

Galatians 5:16-26

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- [0 : 0 0] Amen. Would you turn with me in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 5. This morning we're looking at Galatians chapter 5 verses 16 through 25.
- It's found on page 975 in the Pew Bibles if you're looking on in one of those. Galatians chapter 5 beginning at verse 16.
- Paul says this. But I say walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
- For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit. And the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do.
- But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality. Impurity.
- [1 : 0 2] Sensuality. Idolatry. Sorcery. Enmity. Strife. Jealousy. Fits of anger. Rivalries. Dissensions.
- Divisions. Envy. Drunkenness. Orgies. And things like these. I warn you as I warned you before that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
- Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit.
- More than any other passage in the book of Galatians this passage is about the Holy Spirit. Seven times Paul mentions the Spirit. He begins with the command walk by the Spirit.
- [2 : 0 6] And he ends with a call to keep in step with the Spirit. Those are the only two commands in the entire passage actually. Now many people today I find are curious about the Holy Spirit.
- Over the past few years various people have come to me with questions. Such as who is the Holy Spirit? What does your church believe about the Holy Spirit? How should we expect the Holy Spirit to be at work in our lives?
- Or are there ways that we can be more open to the Holy Spirit's work in this church? And these are all good questions. And it is true that sometimes churches like Trinity which emphasize solid biblical doctrine have sometimes had a tendency to neglect the person and the work of the Holy Spirit.
- But today we have an opportunity to look into one of the great New Testament passages about the Spirit. Now this passage won't answer every question that you might have about the Holy Spirit.
- But it will give us some solid foundations to build on. Now we've been looking at the book of Galatians. And as we've seen the main theme of Galatians is that Jesus Christ came to set us free.

[3 : 17] We've seen that he came to set us free from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of our sin. We've seen that he came to set us free from shame and alienation.

That we're justified before God. And that we're accepted and adopted into his family. Paul says in chapter 5 verse 1 it is for freedom that Christ has set us free.

And so as we come into this last major section of Galatians. Paul's addressing the question since we're free in Christ. What does it look like to live in that freedom?

Since we're no longer under the Old Testament law. What does it mean to live a holy life that pleases God? And the answer that Paul gives in this passage is by walking in the Spirit.

Now this passage is not only about the Holy Spirit. It's also about the flesh. It's about the Spirit versus the flesh. It's about the spiritual struggle that goes on within each of us.

[4 : 21] At every moment of every day. The struggle between our sinful desires and our godly desires. The battle between the flesh and the Spirit.

And so today we'll see two things. The first thing we'll see is that within every Christian. There is a battle raging. Between the flesh and the Spirit. And the second thing we'll see is how the Spirit enables us to overcome the flesh.

So first within every Christian there is a battle raging between the Spirit and the flesh. Now you might say what's the flesh? Well when Paul's talking about flesh. He's not simply referring to our physical bodies.

He's referring rather to our sinful nature. Every human being since Adam and Eve. Is born with a sinful nature. A self-centered nature.

My wife and I have a son Nathan. He's 20 months old. And Nathan is cute. Maybe you've seen him running around the church. Maybe you've told us he's cute too. Well we love him.

[5 : 24] I don't care whether you think he's cute he is. And like all other human beings. He bears the image of God. But even at his tender young age.

There are some times when I'm pretty sure he clearly understands exactly what we have said to him. And he does exactly the opposite. Or he fixates on something that he sees.

We might drive by Dunkin Donuts. And he sees the sign and he says bagel, bagel, bagel. Out! Out! Even if he just finished eating his breakfast.

He will not be satisfied until he gets what he wants. Or until his attention is distracted elsewhere. Part of the challenge of parenting is figuring out how do you respond to these strong desires.

We want to provide for Nathan and his legitimate needs. We want him to be secure in our love and care for him. At the same time we want him to know that he's not the center of the universe.

[6 : 22] His will won't always be done. And that's a good thing. See we're all born in the flesh. We have a natural bent towards self-centeredness, self-gratification, self-justification.

And sometimes when a very young child expresses these tendencies. We can pass them off as laughable. Perhaps they're not fully aware of what they're doing. But it's not funny when an older child becomes oppositional and defiant.

Toward their parents or teachers. It's not funny when a marriage breaks down. Because of unresolved enmity and strife. It's not good when we fixate on something that belongs to someone else.

