



## **Soul Warfare**

**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Many years ago, the 30th president of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, was coming out of church and they asked him, "What did the preacher preach about?" And in his characteristically terse manner, he said, "Sin." And they asked him, "What did the preacher say about sin?" He said, "He was against it," which of course, that's our job is to preach to you against sin because we are against sin, because God is against sin. And he said in Leviticus Chapter 11 verse 44 to the Israelites of the Old Testament, "Be holy because I'm holy." I am morally different than the sinners on the planet. You need to be morally different than the sinners on the planet.

Take your Bibles and let me show you the repeating of that quotation from Leviticus 11 in First Peter Chapter 1. First Peter Chapter 1 gives us this very clear and logical expression of something that should be a n- brainer for all of us, and that is that we shouldn't sin. It's something you should be against. It's something we shouldn't do because God is a God of righteousness, you should do what is righteous and you shouldn't do what is sinful. That's pretty basic, right? You can track with that. That's pretty simple. The New Testament says the same thing. Look at this text here in First Peter Chapter 1, look at verse 16, the quotation of Leviticus Chapter 11. He says, "Since it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy."

So this is an issue, not just a theory. It's not about just the attribute of God or describing God. It's about ultimately our behavior. Look at the verse that precedes it, verse 15. "But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all of your conduct." Do the right stuff, right? If God is a faithful God, you ought to be faithful. If God is a truthful God, you ought to be truthful. If God turns from and abhors evil, you ought to turn from and abhor evil. You ought to be just like God. Just do all the righteous things that God does. Now, you wouldn't think preachers would have to keep preaching about this because if you think that's the right thing, we should just all just do that. Well, I guess that's the question. Why don't you? I think why don't you do it? I mean, if this is what God wants us to do and you say you're a child of God and he says "be holy like I'm holy," well, why aren't you doing it?

I think the verse preceding that verse is going to give us some hints. Take a look at this. It's an illustration ultimately embedded in a title that is given to us as the followers of Christ. He calls us the "children of God," and he says this and it reminds us of our childhood. And this should help us understand why we're not very obedient. He says, "As obedient children do not be conform to the passions of our former ignorance." As obedient children. If I said to you, "Well, were you an obedient child?" And before you say yes, I need to meet your mom and talk to her for a while about it. Because you would say, "Well, no, I wasn't. I was just an ignorant little kid. I did a lot of stuff from the time I was... Yeah, of course I had to be trained and be taught because I was a kid." And as children we're told to do the right stuff and parents have a full-time job trying to tell their kids, don't do that, do this.

And just like children, we are God's children. And just like that relationship that we had with our parents, God tells us to do the right thing and it's really hard and it's embedded right there



in that verse. Look at it again. We have these things that the Bible defines as passions, "do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance." Now, before you became a Christian, you were, the Bible says, dead in your transgressions and sins. You were not alive to God, but he made you alive. And then all of a sudden now it's like, "Oh, I need to do what God says." As Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 15 says, "We no longer are supposed to live for ourselves." That's what you did before, whatever your passions were, as long as it wasn't going to cause too much trouble, you just did whatever you wanted to do. And then you become a Christian and all of a sudden it's like, "Oh, I got to be holy like God is holy. I got to figure out what God is all about and do the stuff he says is right." And that we're awakened to.

The problem is we still have these passions that we were so conformed to before. Passions. That word is just a translation of the word "desire," you had a bunch of desires. And those desires within us make it really hard for us to do the right thing just like a little kid has a hard time doing what mom and dad say because they have all this stuff inside of them that wants to do what they want. And that's the problem. It'd be easy to say, we'll just do what God says. We would need to meet every week and talk about it. We'd just be able to just go off and do it. But we struggle with it because there's a problem, this thing called our passions.

Now I want us to go to the next chapter, Chapter 2 of First Peter and I want you to look at one little verse. That's all I want to spend time thinking about how does this verse help us? As we know the right thing to do. We know what the right things are. You are sitting here today, many of you as Christians, saying, I want to do what's right. I'd like to do what's right for the rest of my Christian life. And now we have to say, well, what is the problem and how can we fix it? Well, here it is. First Peter Chapter 2 verse 11, it simply says this, "Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain," here's our word again, "from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul." I'd like you to abstain from that. I urge you to abstain from that as beloved people who Peter loves his audience and God loves his audience. And here he's saying, look, "you're Sojourners in exile." More on that later. But here's the heart of it, "abstain from those passions." And here he gives us the arena of it, "of the flesh." And they're "waging war against your soul."

