets everything.

The second thing is this - remember God's love. Look what happened here, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in bodily form like a dove. And the voice came from Heaven, ***"You are my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*** When we get an idea of how much God loves us, we won't want to lose that.

Years ago before the Internet back in the 90s I had a friend who confessed to me that he had had this problem for years. He traveled a lot for business and as soon as he got to his hotel room he would head to the television for HBO, or one of the networks where he could see a little bit of skin. He said he did that every time he traveled. But he told me he found a way to fix it. He had an 8 by 10 picture of his wife and his kids and he would sit it in front of the TV in each hotel room, and then he would put the remote in the drawer. And every time he wanted to go to the TV he would see the picture of his wife and his kids and he would ask himself, *'Is it worth it?'* He told me that he loved his wife and his kids more than anything, and when he looked at that picture the temptation would go away.

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

It is an important thing to love your wife or your husband and it is an important thing to love your kids, but it is an even greater thing to love Jesus with all of our hearts, with all of our souls and with all of our minds. That is the greatest commandment of all. So identify His love.

Number three is this - the Holy Spirit. Notice what it said in the first verse that we read this morning. **“And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit.”** And here is not the issue, if you are a believer you have the Holy Spirit, but the question is - does the Holy Spirit have you? Are you walking in the Spirit? Remember what Paul said, ‘*Be filled with the Spirit,*’ and that word ‘filled’ is filled, filled, and continuing to be filled, continue, continued and continuing to be filled.

It also has a military meaning that says, ‘under the authority of.’ So are we under the authority of the Holy Spirit? Is He literally guiding the decisions, the thoughts we have, the actions we take? Are we under His authority? We may have the Holy Spirit, but for a lot of us Christians the Holy Spirit doesn’t have us. And that is done by emptying ourselves, and by yielding. Paul said this in Romans: **“Know what is true, reckon** (and that means think about it) **and then yield.”** And that is the process for all of us. Know the Word of God, mediate and think about it, and then yield to it.

Then the last thing is - Scripture. Over and over and over again in this passage that we read earlier, Scripture was used. **“It is written.” “It was said.”** By the way I want to point out something else. Guess who else knows Scripture? Satan. And I would particularly like to say to you young people who may be watching from college, or getting ready to go to college, that you need to understand that one of the ways that Satan likes to use to put doubt into the minds of young believers is to use Scripture. He will tell you it is twisted and it is out of context.

And it will also be done by people with manipulative purposes, and it is often not answered by people who have the educational knowledge and theological training to respond. Just because they tell you a lie, don’t assume that it is true. Study it. The Word of God stands against lies. And people try to manipulate and twist it and take it out of context just like they do on the news and in the classrooms, and your friends and your buddies will do it too. Many do it by twisting Scripture, so we need to study and find the truth, and that is why it is important to be a student of the Word of God. The Scripture has the answers for us on how to navigate life.

Now here is the last thing and I will be done. I want to give you some very quick practical suggestions on how to overcome temptation. Number one - see temptation as both spiritual and physical. It is both a spiritual deal and it is a physical deal. You know what - people have affairs every day and they don’t make the headlines. People embezzle money and they don’t make the news. But every once in a while the right person commits sin and it becomes public. And do you know what the focus becomes? It is the spiritual issue. We have seen it played out in our headlines too many times and we have

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

seen it this week - the biggest hypocrite in America. And as I have seen people's response it has added a layer of cynicism to young people that absolutely breaks my heart. At the same time I want to say this - welcome to the real world.

There are a bunch of fakes out there, and they are not just politicians. Sometimes they are pastors. And by the way, if we are going to be honest there are days when we are fake too. I don't like that about myself. I want better than that for myself, but I am a broken dude, and I have a sin nature. But that doesn't in any way make this book one bit, one iota less true. (*Amen.*) The value of the Scripture is there apart from the messenger who delivers it, or the container in which it is carried. Satan wants you to rationalize like, 'Why should I keep the rules?' 'Look at my college president.' 'Why should I keep the rules?' 'Look at my old Sunday school teacher.' 'Why should I keep the rules?' 'Look what my dad did.' 'Why should I keep the rules?' 'Look what the guy who led me to Christ did.'