And we can't be satisfied until we get it. In verses 19 through 21 Paul lists 15. Works of the flesh. Now I won't go through each of these 15 in detail.

That would be a 15 point sermon on works of the flesh. Plus 9 points on fruits of the spirit. 24 point sermon. I won't do that for you today. But within this list there are four categories. The first three are about sexual sin.

[7 : 27] Sexual immorality. Impurity. Sensuality. The next two are about misdirected worship. Adolatriy. Idolatry. And sorcery. Then there are eight words. The longest section. About divided relationships.

Enmity. Strife. Jealousy. Fits of anger. Rivalries. Dissensions. Divisions. Envy. And finally two. About uncontrolled self-indulgence. Drunkenness. And orgies. And then Paul says things like these.

See the flesh is like a mutating virus. It's hard to stamp out because it manifests itself in different ways in different people. So you might not currently display every single one of these 15 symptoms.

I hope you don't display all of them all at once. But the reality is every one of us has the virus. And like a virus or a parasite the flesh attaches itself to something that is good.

And then corrupts it. You see each of these four categories. Sex. Worship. Relationships. Entertainment. Are good gifts from God. God invented sex.

[8 : 32] God made us to worship. God created us for relationships. God loves a good party. But the flesh latches onto all these things.

And twists them. Corrupts them. So we idolize our career. And then find ourselves lonely. Because our overriding commitment to our career above everything else has prevented us from actually developing deep and lasting and meaningful relationships.

Or we idolize a relationship. Your boyfriend or girlfriend or husband or wife. And then when that person fails to meet all of our desires. Or live up to all of our expectations.

We explode in anger against them. Recently someone said to me what we idolize we eventually demonize. When it doesn't fulfill us. The flesh latches onto God's good gifts but it corrupts them.

Because it fails to recognize and honor the giver. God. And the result is only destruction. Verse 19 says the works of the flesh are evident. In other words they can't be hidden for long.

[9 : 40] First Timothy 5.24 says the sins of some people are conspicuous. Going before them to judgment. But the sins of others appear later. Now it doesn't say the sins of some people are obvious.

And the sins of other people are hidden. It says the sins of some people are obvious now. And the sins of other people will be obvious later. And if they're not evident on earth. They will become evident at the final judgment.

When everything is brought to light before God. See it's a little bit like rotting meat. You can keep rotting meat in a Tupperware in your refrigerator for a while.

And not notice it. But eventually it will start to seep through the Tupperware. And make your whole fridge stink. And the minute you open the Tupperware you have to throw it away. And turn on the exhaust fan.

And take out the trash. And your kitchen still smells. See there's no such thing as hidden inconsequential sin. Just like there's no such thing as hidden inconsequential cancer.

[10 : 43] You can't look at pornography on the internet. And then get in bed with your wife. And expect to have a healthy relationship that's unaffected by your secret addiction.

You can't harbor anger and bitterness in your heart toward your parents. And expect that all your other relationships will remain unaffected. You might not recognize the effects of one particular symptom.

One particular manifestation of the flesh right now. But over time they will become evident. And if not to you. To other people who know you well. Now this tends to happen as people get older.

Because you're less able to hide and put on masks. And the accumulated consequences of lifelong habits become increasingly evident. To the people around you. And that's why some people.

As they get older. Get harder and harder to deal with. Because of ingrained and often unchallenged fleshly patterns. Paul warns in verse 21.

[11 : 43] Those who habitually do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Jesus said the same thing. Matthew 13, 41. The son of man will send out his angels at the end of the age.

And they will gather out of his kingdom everything that causes sin. And all who do evil. And they will throw them into the fiery furnace. Where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The flesh is our self-centered, God-defying nature.

It corrupts God's good gifts and its destiny is eternal destruction. But the good news is. There is another principle at work. In the heart of every Christian.

And that's the Holy Spirit. Now when Paul talks about spirit here. He's not referring to the human spirit. But to the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Trinity.

As John read for us earlier. Jesus promised his disciples before he left. That he would send the Holy Spirit. To live with them. To be their comforter. Their helper.

[12 : 40] Their advocate. To lead and strengthen and guide them. The spirit would remind them of everything that Jesus had said to them. And empower them to do all that he had commissioned them to do. The spirit enables Jesus' disciples to carry out Jesus' mission.