So the problem with many people coming to Christ is they hope that once their inner core desires get adjusted to want to please God and we read a verse like "Be holy as I'm holy" and "in all your conduct be holy." We think, okay, now I want to, before I just wanted to please myself, now I want to please God. And we think, okay, let's just do it. We like to think about our Christian life sometimes as a peaceful thing. We want tranquility. Well, we have peace with God. But that's a description in Romans 5 of our relationship no longer being at odds. I'm no longer at odds with God. The problem is when he enlightens me to say in my own heart, I'd like to please God, and that's all true, it's called the miracle of regeneration, I want to please God, but I still am stuck with this thing within the arena of what is called here my "flesh" that has a lot of desires and passions and that creates a conflict.

And we need to beat this. It's a war that's waging. And we need to say, okay, I need to be aware of it. I need to be attuned to it, I need to be enlightened to the reality of it all. I need to



be vigilant about it. And that's a good place for us to start right in the middle of this passage, to know something about the passions or the desires of the flesh. Number one, you and I need to be paying attention to that. Number one, we need to "Pay attention to the Internal Assault." We have an assault upon the core desires that you have as a Christian, You'd like to please God. You'd like to do the right thing. You don't want to sin. If you're a Christian I can guarantee you that resonates with the core desires of your heart. I do not want to sin. And yet this week we're all going to sin. And we've got to say, "Well, wait a minute, I'd like to not sin. I'd like to be holy like God is holy. I'd like to be set apart ethically and morally. How do I do that?"

Well, we start by understanding there's a battle going on and a lot of people don't think about that. Matter of fact, they think it's all external. There's a lot of temptation out there in the world and that's the problem. And we do talk about that because it's true. You think about the culture, the Bible says in First John Chapter 5, it's under the domain of the evil one. And he is the tempter, that's one of his names. He's the tempter who tempts people and just like in the Garden we just feel like, well, it's all out there. So if I just am careful about my interfacing with the world and the culture and Satan's getting involved in all this stuff in my world, if I can just avoid all that, then I'd be okay.

Well, that's been tried. We still kind of do things that reflect the trying of that in church history. We can go back to the Desert Fathers early on in church history when people said, well, we want to get away from all the cultural temptations. Satan is always active out there in the society, so I want to retreat into the desert and I can just be holy if I just get out there by myself. In the Middle Ages we called them monasteries. You can become a monk in a monastery, you get away from the world. And in our churches we still have things we call retreats. You've been on a retreat, perhaps, our women's retreat, our men's retreat. We go away. We get away from work. We get away from home. We get away from all the normal stuff in our lives and we go sing worship songs and we fellowship together and we preach the Bible multiple times. We think, well, this is great, there's no sin there. It's like Christians going into the monastery or into the desert and trying to be holy.

Well, the problem with all of that is you take yourself with you and when you get there you've got this thing working within you that's at war against what is righteous, what you want to do. It's waging war against your soul. And as a Christian the internal part of your life, your soul, your spirit, the internal mechanism of your decider, your volition, you're in the cockpit of your life and you're saying I want to fly this life of mine into righteous paths, I want to do righteous things. But there's a war. There's a hijacking that's going on as you sit there in the cockpit of your life and it's just constantly trying to pull you in the wrong direction. See, all the things that the Bible says are true that you know you should do are all the things you aim at, but here are all these other things moving them in the opposite direction and they all come from within you.

Let me look at a couple of passages with you really quick. Let's start with this one in James Chapter 1. I think this will be helpful because it's a reminder of something so basic to the idea of who we are as Christians. James Chapter 1, look at verses 14 and 15. James Chapter 1 verses 14 and 15. "But each person," James 1:14, "is tempted when he is lured and enticed"



by the devil, underline the words "by the devil" there in verse 14. Do you see that? Are you there quickly enough to get my sarcasm? James Chapter 1 verse 14. "But each one is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire." There's our word again, our passions, our desires. "Epithymia," the strong cravings of my internal life. It's described in First Peter Chapter 2 verse 11 as the domain of my flesh. And it says here, they're "my own desires."

Now, is the tempter a tempter? Absolutely. Are there things in the culture that tempt me? Yes, absolutely. The world, the things in the world. A lot is trying to pull me off the path of righteousness. But the problem is there's something within me, my desires, that are pulling me in the direction of every temptation I can get my hands on. I am a Christian, I'm still a Christian, but as a Christian I'm still filled with these magnetic connections to sin. And that's why the next phrase is helpful when it says in verse 15, "Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin." Right? I understand there are things that have to happen for my passions to fall into sin. There has to be a connection, a conception, if you will. And it's like a magnet, right?

I replaced all those doorstops in my house that have the spring on, and they go 'rrrrrbbbs," I can't make the noise, when you kick them. Well, I found out in our house, at least, if I left the windows open at the right time of day or whatever and my cheap little doors that I have, I want solid doors. I have hollow doors. I hate my doors, whatever. (audience laughing) I have a story to tell about that but I have no time for it. But here's the thing. If you left the windows open, they'd all of a sudden slam. And then the kids thought we were arguing and we weren't arguing. You just left the window open and the door slams. And so I went to Home Depot and I found these magnetic doorstops. Do some of you have those? So cool, so cool, right? You put a little metal thing on the door and then you put the other part on the wall, on the baseboard. And as soon as it gets close, gets within inches, it just kisses that and it just stays there. It's so great. I love my magnetic doorstops.

