

The believer's victory in Christ

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Date: 15 March 2026

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[0 : 00] So what seems to be like a personal conflict within can be shared among people and then it leads to certain actions that lead to conflict that we see externally.

! There's a constant internal conflict that is going on within us as human beings. There are life-changing decisions we want to make. Do we choose this or that? There's that conflict that goes on at that level. We need to make choices quickly. Where do we live? What happens? What becomes of the future as individuals and as families?

So to various degrees, there's a conflict we see when we need to make choices that would define our lives. And even believers in Christ, there's this conflict that goes on. There's the internal struggle that we face between yielding to the desires of the flesh and yielding to what the Spirit of God wants in us, even as children of God.

And especially from where we read, we see this in the life of Paul. This chapter really is one of those chapters where you see Paul pouring out his heart, you know, talking about his personal struggles as a child of God.

And I don't know about you, but in Scripture, I tend to do this where subconsciously or consciously we pedestalize certain people we see in Scripture because of their influence.

[1 : 22] I mean, he wrote half of the books in the New Testament. And he has this, you know, deep way of exposing the mind of God on issues. And you expect that somebody like this should be perfect.

Somebody like this should not struggle, you know. We expect someone like Phil or Daniel, you know, or Deacons among us to be these superhumans that you don't expect some of these things. But, I mean, Paul is that man where we see having this struggle. So, again, perhaps as children of God, we can think about it in this way as well.

So, what happens? There's this conflict that goes on within us. The passage we are reading today or we've read, you know, was set in the Roman Empire as well.

The church that was growing in Rome at that point. And Rome at that point was ruled by Emperor Nero. And we know the context in which the church lived with the persecution and all that.

[2 : 22] And so, the society was composed of a mixture of people and with various social hierarchies. And this was, this demographic seems to be reflected even in the church. They had all kinds of people in the church.

And if you read through the book of Romans, you see that the church was composed of different kinds of people, socially, intellectually, in terms of economic status and all that.

And so, this were the people Paul was writing this letter to. And Paul wrote this letter sometime within, believed within this time, AD 57 to 58, around that time.

The portion we read, perhaps, if you want to go back to chapter 5, you see an argument that Paul begins from there. So, chapter 5 talks about being justified by grace.

By grace, not through the law. Chapter 6 talks about the fact that though we are justified or we are made right with God through grace that has been imputed on us because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we should not use that as a license to yield to the desires of the flesh, you know, but wholly surrender to God.

[3 : 33] But then in chapter 7, we see Paul talking about the fact that, yes, while this is the ideal case, there are struggles we can have. There are struggles we may have as children of God in our work with God.

And so, he ends by talking about the fact that our victory is in Christ, you know, based on that.

And I'm going to talk a bit about that as we go on. And we'll see this thought shared in the next few minutes. So, there are three points I picked from the text we read.

And I'll just run through them quickly. We see something about the law, the righteous law and sin's exploitation.

So, we see that the law is good, you know, from what we read, verses 7 to verse 12. We want to go back and read that. But we see that the law itself is good.

[4 : 32] And he repeated it. Especially if you read verse 12. So, then the law is holy and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good. But then we see that in verse 11, sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me.

So, sin used the opportunity that, saw an opportunity in the law to, you know, to deceive Paul as he shares here.

So, there's a moral code. There's a sense of moral code we see here. There's a standard. The law is righteous. There's a standard that God expects. You know, there's a standard that God has set. And we have seen this throughout scripture, various portions of scripture. There are standards that God has set. And life needs to have boundaries at some point.

You can't just live as we want or as we wish. And so, that's why law, commandments, and all that, essentially, you know, there has to be a sense of order.

[5 : 32] And this gives us a picture of the idea. That is how we should live. I mean, even how God created the earth. If we go back to Genesis, you'll see that there, God, you know, there's a sequence in which God set things and even set life generally.

You know, there's a standard. But then the problem that we have is that sin came in and took advantage of the law to put one to death. This death now is not just a physical death, but the idea or the separation from God in this sense.