So if you want to experience the spirit's power in your life. Begin by asking Jesus. To send his spirit. To you. You know sometimes we think of the Holy Spirit as a force.

Talk about it. But in the Bible. The Holy Spirit's described as a person. A divine person. He. The Holy Spirit's not a mysterious power that we plug into. Like an electric current.

But rather a real person. Who's shaping us. Into the image of Jesus Christ. God's son. R.A. Torrey said the Holy Spirit is just as real as Jesus Christ himself.

An ever present loving friend and mighty helper. Who is not only always by our side. But dwells in our heart. Every day. And every hour. Who is ready to undertake for us.

[13 : 43] In every emergency. And the Holy Spirit is the perfect antidote. To our flesh. Our flesh like a virus. Latches on to good things. God's good creation. And corrupts them.

But the spirit like rain on parched ground. Comes to indwell. God's fallen creation. In order to renew it. If you look in the Old Testament. There's several images of the Holy Spirit.

As the renewer. Of God's creation. And God's people. Psalm 104 29. It says. When you hide your face. Your creatures are dismayed. When you take away their breath. They die and return to the dust.

But when you send forth your spirit. They are created. And you renew. The face of the ground. Isaiah 44. Verse 3 and 4. It says. I will pour water on the thirsty land. And streams on the dry ground.

I will pour my spirit. On your offspring. And my blessing. On your descendants. They will spring up among the grass. Like willows. By flowing streams. The Holy Spirit has come.

[14 : 39] To dwell within us. To change us. From the inside out. He plants the very life of God. In our hearts. So that like a tree. We begin to produce. Good fruit.

You know. It doesn't matter. How spiritually. Barren. Or dry. Your life has been. Through the spirit. There is hope. For new life. And lasting.

Growth. The fruit of the spirit. Is love. Joy. Peace. Patience. Kindness. Goodness. Gentleness. About faithfulness.

Gentleness. And self-control. You know. These are the very characteristics. Of Jesus Christ. Himself. And you know. Just as the works of the flesh. As they're left unchecked.

Becomes increasingly evident over time. The fruit of the spirit. Also becomes increasingly evident. In the lives of people. Who are continually receiving life. From Jesus.

[15 : 35] Through his spirit. Here. So when I was in college. There was a family. Who invited me over to their house. For lunch on Sunday. Several times. And often the husband's mother. An older woman named Mira. Would be there.

She was a widow. She was almost. She was about 70 years old. She had lived most of her life. Under communism. In eastern Europe. Her husband had been a pastor. A Protestant pastor. Under the communist regime.

And they had experienced many hardships. But just listening to her. You could sense. The fruits of the spirit. Peace. Gentleness. Kindness.

Patience. The fruits of her. Lifelong reliance. Upon a sovereign. And faithful. And infinitely wise God. The fruits of the spirit. Had only ripened. In her life.

And in her later years. You know. Isn't that the kind of character. That you would want. A character that reflects. Jesus Christ himself. These fruits of the spirit.

[16 : 32] Not the works of the flesh. But the fruits of the spirit. Self-giving love. Instead of mere. Sensuality. Peace. Instead of rivalry. And dissension. Joy. Instead of envy.

And jealousy. Self-control. Instead of unrestrained. Indulgence. You might say. Well yes. I do want to be that kind of person. I do want to be Christ-like.

But no matter how hard I try. I seem to keep falling back. Into the same old patterns. How can I break free? Is it even possible.

To really. Change. Well Paul is. Very realistic. About the conflict that we face. But he says.

But he's also confident. That through the spirit. We are enabled. To overcome. And gradually. Win victories over. The flesh. So first Paul is realistic.

[17 : 30] He says. This battle will continue. Until you die. Or until Jesus comes again. In this life. It is not possible. To completely eradicate. The sinful nature. Or escape from all temptation. It's an ongoing.

Daily struggle. Verse 17. The desires of the flesh. Are against the spirit. And the desires of the spirit. Are against the flesh. It's like two opposing armies. Facing off.

In the middle of your heart. They're opposed to each other. To keep you from doing the things. That you want to do. Now that does not mean. The struggle is hopeless. The end of that verse. Does not mean. That even though the spirit.