But if I were walking by one of my magnetic doorstops and I dropped like a box of paperclips and I spilled them by it, you can see, you've imagined it. You see it in your mind's eye. It's like a paper clip Afro. Let's just look at it that way. I don't know if that's the right word, but that's the picture. It's just like they bounce near the magnet and instantly get sucked into it.

You have these magnets inside of you, moral magnets. All it's looking for is a place to sin, right? You are sin looking for a place to happen. Right? That's the problem with the magnetic pulls of your heart. And there are all kinds of them. Matter of fact, now let's go to Galatians 5, a very classic text. But it reminds us of this battle. You, as a Christian, you want to do right. You'd like to not sin this week. I would like to not sin this week. The problem is I got all these passions and desires that are constantly looking for an outlet. They want to conceive and bring forth sin. And when the sin does its thing and corrupts parts of my life, "it brings forth death." That's where the rest of that verse went in verse 15. All the different ways in which it messes up my life, the domain of death, corruption, messed up stuff.



Okay, now, are you in Galatians 5? We did Galatians 5 verse 16, you know this passage, "But I say," Paul says, "walk by the Spirit," live your life in accordance with the Spirit. That'd be great. I'm going to do that this week. Be holy as he's holy. I'd like the Spirit to just have me walk in line with him and just do what the Spirit has written within the pages of Scripture. That would be great. "And I will not gratify the desires of the flesh." That would be awesome. Let's do that. Well, problem, the desires of the flesh. Verse 17, "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." I'd like to fly this plane in the direction of righteousness. I'd like to be like God. I'd like to do everything that God would do morally and ethically and I would like to do that. But here's the problem. These desires within me are in the domain of my flesh.

And that makes perfect sense, that's a good way to put it because the flesh, the humanness of humanity is really connected to, at least the image that we see there in Genesis when man is created out of the dust of the earth and God breathes into him the breath of life. Now he's hardware. That's the biological matter. The stuff of my body is all the minerals and materials of the earth. And I'm now given this breath of life that's done in the secret place as Psalm 139 says now inside of my mother. But initially it was God taking the stuff of the earth, making a body, breathing into Adam the breath of life and he becomes a living soul. Here he is, now a person. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve morally sin and God says, "Now here's the deal. You have morally sinned. You're a morally corrupted agent. I'm going to corrupt the whole frame." I like to say the picture has been morally rebellious now, the person, now God is going to create a morally rebellious frame around that picture. And he says, "cursed is the ground because of you." the Hebrew word "Erets." It's the dirt, the earth.

And here's the problem: the dirt and the earth and the stuff of earth that's what Adam was made from. And everything in his life now is going to be messed up, not just on a level of medicine, and, you know, you got migraine headaches and you got arthritis and you got cancer. All that's true and it's all part of the cursing of the ground. But there's something about the fallen fleshly human container that we're in, which is more than a container, we're enmeshed in that. I mean, a human being that's made to live within a material thing that expresses my volition through my hands and my mouth and my eyes and my head. And all of this is expressed through the hardware of my body and it doesn't work right. It is morally rebellious. It is morally rebellious, it's biologically rebellious, it's rebellious in so many ways to match the problem of human beings who are rebellious in their hearts. Their moral rebellion is now matched with a fleshly rebellion.

Now that word, it helps me kind of get the category, but I don't want you to think about your eyelashes and your elbows and your fingernails. It's not just about the stuff of your body, though that is cursed, but the desires. As I like to say it's the hardware like a computer that's got firmware embedded and encoded in the motherboard. It's not just neutral. You can change the software out, who you are. You were dead to God. Now you're made alive to God. That's the miracle of regeneration, reborn. I now want to do what God wants. Before I lived for myself. Now I'd like to live for God. The problem is the firmware that runs the hardware. It's like the hard drive is messed up even though the software is made right. And now all of a



sudden now I'm having a hard time doing it because there's all of this competing interest, all this competing desire.

And I'd like to live righteously this week, but I got a lot going on inside of me, just like you got a lot going on inside of you. And the problem is those are in opposition to one another, so I can't do what I want. I'm struggling. "I'm led by the Spirit, I'm not under the law," verse 18. That's a loaded phrase in terms of all that was said in the book of Galatians. But get to stuff that's easy to understand here in verse 19.