If you want an excuse for walking away from truth and walking away from your faith, I guarantee you Satan will provide them to you in spades. He will do it every time. Your relationship with truth and God and His Word needs to be independent of how others respond to it because it is personal, it is between you and God. It is between you and Him. And yes, I hate it, I hate what I found out last week, and I hate it when I look in the mirror and see the real me, I hate that. But I know this - I aspire to be better than my worst moments. And I am not going to pretend because you know what happens - the more we pretend, the bigger hypocrites we become.

Maybe it is time for all of us to just get really honest about our struggles and our doubts and our failures and realize that failure isn't final, and it is not fatal. As long as we have the hope that matters which is the hope in Christ there is a new day, a new opportunity. That is why we believe in the redemptive nature of Christ.

Let me just say this to you - Satan will try to cancel you but God will never let it happen. God does not believe in cancellation; God believes in redemption. And whether you are one of His, or not one of His, the path that begins to restoration is the path that begins with Jesus, through repentance and humility. We need to see temptation as the physical battle that it really is. Galatians Chapter 2 and verse 20 says: "***I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.***"

Secondly we need to just avoid evil things. Avoid evil things. James Chapter 4 and verse 7 says: "***Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.***" I think that we as Christians have become quite comfortable with seeing how close we can get to being accepted by the world and indulging in sin and we no longer strive for holiness. I dealt with this when I was a high school principal as I dealt with this with kids on the issue of morality. And they would say, 'Well what is losing your

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

virginity mean?' There was a phrase at that time called 'technical virginity.' And it meant how close to this line can I possibly get and still call myself pure.

I don't know, because you know the smart thing is not to be close to the line; the smart thing is to be over here. The line will lead you astray ever time. It is too easy to lose your balance and wobble over it. And all of us need to be away from the line. We need to be holy as He is holy. Maybe you think that sounds legalistic. No, I'm sorry I am a little tired of people throwing the legalism charge up every time we talk about trying to be like Jesus.

Maybe you think, '*Yeah, but I know hypocrites,*' and yes, you are looking at one, but it doesn't mean I shouldn't be trying to be like Jesus. Our faith is aspirational. Otherwise we would just give in and live like the devil. It sure would be a lot easier some days I will tell you that, particularly when I'm driving. (*Laughter.*) There are a lot of times I want to live like the devil. I want to return evil for evil; I really do. I wish I didn't, but I truly do. But you see I aspire to something better than me and that is Him in me.

The third thing is this - know and pray Scripture. Know it and pray it. If you are not reading it, you won't know it. If you aren't memorizing it, you won't be able to pray it, quote it, and throw it back in Satan's face. Every time Satan tried to get Jesus to sin, all Jesus said was: "***It is written.***" "***It is written.***" "***It is written.***" He was quoting Deuteronomy and Psalms. You have to know the Word of God.

How many of us during this pandemic have put our Bibles aside? How many of us have failed to be in the Word? How many of us have failed to listen to the teaching and preaching of the Word of God? How many of us in this time where our world is turned upside down have neglected that which could be our very lifeline? Psalms 119 and verse 11 says this: "***I have stored up your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you.***"

I went to a Christian high school and they did something that drove me nuts. They forced us to memorize Scripture. For all of you folks who are like, '*Well, I'm not going to force my kids to do anything spiritual because it will ruin them,*' no, no it won't. I had to memorize a chapter of Scripture every month before I could play basketball. Maybe you are wondering if that is legalism. I think it was, it was horrific and I hated it, but you know what I appreciate? I appreciate the fact that now I can quote Scripture. We always used the King James version so sometimes when I am preaching I probably sound like I am 400 years old. But it is because I memorized all this Scripture and it just comes out. It pops out all the time. I don't even know I remember it until it just comes out. I certainly wasn't trying to remember it at the time; I was just trying to be able to play basketball. (*Laughter.*)

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

Some of you have had kids in Awana. Some of you have kids in Kid Life where they memorize Scripture and you may wonder if it does any good. Absolutely it does good. Are they retaining it? I don't know, but if you run something through a colander at least it is cleaner at the end than it was when it started. We need the Word of God. We need to be under it, teaching it, learning it and praying it.

Number four - don't isolate, journey with someone. Many times when we get into sin the first thing we want to do is push away those people that need to speak truth to us the most. Don't do it. By the way if you know someone like that, chase them. That is love. Chase them. Don't let them isolate. And the fact is all of us are going to need a friend at some point in our life, someone who will put their arm around us and say, '*Cut it out. Stop it. And I love you enough to journey with you.*'

Many of us are so interested in judging people in their journey that we are not willing to join them in their journey. And we need to be more interested in joining people in their journey than judging them, because when we are joining them we also are taking heed lest we fall, and also the three stranded cord is harder to break. In fact it cannot be broken.