And we see that, especially the Garden of Eden, when sin came in, that was where it started from. That sin, you know, took us away from what God had intended to be.

And, of course, we don't need to go into the story. But the death there is not necessarily the physical death, but the inability to have that consciousness to commune with God naturally that God intended for us to have in the beginning.

So, this is the reality that we deal with. And we see Paul talking about I, I. There's a lot of I's. I lost count of the I's I saw through the scripture.

[6 : 47] So, it's like there's the law, there's the sin, then there's us. And there's this struggle that is going on. There's a conflict we see going on that, you know, among these variables.

Which tells us that our personal efforts cannot, you know, make us victor. We cannot be victorious over sin. And we cannot please God by personal efforts.

It has to be true grace. And we'll look at that much later. So, no personal act of righteousness or keeping regulations can make us right with God.

We have what you call an imputed righteousness because of the obedience of Christ. The second point is the battle, the battle that is real.

The real battle, I think, from verse 14 to 20 and even beyond. We see Paul in a stylistic way putting, sometimes I get confused when I'm reading that.

[7 : 47] What I want to do, I do not do what I want to do. That sequence is interesting. And it gives you a notion of this struggle that goes on. I struggle and all that.

So, the battle is real. That's the reality of the typical Christian life. And there's this internal struggle that happens. Of course, the choice between what God wants us to do and what the sinful nature, you know, requires or, you know, wants us to do.

And so, sometimes, as we have come for communion, we have this feeling of inadequacy before God. We are not worthy to come before this table, you know. We feel we've done things that disqualify us from coming to commune with God and, you know, fellowshiping with him through communion.

But, again, just like I said, no human act of righteousness or works attains God's holiness. We should remember that the righteousness we have is imputed, you know, accredited to us through the grace we have in Christ.

And we see this in chapter 4, verse 5 to 8. And other scriptures, too, we see in the Bible. And then the last point I have to share is that the victory is in Christ. As we have this conflict that is going on within us, we struggle with the sinful nature, you know, what the sinful nature desires and what we know God wants us to do.

[9 : 11] This tells us something, you know, that we have the consciousness that this is what we should be doing. But the power to do it does not come from us. It does not come from us.

And we see Paul alluding to that in verse 25. Thank God for Jesus who delivers us, you know, especially through his death and resurrection on the cross and the salvation we have, he has given us.

So Christ won for us. And so we engage not for victory but from the point of victory. We are not seeking victory. We are already victorious.

And this, from this vintage point, we have the grace. We have the power. God has given us the power to live the lives that we ought to live. And we see 1 Corinthians 15, verse 57.

It says, So as we struggle sometimes with what this conflict that is going on between what the sinful nature wants and what we know God wants us to do.

[10 : 21] Let's remember that we have victorious. So we should not feel defeated. Some way in Proverbs says, The righteous man falls seven times and rises again. But the wicked, you know, falls to his own destruction.

You know, for somebody to fall, it means you are standing. You can't fall. I think there's a proverb that says, Someone who is on the floor is not afraid of falling anymore. Because you can't fall anywhere anymore.

But when you are standing, you have the tendency to fall. And this tells us that that's why the righteous, we fall seven times, but rise again. Why? What gives us the power to rise? It's Christ. We can't rise on our own. And there are many people that feel defeated. I've had conversations with certain people over the years who had positively impacted my life by Christian work with God.

But for some reason, they don't seem to believe anymore. And when you have a conversation with them, sometimes you have this, you get the sense that many people feel offended by God.

[11 : 27] Many people also feel that, well, look, I've tried this Christian thing. It's not working. Today I rise. Tomorrow I fall. I can't do this. I can't continue like this. I'd rather stay on the floor and just do what?

I just keep on living my life. There's no need for this. One of the things we should remember is that, look, we can rise because of the victory Christ has given us.

And so we should not feel defeated. We are victorious. And that is where we engage our Christian life from. We're not fighting for victory. And so the struggle against the fleshly desires is the reality of the Christian experience.