"Now the works of the flesh," the firmware of our fallen humanity, its really obvious stuff, like, I don't know, you pick your poison here, here's a vice list in the New Testament. They're everywhere in the New Testament. And let's just start with one that I'm sure no one in this room has any issues with at all. Sexual immorality. So you're really quiet now aren't you? "Sexual immorality, impurity" Right? Think about that, impurity. Your mind going in any direction that is not right. That is not holy. "Sensuality." A lot of First John Chapter 2 like the lust of the eyes. Like whatever I see I want it if it's going to make me feel better. "Idolatry," exalting something, something taking my interest, glittering so much that I want it more than I would want God or God's approval. "Sorcery." Right? "Pharmakeia." This idea of having something else direct my life, and obviously even the connection with the word pharmacy or pharmaceuticals certainly has a connection to how it was practiced in the ancient world where people are trying to dope up their bodies or do something to make themselves feel a particular way.

"Enmity," a lot of enmity in my life with people. "Strife" with other people. "Jealousy," I want what you've got. "Fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." That's the stuff that when it's unleashed and you just do it, that just characterizes the non-Christian life. But I am a Christian. Now that's great. I don't want any of that. But the problem is that's all the pulsating exertion of the desires, the magnetic draw of the flesh and I happen to still live in it.

Verse 17, "The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit." So I'm still in a human fallen container, which is too sterile of a word. I'm enmeshed in the fabric of humanity. That's a better way to put it. And all of that still wants to sin. Okay? Now the core of my heart, you can look at the promise of the New Covenant in the book of Ezekiel and you can say, "Well, of course I have a desire now to love God. I do. And I want to please God. I do. I didn't want that before. I was dead to God. Now I'm alive to God. I want to please the Lord. But I got this thing, this human principle, this desire, this magnetic draw to sin. I'm sin just looking for a place to happen. And so I just got to be aware of the internal battle within my life.

One more passage on this, Mark 7. Go to Mark Chapter 7. Let's look at the words of Jesus as it relates to this. Now Jesus is dealing with, as he always seems to, the Pharisees and the scribes. And in Mark Chapter 7 verse 5, you can see they're concerned about him doing the ablutions or the cleanings, the lustrations, the washings of the traditions of the elders of Israel. And they're not doing it because it's not biblical and you don't have to even under the Old



Testament law, you didn't have to, but they expected that. And then he responds with this quotation from Isaiah, Isaiah 29, and he says, you know, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Now, that's interesting. You have people here that are all uptight, which, by the way, as you study, the real problem is envy, the envy of these leaders of Israel looking at the following that Jesus had and all this stuff that was going on, so they wanted to oppose him. And so he quotes this passage, your heart's wrong before me, right? You're saying all these things. People look to you as these godly people, but you're not godly.

Now get to where he finally calls the people around him, verse 14. He says, okay, guys, you saw what went on there with the Pharisees and the scribes. He says, "Hear me, all of you, and understand." So he's got his disciples, he's got the crowd around him. He says, "There is nothing outside of a person that by going into him can defile him" They were concerned about these ablutions, these washings. And listen, it isn't about a ceremonial washing. It's not even about the sanitation of your body, it's not about that. It can't defile you morally. If you want to be holy, it's not about being unholy by doing those things. It's the things that come out of a person that defile him. They're already inside. And then he says, drop down to verse 18, he says, "Then, are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from the outside cannot defile him?" We're talking about moral defiling. We're not talking about health here. "Since it enters not into his heart, but it enters into his stomach, and it's expelled?"

And then Mark steps out and goes there's the logic, by the way, of the ceremonial law, the kosher law, coming to an end, right? When they do, when the ceremonial law was seen to be as Christ died on the cross torn, the veil was torn. Because of course this is the logic of declaring all foods clean. Verse 20, "And he says, 'What comes out of a person is what defiles him.'" If you're not going to be holy this week, what's happening is the things within you, "From within, out of the heart of man," the core of the human being, the fallen humanness of a sinful person, "come evil thoughts." Ever had any of those? Oh, we're back to this old saw, "Sexual immorality." Any sexual immorality going on in your brain, in your heart, any magnet to that? How about "theft," having what you didn't earn? "Murder," right? Maybe even on the spectrum of murder. Just calling someone an idiot. "Adultery," obviously. "Coveting," sure. "Wickedness," yeah. "Deceit, sensuality, envy." There's our word envy again. "Slander, pride, foolishness." Now, "all these evil things come from within." And those are the things that make you not holy this week. "Those are things that defile you."

See, Jesus is concerned about you knowing that you've got a problem and it resides right within you. You can put yourself in a perfect environment. You can move to a perfect new job. You can have a better wife, you can have a better health, you can have better everything. And it still won't fix the problem. You will fight against sin your whole Christian life because the enemy, it really starts with these passions within you. They're the things luring you into sinful behavior. And it all comes from within the kinds of impulses and desires that you have. So we have to be aware of it. That's the first thing.