Number five - change your habits and your location. If you know you are tempted about something don't get involved. If you know there is an area of weakness, if you know you are prone to addiction, stay away from the stuff. If you know that you have a problem with pornography, don't take your laptop to the bedroom. Put your computer in the living room, with the screen where everyone can see it. And get Covenant Eyes. I get Covenant Eyes reports from a bunch of young men that I am working with on breaking an addiction. And every day I get a report, '*They saw this. They saw that.*' And I am working with them.

Maybe you would ask, '*Do men really need that?*' Absolutely, we do. I need accountability in my life. Maybe you wonder if that is true about this area or that area. Whatever area it is journey with someone, change your habits and your location. Take proactive actions that will prevent you from being seduced by the devil. The media mocked Mike Pence ferociously for this, and it is what Billy Graham said: "*I will not even get in an elevator alone with a woman.*" Billy Graham never had an accusation made against him about his morality because he had what we call now 'The Billy Graham Rule.'

So the world may mock us about that, they may say it is anti-feminism and think that we must be a pervert. You can throw all you want at it, but it is the smart rule. It is a smart rule anytime it keeps you from sin. If you see me driving down the road with a woman in my car I guarantee you it is either my wife or my daughter. It's been my rule in ministry. I one time saw a woman broken down by the side of the road, and she asked me to take her someplace. I told her I couldn't, but what I did was sit there in my car until help came to take her home. And that was because as a pastor I didn't want to be

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN

Power Struggle Series - Part 5

Dan Burrell

seen with an attractive lady sitting in my car and have people wondering and assuming. You may say, ‘*Oh, do we live in a world that cynical?*’ Oh yeah. And by the way I am a man. I would never intentionally do that, but you give Satan the right circumstances in my life and I will do what any other guy would do. So what do I have to do to prevent that? I have to set up these practices because I know my heart is desperately wicked.

The last thing is this - persevere. Hebrews Chapter 12 and verse 1 has a great message that comes right after the great faith chapter with the hall of fame. The beginning of the verse says, “***Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,***” Sometimes people say, ‘*Well, that’s like we are in a stadium and running this race.*’ No it is a mixed metaphor actually. The witnesses there are like legal witnesses, they are testimony, and so it is like having heard the testimony of these great people here is what we need to do: “***Lay aside also every weight and the sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance,***” and that word ‘endurance’ is another word for perseverance, “***the race that is set before us.***”

I am at that stage in my life where there is more in my rear view mirror than in my head lights. Boy it goes by quickly. And I said to one of my accountability partners the other day that my goal at this stage that is stronger for me every single day is that I can finish this race without being a casualty, like so many that I respect and love, friends and people I have learned from, people I have ministered with. Lord, please, please, please, please let me finish well. That is perseverance and it is worth it. It is worth it. Satan has a plan for your defeat. The battle is within. The warfare is real. There is a power struggle between Satan and everything that God loves and values and sacrificed Himself for. This week let us not be casualties; let us be victorious.

I’m going to pray and then we are going to sing one last song. When we stand remember we have communion over here. If you want to have communion with one of our pastors or team members please come over here. If you want to pray with someone one of our pastors or team members will pray with you. Or you can go over to our Prayer Room which is over to the right of the lobby and there will be someone there to pray with you. Whatever you do let God speak to your heart.

Maybe you don’t know if you are a believer and you want to talk to someone about it, we are here for you. We are not going to judge you, we want to journey with you. No game playing, we just want you to know there is hope. We believe this is really real. Forgive us when we don’t act like it, forgive us when we mess it up, but don’t let us prevent you from seeing Him. That is the big thing. Whatever God is doing in your life today, let’s turn this pandemic thing around again. Let’s quit 2020ing our life and get back on track and see who Jesus would have us reach. Let’s be people of the Word and let’s be consistent with our walk. Let’s stand as we pray.

Father, help us to be people of the Word. Help us to stand, and then again stand. Help us when Satan comes and says he has a deal for us, help us to stand resolute, and

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITHIN
Power Struggle Series - Part 5
Dan Burrell

Speak the truth of the Word of God to Satan's face. Help us not to be the casualty that prevents others from seeing the real Jesus in our lives. And Father, let that begin with me. 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.