Lives in you. You'll never be able. To resist the flesh. Because the flesh. Will always keep you. From doing what pleases God. No it simply means. The flesh and the spirit. Directly oppose each other. There's no common ground.

Between them. The flesh. Corrupts God's good creation. And turns. And it's a self-centered. A God-defying impulse. The spirit. Renews God's good creation. It turns us toward God.

[18 : 23] And to worship him. The goal of the flesh. Is to keep you from doing. What the spirit wants. And the goal of the spirit. Is to keep you from doing. What the flesh wants. And Paul warns.

You can't win this battle. Against the flesh. Merely by willpower. Or by imposing. Some kind of external law. Upon yourself. You know. You won't make lasting.

Spiritual progress. Just by telling yourself. Just say no. And just do it. Paul doesn't say. You defeat the works of the flesh. By doing the works of the spirit.

He doesn't say. Stop doing this list. Of 15 things. And start doing this list. Of nine things. And once you stop doing this list. Of 15 things. And start doing this list. Of nine things. Then you'll be okay. No.

Christianity is not. A giant checklist. Of things that you. Must not do. And things that you must do. That's the law. And verse 18 says. If you're led by the spirit. You're not under the law.

[19 : 21] Even God's law. Let alone any humanly invented law. Will not in itself. Give you the power. To really change. And become holy. The works of the flesh. Can only be conquered.

By the fruit. Of the spirit. Think about how a tree. Bears fruit. Earlier this week. I was reading a book. By Paul Tripp. And he gave this illustration.

He said. If you have an apple tree. In your backyard. And it's not. Bearing very good fruit. You can't make the tree. Bear fruit. By buying a bushel. Of apples.

Getting a step ladder. And a giant staple gun. And stapling fresh apples. Onto your. Lifeless tree. That will look nice.

From a long distance away. For a couple of weeks. But pretty soon. You'll need to replace the apples. And. The character of the tree.

[20 : 17] Is unchanged. See if you try to produce. These fruits of the spirit. By willpower. And external law. It's like stapling apples to a tree. Paul says we need an internal change.

We need the Holy Spirit. The very life of God. To be planted in us. So that we produce fruit. Not artificially. And temporarily. But genuinely. And in a lasting way.

And the way this process begins. Is by being united by faith. To Jesus Christ. Life himself. Trusting in him. To forgive your sins. And fill you. With his spirit.

Now if you've already done that. If you've already put your faith. In Jesus Christ. Then the question is. How do you grow? How do you produce this good fruit? Well think. If you had a seedling. In your backyard.

There are several things you can do. To help it grow. You can water it. You can fertilize it. You can prune it. You can protect it. From devouring pests. And squirrels. That's the pests in New Haven.

[21 : 19] Anyway. In a similar way. You can cultivate your relationship with God. By reading the word. Praying. Coming to church. Confessing your sins. To a brother or sister. Memorizing scripture. Fasting. Giving thanks.

Many other spiritual disciplines. But you know. However much you plant. And water. And prune a tree. You're not ultimately in control. Of how much fruit it produces.

Or how fast it grows. Some days you might be very active. In doing those things. And cultivating it. And some days. There might be nothing else you can do. But wait. For the fall.

But all the time. You're dependent. On forces outside yourself. And it's the same way. In our relationship with the Holy Spirit. As we seek to grow in godliness. There is an active element. On our part.

Walk by the Spirit. Keep in step with the Spirit. There's also a responsive element. Yield to the Spirit. Or be led by the Spirit. Now being led by the Spirit.

[22 : 17] Doesn't mean that you don't do anything. Unless the Spirit specifically whispers in your ear. It's more about following the Spirit's promptings. Toward holiness. And godliness.

Later on in chapter 6. Paul talks about sowing. To the Spirit. So it's not just let go and let God. That's only passive. We do need to act. But even when we're most active.

Even when you're most active in cultivating your garden. You remain completely dependent. Upon the sovereign Lord who makes things grow. We sow. We water.

But God is the one. Who makes things grow. And Jesus promised. If you remain in me. And my words remain in you. You will bear much fruit.

So we can be confident. That change is not only a possibility. But change is God's intention. For everyone who trusts in Jesus. Through the power of the Spirit.