Back to our passage. First Peter Chapter 2. We looked at that middle phrase there, we've got to abstain from those and we've got to know what that means to abstain and I think this last



phrase helps, "which wage war against your soul." Let's start with the bottom of this verse now. "They wage war against your soul." Now I've got to do something with that. I have to abstain from them because they're attacking me already. A lot of talk on the news about a cease-fire. I don't want to get into politics this morning, but let me tell you how absurd it is to call for cease-fire when the other side is not interested in stopping their fight. Do you follow what I'm saying here? Not sure I want to talk politics, although we could. That's for another time. We'll do it afterwards.

But here's the thing. You want to live a peaceful Christian life and lay down your arms. The other side is not interested in that. They just want to dominate. They want to enslave. The enemy within you wants to conquer you. They want to eradicate you. They want to move you into increasing sin. So you cannot put down the arms. You cannot stop fighting. You have to launch a counterattack. You didn't start the war. It's not about you, right? You have to respond to the attack. If you're being assaulted it's time for you to respond to that. And so I'm going to say this. Number two, you need to "Maintain a Serious Counterattack" because there's a war being waged against you. I use the word "assault" in the first point. The second point, I need to fight back. You have to fight back.

Some say, "Oh, I'd like peace." Well, that's great. You're not going to have it because you're always going to be assaulted when God says be holy because I'm holy. You're going to have everything within you wanting to fight except for the core pilot, which is you wanting to do right now because God has made you new and the Spirit of God is trying to direct you in the cockpit of your life. But the problem is you're being attacked by all these hijackers wanting to hijack the plane today, and you're just going to have to fight. You're going to have to fight just like you said, that's view of Nehemiah, where everyone was building the wall with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. You've got to fight.

Now, all of this, the abstaining is the fight. We'll look at the details of that. But to abstain from these passions, to do something to get these passions conquered in my life, that's the goal. As imperfect as we might do it, we've got to work toward that. And you just need to think about what that means. The Bible's always going to say, like in First Timothy Paul said, "Fight the good fight." He wanted Timothy to fight the good fight. And in Second Timothy, his last book he ever writes, at least the last extant book we have from Paul, he says, "I have fought the good fight." "The time of the departure is ready." I'm going to leave. I'm going to die. "I fought the good fight of faith." Right? That picture of fighting the good fight is something you're going to have to fight for the rest of your Christian life.

And I just want to step out of the passage and say, what does the Bible say about this? How do we do it? Okay? So let's go from First Peter Chapter 2 verse 11 and let's look at a couple of passages. Let's go to Colossians 3 and we'll get a list here. Let's build at least the first few points from Colossians Chapter 3. Go to Colossians Chapter 3, let's start in verse 5, Colossians 3:5. Key text. Here's what it says about the counterattack. I want you to launch the counterattack and it's going to start with this. And I just think the words are helpful. What's the third word? Put to "death." Okay. Does that sound like you just want to put your passions in a timeout? No. Like embargo? Nope. Sanctions? Nope. "Death," put to death. And again, we





get this image, the domain here, "whatever is earthly in you." And that hearkens back to the cursing of the ground. It hearkens back to our humanity now being cursed. We have a problem. The impulses that fight against my holiness, I've got to now say I'm declaring war on you. That's the first point.

Seven things. Let me give you seven quick things. Letter "A." Here's the first thing. "You have to mentally declare war." If you don't mentally declare war on the passions of your fleshliness, then you're in trouble. Here's the best strategy for winning in a war. Number one, you got to know you're in one, right? That's the key. You've got to start there. You're never going to make any progress in your sanctification if you don't know it's a fight. This isn't just adding a few sermons on top of your life and hoping it all just kind of morphs into your holiness. You're going to have to fight. And to know that you're fighting is to say, I know I've got problems, whether it's sexual immorality, whether it's greed, whether it's worry, where it's anxiety, whether it's outbursts of anger, whatever my issues are, I got to know I'm at war with them and I'm carrying around all that I need to sin right within me, lured away, attracted into temptation. I'm just looking for a place to sin.

So I got to go to war against those things. And it's a mental fighting vigilance. It's like I'm ready to get serious about this sin. And some of you right here, you sin, you feel bad, you think, well, God's a forgiving God. I just pray, it's forgiven and so I move on. We have to declare war against this. You have to take this seriously. It has to be a big deal. Mentally declare war against these passions in your life. It starts with that. And you want a word? "I mean, like you want me to kill them? I want to get a weapon?" Verse 8. It's like the word abstain. This is what abstaining is all about. "You must now put them all away." Put them away. I'm turning from them. I'm saying no to them. I'm depriving them. I'm starving them. And then he gives them a little mini vice list here. "Anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk from your mouth." Just don't do that stuff. You're going to have to say now it's more than just saying, "I got to avoid that." No, I have to declare war on it. Whatever's earthly in me and here's his list. Just a partial list. "Anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk." I just have to declare war on that.