No matter who you are, whether you think you're up there in your Christian life or low, the struggle is real. There's this conflict within that is real, no matter who you are. But let us be reminded that in Christ we have victory.

And this same Christ dwells in us through his spirit. And because Christ dwells in us through his spirit, we can always stand in victory. We can always continue in our Christian journey.

[12 : 26] On this pilgrim's journey we have. You know, remembering that the redemptive power, God's redemptive power has defeated the power of sin.

You know? So sin can no longer have, I mean, Romans chapter 6 verse 13 to 14 tells us that sin should no longer reign on our mortal bodies so that we, you know, yield to his evil desires.

Because we have, God has given us, the power of sin is broken in our lives. The power of sin is broken in our lives. And in the cross is liberation. So we shouldn't feel we are under, though the sinful, we have, there's the presence of sin that we have to grapple with.

But remember that the power of sin has been broken. And since the power of sin has been broken, you know, in the cross we are free. Christ has given us that liberation. Verse 25, you see that.

And the true freedom is in Christ. It's nothing conforming. Like I gave the example of people that feel, look, they can't do this anymore. So they just have given up on the Christian life to just live their lives based on impulse and what they feel they want to do.

[13 : 33] You know? That is conforming. But the freedom we have in Christ should help us, you know, to engage from victory. And so in our path to play, let's remember that there are things to put off and there are things to put on.

We see that in Colossians chapter 3, verse 1 to 14. If you read that, Paul is quite consistent in the kind of chain of thoughts. You see several themes spread across many of his books.

Because the problem in the church, the conflict that people face seems to be the same everywhere. I can tell you that the challenge of the church, the personal Christian challenge that one faces here

in the UK, it's not so different from the ones that I see or have faced in, maybe say, Nigeria, where I grew up most of my life.

The problems are not necessarily different. But we thank God that in Christ, there's this thing that the victory is universal. The power is universal. The power of God that works in the UK works everywhere.

It works everywhere. And so it gives us the, we have that drive to wherever we go in the earth or the world, we can live victoriously in Christ because of this power.

[14 : 56] And so let's also remember that whatever we feed grows. So we need to feed our spirit with the things of God. Coming to fellowship is one of those things. Reading God's word.

But, you know, praying together, fellowshiping with believers, the strength we draw when we come together. That's why, as much as possible, I look forward to coming to the gathering of believers because you draw a lot of strength when we come.

When you are weak, you know, you come and feed your spirit here. You talk to people. You get encouraged. And your spirit is uplifted. And you feel like you can go again, you know.

And whatever we starve, die. So that sinful nature, when you starve the sinful nature, I mean, it seems logical that what you feed grows and what you starve will die.

And one of the things that we can starve is the desires to do certain things. And, you know, they are, what's the expression now? They are mutually exclusive.

[15 : 54] They cannot, it's either this or the other. The more this one is fed, the more the other dies. And the more the other one is fed, the more the other dies. And so we need to remember this, that we need to feed our spirits with things of God.

So as we commune, let's remember that we are not slaves of sin, but sons of God. We have this in Galatians chapter 4 verse 7.

I'm sure we went through it a couple of months ago, the series of Galatians. And so we can come to our Father's table with boldness to commune, reflecting on our victory in Christ, that the power of sin is broken.

And so we are free to live as we ought to, not as we want to. There's a pattern we ought to live. And God's divine power has given us all we need to live for him.

And all this is made possible through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, you know, who died on the cross and lives in us.

[16 : 56] So let's go with confidence. And let's come to God's table as we commune, with confidence, knowing that the power of sin is broken in our lives. We are fighting from victory.

And we have the power to live as God intends us to live. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. And that's why I want us to end with this song, this session with this song, talking about what can wash away our sin.

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make us whole again? Oh, precious is that flow that makes us white as snow. No other fountain, nothing but the blood of Jesus. And this blood is what, you know, we reflect on as we come to God's table.

So as the music starts, let's feel free to be on our feet and sing together. Yeah.