[23 : 16] You and I can experience substantial. Significant. Observable. Victory. Over the flesh. We will never fully wipe it out. But we can make successful advances.

We can recapture lost territory. We're no longer slaves to the flesh. There's no reason. That a Christian. Needs to be dominated.

By the desires of the flesh. Verse 24 says. Those who belong to Christ Jesus. Have crucified the flesh. With its passions and desires. If you turn to Jesus.

In repentance and faith. That's when we dealt a death blow. To the flesh. Now you might say. Well if we've already crucified the flesh.

Why are we still fighting against it every day? Well Paul's using a metaphor here. Crucifying someone. Didn't immediately kill them. That very moment. Some people. Hung on crosses for a day or two.

[24 : 13] Before they finally died. But crucifixion did ensure. That people would eventually die. And in a similar way. If we repent. And turn to Jesus. Our flesh.

Our sinful nature. Doesn't immediately die. But it will. Eventually. Die. So Paul urges us. Keep on. Crucifying. The sinful nature.

It is a deadly. Enemy. You've declared war on it. Because it only wants to destroy you. Don't start negotiating. With it. Again. Don't accommodate it.

Say. Let it have partial sway. In one part of your life. Keep on crucifying it. Until one day. By God's grace.

It will die forever. Now you might say. How. How do we do that? Paul says. The way to continue. To continually crucify the flesh. Is by walking. By the spirit.

[25 : 08] Verse 16 says. Walk by the spirit. And you will not gratify. The desires of the flesh. There's a command. And a promise. In that verse. If you walk by the spirit.

Then you won't gratify the flesh. So don't just try. To resist. Some particular manifestation. Of the flesh. And stop there. That's sort of like.

Driving down a highway. Seeing that there's a bridge. Out in front of you. Turning around. And then standing still. In the middle of the road. Not going anywhere.

You won't get anywhere that way. If you just try to stop. The works of the flesh. And that's it. It's sort of like someone. Who has a severe.

Gluten allergy. Going to Pepe's pizza. For dinner. Pepe's only serves pizza. They have nothing else. On their menu. And they don't have. Gluten free crust.

[26 : 04] So if you're sitting in Pepe's. You're ravenously hungry. The pizza smells. Amazingly good. You're seeing it. All around you. But you say to yourself. I shouldn't eat it. It'll make me sick.

It might put me in the hospital. I really shouldn't eat it. You're tormenting yourself. If you try to resist. The works of the flesh. Without being filled. With the spirit. You need to feast.

On Jesus. Receive the good gifts. That he offers. The gifts that won't. Make you sick. Later on. So don't just sit alone. In your room.

Late at night. In front of your computer. And say to yourself. I really shouldn't click on that link. I really shouldn't click on that link. I know pornography is bad. Call a brother in Christ.

Tell him you're being tempted. And ask him to pray for you. Turn on some worship music. And fill your mind with the beauty of God's character. Get involved in a small group.

[26 : 59] So you're not sitting alone in your apartment every night. Go to settingcaptivesfree.com. Enroll in one of their online courses. To find freedom from habitual sins.

Through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A few years ago. A friend of mine was a new Christian. And he had been addicted to pornography for several years.

He really didn't know what to do. He felt it was hopeless. But he prayed. I think I had visited him. And I think we prayed together. That somehow God would free him from this pattern. And it was connected with other things in his life too.

So a few days later. He was walking down his street in Washington D.C. And he got mugged. Three guys beat him up. And took his laptop. This is not a joke.

And he said to me. I guess God answered my prayer. I didn't have enough money to buy a new laptop. So I had to borrow my housemate's laptop. And work in the common room.

[28 : 01] So that. Helped me deal with my problem. At least for a while. You know sometimes God answers prayer. In unexpected ways. But don't wait.

Until you get mugged. On the streets of New Haven. Start feasting on Jesus. And walking in the spirit today. Now maybe lust. Isn't your biggest issue.

Maybe you struggle with anger. Occasionally blow up in anger. At your spouse. Or your parents. Or you internalize the anger. So it comes out. In all kinds of passive aggressive forms.

Well in the same way. Don't just try to resolve. To be less angry. Don't just stuff it. And try to forget about it. That's like weed whacking dandelions. And hoping they won't grow back.