So that's number one or Letter "A." Letter "B." And this is interesting. It may be subtle, it may be hard for us to catch, but check it out in verse 6. "On account of these things, the wrath of God is coming." Now is the wrath of God coming upon Christians when they die? Are we going to hear, "depart from me, I never knew you." Are we going to be before the judgment seat of Christ? And he's going to say, okay, now into the lake of fire, you're going to be judged for your deeds. That's never going to happen. "There's no condemnation for those who are in Christ," Romans Chapter 8 verse 1. We know we are no longer condemned. We do not receive the wrath. He has not destined us for his wrath. Right? First Thessalonians. We know that's the truth.

So what are we talking about here? We're not talking about threatening you with hell. We're talking about you as a Christian knowing this: that you have been moved from the path, the wide path where the culture's cheering you on, leading to destruction. You're not going there anymore. You are on this path now and it's a narrow path. Jesus said, it's a hard path and it's



leading through a small gate leading to life. So you need to realize your transformed identity. If you want to put it down that way, that would be good. Letter "B." You need to have that sense of I am on a different path now. Here are a few ways to say it. "Relive your testimony." Go back to the fact that there was a day when you recognized my sin is a problem, it's going to lead me to judgment. By God's grace, I've come to faith and repentance in Christ and he took me off the path I was on, Second Corinthians 5:15, living for myself, and he put me on a path to live for him. He said, come, follow me. Take up your cross and follow me. You move from that to this. You're no longer a child of wrath.

Ephesians 2, Ephesians 5. Another great text on this is Ephesians Chapter 5 verse 6. He said, "Let no one deceive you with empty words," it's a vice list that he gives there, "because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." Now, you're not a son of disobedience but you need to remember when you're fighting the passions of lust or greed or worry or whatever it might be in your life, those are the kinds of things that characterize non-Christians. Those are the kinds of things that Christ had to die for, for you. And if tomorrow or next week or next month, you fall into a lot more sin in your Christian life, just remember those sins have to be paid for and they have to be paid for by God taking your judgment and placing it on Christ. I know that's an anachronism. It's out of the timeline. It's like, okay, I sin next week, it gets laid on Christ. But the reality is that's what has to happen. There has to be a judgment for your sin.

Now, non-Christians get judged by themselves. They get to pay for their sins themselves. You have your sins paid for by Christ, remembering your testimony, understanding that you've been redeemed, thinking back at your regeneration. That's the second step. I declare war and then I realize, listen, "Such were some of you." That's the vice list that Paul gives in First Corinthians 6. He says all kinds of drunkenness, homosexuality, sexual immorality. He lists these things and he says "and such were some of you." You were on that path. I mean, God was going to judge these things. God's going to send people to hell for those things, and that's not who you are anymore. Remember your identity. You're not a non-Christian anymore. That's just a helpful mental perspective. So I start with, okay, I got to declare war on these things.

Now the things I'm declaring war on are the things that lead people to hell. These are the things that have to be judged. These are the things that Christ has to absorb the judgment in my life when I commit them. So this is a big deal and it's a great place to start. And if you start looking at vice lists in the New Testament, where they start listing all these sins, you'll start to see so often what's parallel to that is remember that this is what non-Christians do and get judged for. That's one of the motivations in Scripture. So number one, we start with declaring war. Number two or Letter "B." Right? We start thinking about the reality of my changed status before God, my regeneration, my being moved from path "A" to path "B." Super important.

Let's keep reading in this text. You're still in Colossians 3, look at verse 9. "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you put off the old self with its practices, put on the new self." That's just exactly what I've talked about. You've been moved from one path to the other. But look at this



new self, right? Who am I now as a Christian? I'm on a new path. I'm following Christ. I'm living for him, "which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." Now I've been created new in Christ. That's called regeneration. I've been reborn. I'm now a new person. Now I have a desire to love God. And where did that come from? God made me a new creation, that's what the Bible says, Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 17. I'm new in Christ. Paul called it the new man or the "new self" in this passage. If I'm a new person in Christ who gets "renewed in the image of its creator" through one keyword in that sentence. What is it? "Knowledge." I need knowledge. I need to know when God says, "Be holy as I'm holy," how am I going to know what in the world that is?

Well, I need to learn. What does it mean that God is holy? I threw out a couple of things real quick in the introduction. If God is faithful, you ought to be faithful. If God turns away from evil then you ought to turn away from evil. If God tells the truth then you ought to tell the truth. Where do we learn about God's self-disclosure? Well, in the book. So let's get Letter "C" going here. When it comes to the third strategy of a counterattack against sin, every single sin that you struggle with, every desire you have for sin there is information, there's knowledge within the word of God that helps me know how to fight it. I learn about who God is. I learn about the holiness of God, and I learn about how to apply the truth of God to start combating these things.

It's found within the text of Scripture. I'll call it this: Bible study. "You got to study the Bible." And if I just say that and I say you would sin less this week if you study the Bible more, I think you'd yawn and say, "Oh, I heard that so many times." Well, why don't we do it? Seriously, that one is controllable. You could get up tomorrow morning and spend more time in the word. You could spend time studying the Bible tonight instead of doing whatever, your Sudoku or whatever you're doing. I don't know if people still do that. I saw an old gal doing that on the tram the other day. Whatever. It doesn't matter. What is the point? Get back into Bible study. If I put everybody's name up here and quickly flashed through and said, okay, there are 168 hours in the week. How many hours did you spend ingesting, thinking about, studying, analyzing the word of God, and getting the knowledge of the creator of your new heart, getting that into your head? Has that been renewing this new man? Has it been strengthening this new man? Are we going to get fed here in the knowledge of the one who created your new heart if you spend time in the word.

If I started putting a chart and compared everybody in the room up here, we spent the next 5 hours looking at every single person listening to my voice right now. So we're going to look on the screen and see how much time we spent ingesting the word of God. I just wonder if you'd be embarrassed about that number. And I'm thinking, well, that's key. We need that. We have to do that. These are the words of God, right? Scripture, all Scripture has been given, as the old translations say, by the inspiration of God, which is just the Latin word "Inspiro," which means to "breathe out." The English Standard Version, the New International Version, a few translations put it well, it's they've been breathed out by God. The text of Scripture, the written book that you have encoded on your phone that you can scroll through when you sit there getting gas this week, that book, those words are God's words and they are reflecting the



attributes of God, the truth of God, the values of God, the priorities of God that are supposed to reflect my new person.

So studying those things, if I get those things into my life, as I'm quoting now, Second Timothy Chapter 3 verse 16, they're going to be good for "teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness." They're going to change who I am. They're going to direct my life. You need more Bible. Is that just old-fashioned? It's old-fashioned, but welcome to advice that works. Here's good preaching right here. You need to spend more time in God's word. You need to do it. You spend money on all kinds of things. Why don't you invest in some good Bible software? Why don't you start clicking around every night instead of doing whatever else you're doing and say I'm going to study this book? I got to be able to look up where everything in the Bible addresses this one passion that I'm struggling with, this one temptation I'm always falling into. What does the Bible say about it? Study the Bible.

And as long as I'm in the last part of Second Timothy, I'm in Second Timothy in my brain, Chapter 3 verse 16, and I could quote verse 17 where we have that this is going to make the man of God "complete, equipped, ready for every good work." So that's what I want, holiness. The next chapter, Chapter 4. It starts with this: Paul tells Timothy, who is the preacher of the church in Ephesus. He says, "preach the word." In light of the God who's going to judge everything, "preach the word," verse 2. Preach it whether it's "in season," everybody goes YAY! "or out of season," everyone goes, BOO, preach the word, preach the word and do it. "Reprove, rebuke, exhort and do it with all your teaching and all patience." Just keep teaching. And I'm thinking to myself, why? Because it's in your preaching as God gifts to him, as Paul said had happened in First Timothy Chapter 4 verse 14, he's been given this gift to preach and he says, go out there and preach. Why? Because it's good for them.

And I'll say this. What am I on? Letter "D" at this point? You not only need to read the Bible, here's number four or Letter "D," you need to be under the preaching of the Bible. And I don't mean just listening while you're working in the garage or eating your sandwich at lunch on the radio. I'm talking about sitting in the physical presence of a Timothy who doesn't care whether it's "in season or out of season," a bold preacher. Not one who capitulates to the culture, not one who wants to say what will get applause or grow the church, but someone who's just going to preach what the Bible says. You need to sit under good biblical preaching. And you might be listening to this on the radio right now. And I'm saying get in the physical presence of preaching or you're watching right now on the stream.

You better be traveling in another country right now is all I have to say. If you are within driving distance, you ought to be in the building right now. You ought to be listening to preaching in the physical presence of preachers, hearing the word of God taught by people who God gifts to exhort and explain and elucidate and prove and apply the word. You got to go to church, man, and you've got to be sitting under the preaching of God's word where someone is looking at Scripture and giving you all the Scripture you can't even keep track of as he preaches to you, to "rebuke and reprove and exhort you with all patience" in his teaching continually week after week, "in season or out of season," you need more preaching.



And that, by the way, is under the category if we wanted to take Letter "C" and Letter "D," we could put it into the category of renewing our mind because that's what it does. You study the Bible, your mind gets renewed. You sit under preaching, your mind gets renewed. And the problem is you could be conformed to the world, now I'm quoting Romans Chapter 12 verse 1 [2], you can be conformed to the world or you can "be transformed by the renewing of your mind." And you can be able to discern once your mind is renewed by all this biblical data, all this good preaching, you can start now to discern what the will of God is. And that's the picture I want to do... I want to fly this plane in the right direction, my life into righteousness. Are you tracking with any of this? Four things so far, right? There's our counterattack. Right?