The only way to get rid of dandelions. Is get down on your knees. And pull them up by the roots. And the only way to root out. Anger or envy. Or jealousy. Or any of these other works of the flesh. Is to deal with them.

[29 : 00] At the root level. The heart level. So earlier this week. I was asking myself this question. Why do I sometimes feel so angry.

With other people. And most of the time. It's because someone blocks me. From getting something that I want. Now they may not even know. That they're blocking me. From getting something that I want.

But. I want something. I don't get it. And so. I get angry. It's exactly what. The book of James says. James.

Chapter 4. What causes quarrels. And fights among you. Is it not this. That your passions. Are at war.

Within you. You desire. And do not have. So you murder. You covet. And cannot obtain. So you fight and quarrel. It goes back to our desires. Within ourselves. But then I thought.

[29 : 56] If the deepest longing of my heart. Is for God himself. Nothing. And no one. Can ever take that away from me. Nothing.

And no one. In the whole world. Can ever separate me. From his love. Even the most frustrating. And unfair circumstances. Can be an opportunity. To receive his grace.

And speak his truth. And if I really let that truth. Sink into my heart. More deeply. I would not get angry.

So often. So what makes you angry? What do you really want. That you're not getting? Examine your desires. Are they out of proportion? Or are they legitimate desires. But you're not getting. What you need from God.

So then you get mad. At other people. When you can't get it from them. Psalm 103 says. God satisfies our desires. With good things. So that our youth is renewed.

[30 : 52] Like the eagles. You know. Whatever your biggest struggle is. Whatever your work of the flesh. Of choice. The only way you can overcome. A sinful desire. Is with a godly desire.

A stronger. Godly desire. The only way to resist. The fleeting pleasures of sin. Is by delighting in. And receiving. The lasting and eternal.

Pleasures. Of God. So maybe you're here today. Maybe you're not a Christian. Maybe you're exploring spiritual things. If you're here with your mom.

On Mother's Day. That's great. Perhaps there's some habit. That you've unsuccessfully tried to kick. For many years. Or maybe you've kicked one habit.

But you realize that in the process. You've picked up another. What this passage is saying to you. Is that there is a power. That you have not yet fully experienced. There is a person.

[31 : 48] Whom you have not yet fully encountered. And he can liberate you. From self-centered. Self-destructive patterns. And he can produce in you.

Character qualities. That you could not. Create or sustain. By yourself. And he is called. The Holy Spirit. And the way to receive him.

Is by asking Jesus. So you perhaps you might pray something like. God. If you are there. I need you. Jesus. If you are real. I want to know you.

Holy Spirit. Come into my life. So I can be changed. I want to conclude today. By sharing three testimonies. Three testimonies. That I've gathered.

From people who have been changed. Who've experienced substantial. And significant. And observable victory. Over deeply rooted patterns. Of the flesh. Because I want you to know. That there is hope. For real change.

[32 : 43] You don't have to stay stuck. In the same old patterns. For the rest of your life. But I also. Don't just want to give you. Some vague sense of optimism. I want you to see clearly.

The path to lasting change. So I asked. Each of these people. I said. What was it. That brought you to change. To turn away. From habitual sin. And find freedom.

In Jesus Christ. And each of them. Has given me permission. To share their answers. With you. Today. So one man. Who habitually indulged. In pornography.

And masturbation. For over 20 years. Wrote this. The most help I received. Was the conviction. Of the Holy Spirit. Pastoral counseling. Be accountable. To other Christian men. Weekly accountability.

Is a big key for me. Because the spirit is willing. But the flesh is weak. And temptation surrounds us. Could you please. Let people know. There is help out there. And through Christ. Who strengthens. We can overcome anything.

[33 : 38] Second. A testimony from a woman. When I was in seventh grade. A girl told me. That once I hit puberty. I would get fat. Like her. And all the other girls. So I started limiting. My diet immediately.

Putting into effect. What these other girls. Seemed to do. In order to control their weight. The guys I hung around with. All made fun of me. That I didn't eat socially. It triggered in me. A desire to become normal. I then decided.

I would just eat socially. And then throw up my food. That way. I would appear normal. But still have control. Of my weight. This pattern of bingeing. And purging. Lasted for several years. But God was working on me.

He was patient. In changing and conforming. My heart to his. For a long time. I never thought of my eating disorder. As a sin. But one day. My husband found out. He instructed me.

That I was not truly trusting Christ. That did it for me. The idea that my eating disorder. Was in direct contradiction. To what I claimed to believe. Caused me to change. It was a sudden change for me.

[34 : 34] I've never purged again. And I've never desired to. It was as clear. As Christ's blood spilled on the cross for me. I wanted Christ to change me. And he wanted me to be willing. To bear everything. Warts and all.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit. Produces immediate change. Sometimes he produces change. Over a long period of time. So thirdly. Another man. Who was caught in patterns of sexual sin. For several years. Wrote this.

There are four things. That have provided spiritual power. In this fight against sin. Number one. The love of God. Working over a long. Long time. This was painful. Because I wanted change quickly.

And I wanted it my way. I felt stuck. Ashamed. Worthless. And the only way out. Was to stop being bad. And start being good. But I couldn't on my own. But God has been endlessly patient with me.

There were deeper issues. Seemingly unrelated to my struggles. That he wanted to address. Like a good surgeon. He knew the root cause of the symptom. And was going after it with a knife. Second.

[35 : 29] God gave me gracious friends. And mentors. Who knew when to challenge. And when to be gracious. I grew up in a very performance based situation. Always feeling like I had to be perfect.

To be accepted. And loved. Not only is that a lie. But that will suck the joy out of your heart. God's grace is the only antidote for this. And he gives grace through honest.

Vulnerable. Broken community. Where we're sharing our struggles. And praying with one another. Three. Falling in love with Jesus. And out of love with sin. This changed my battle from focusing on not worshipping sin.

Instead to focusing on worshipping Christ. Christ is so much more satisfying and wonderful. Than the fleeting pleasures of sin. And so sin had to start stepping down from the throne of my heart.

A greater king taking back his throne from a lesser king. Christ is the radiance of the glory of God. He is ravishing. And my heart finally found a home in his love. Four. Most importantly.

[36 : 26] Having a heart experience of his grace. This point can probably be summed up by saying this. The only defeatable sin is forgiven sin. The only defeatable sin is forgiven sin.

Knowing my sin was completely forgiven. Even before I found more significant victory over it. Was of utmost importance. I had belittled the power of the cross. And the breadth of the grace of God. By assuming that he couldn't love me.

Until I cleaned up my act. God broke my heart time and time again. Showing me his compassionate mercy. In light of my willful sin. Romans 5.8. God demonstrates his own love for us in this.

While we were still sinners. Christ died for us. For me. The chains of sin. Have been very long. Very strong. And very constricting. But his grace is sufficient. For me. For his power is made perfect.

In my weakness. And I have enough weakness. To see a lot of this power. Now you might ask. How do I know all these people? Well the answer is simple.

[37 : 24] They're all part of this church. Now these people wrote something up. And they gave me permission to share it. So don't worry. If you come to me or one of the other pastors. To confess a sin.

You won't appear as a sermon illustration. But I want you to know. They're not the only ones. Who've experienced the transforming power. Of God's grace in their lives. There's many more. Some of you.

I know. Many of you have your own story. So share them. With others who might benefit. Because I want you to know. The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit. Is not just working. At some other church.

Somewhere out there. The Holy Spirit. Is not only working. In some other part of the world. The Holy Spirit. Is at work. Even here. In this church. Despite our many imperfections.

The Holy Spirit. Is enabling people. Like you and me. To overcome the flesh. By walking in the Spirit. And to bear good. And lasting fruit. To the glory of God. So I pray that each of us.

[38 : 20] Here today. Might walk by the Spirit. And know day by day. That his grace. Is sufficient for us. Let us pray. Lord Jesus.

We thank you. For the gift of your spirit. That you promised. To your disciples. We thank you. That you have not left us alone. To fight against. Our sinful desires.

And our idols. That you have given us. Something much better. And that you have sent your spirit. To open our eyes. To your beauty. And glory.

And grace. Lord I pray. That we might. Experience the power of your spirit. In deep and lasting ways. That by your grace.

We might experience. Change. And growth. Even in parts of our life. That might seem. Right now. Impossible. Or hopeless.

[39 : 26] And we pray that we would. Seek to overcome the flesh. By walking. By the spirit. By receiving from you.

And letting you work in us. And bear good fruit. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.