Let me give you one more and we won't spend time on this one either because we got you there after the armor of God. I don't know if it was the last sermon or two sermons ago or whatever, I was talking about the one part in that sermon about the armor of God that has more ink spilled on it than any other part of the armor of God, and it doesn't even have a corresponding element. In other words, it's not a sword, it's not a breastplate, it's not shoes. But he just starts talking about prayer. There are more verses on prayer than anything else. Do you want to "extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one"? Yeah, put on the armor of God. But at the end he goes, pray, pray, pray, pray, pray all the time. Pray for me, pray for yourselves. Pray. Let me just add that one for Letter, what is that? Letter "D?" Letter "E." "You need to pray" and you need to pray more.

Now let's get our chart back up. All right, let's start with Linda, then we'll go to Bob and then we'll go to Dan, then we'll go to Jim and we'll put up here all your prayer time this week. Right? We can look at how much time you spent sinning, how many hours did you spend sinning this week. How much time did you spend praying? He says to Peter, James and John, Jesus says, "Pray with me. Pray that you might not be led into temptation." Just pray. And he says, "Pray for an hour. You couldn't pray for an hour." And I'm going, yeah, that's hard. No, pray for an hour. Pray that you might not fall into temptation. And I'm just saying this: what's the temptation? The temptation is within myself. The guys were sleeping. He says, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." You've got a lot of desires in your flesh, even for being lazy. And all of that needs to be combated. And part of the solution, the counterattack is not only Bible, it's not only Bible study, good biblical preaching, but prayer. You have to pray. And you know there are so many passages in the Scripture about that. We got to pray, pray, pray, pray, pray. Colossians 4 verse 2, pray, be devoted to prayer.

How about this one? You know this passage, too. We don't need to turn you to it. You're a Bible scholar. You know these things. Hebrews Chapter 10 verses 24 and 25. You can already write the point down because you know what it is. What happens in that passage? Chairs go face to face. "Consider how to stir one another up to love and good deeds. Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as is the habit of some." What's the point? You better get in small groups because that passage is about small groups. It's not about big groups, it's about small groups. It's about you being with people who are talking to you and you're talking to them and you're stirring each other up. Actually, the word is a hard one, "provoking" each other, poking at each other to be able to "stir one another to love," love God,



love people, "and good deeds." That's holiness, that's righteousness. Do you want to sin less? Then you better be in a small group.

And some of you right here, I'm looking at the crowds. I preach to a lot of people this weekend in three auditoriums full. And I know this based on our church's stats, right? We've got a lot of people in small groups but not everybody. If you come to our women's Bible study, you'll be in a small group. If you come to a men's Bible study, you'll be in a small group. If you come to Navigating Motherhood, you'll be in a small group. If you come to our programming, Thrive or Together, whatever, you'll be in a small group, because all of that has to fulfill this particular command. And that is if you want to love God and love people and do good works, you're going to have to stir one another up with your faces facing each other. You have to be congregating together. You have to be in those groups together. These are not like... We announce stuff like this all the time. You go, "Oh, that'll be good. If I have time for that, I'll check that out." This is not superfluous. This is not extra credit. This is the core of Christian counterattack. You have to do these things. Wow, preaching now.

Number seven. Is that number seven? Am I at number seven yet? I think I am. If you didn't get seven, half of you said yes, so I think I'm at number seven. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. (counting on his fingers) Thank you. Here it is. Here it's coming. Okay. Do you want me to review them? You do. This is a sign of my poor teaching right here. Right? Mental declaration of war, Letter "A," number one. Number two. I got to know what I'm saved from. I've got to think about my regeneration, my changed path. That was Letter "B." Letter "C," number three, Bible study. Number four, bold preaching. Number five, prayer. Number six, congregating. Number seven, what is it?

When Paul was in Philippi he was teaching them and living among them and he said, hey, follow my example. This is Philippians 3:17, follow my example. But then he would blow out of town. He said, "And take note of those who are doing these things and follow their example." In other words, I'm not always going to be there. And the preacher ought to be an example of the good deeds but here's the thing. You ought to take note of anybody who's got those, and you ought to connect with those people and you ought to follow their example. In other words, this gets down to relationships. And just to quote Proverbs Chapter 27, and I think it's verse 17. Let me check. Yeah. Proverbs 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

Let me talk about going from congregating and small groups to friendships. You need godly friendships that are willing to sharpen you. And they're the kinds of friendships that most of you don't gravitate toward. You gravitate naturally toward people who like slapping you on the back, right? I like them. You go home and tell your wife you like that guy because he's all cool with you. He likes me. He thinks I'm cool. I like people who think I'm cool. Well, I need some godly people in my life. The closest friends you have ought to be godly people. They ought to be the kinds of people, here's a passage for you, this is also in Proverbs 27, it says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy." It's near the front of the chapter, five, six, seven.



That passage, I just want you to think about that. That means that my friend is willing to sharpen me, which may cause some sparks in my life, because they're the kind of people who are always pushing me to godliness. They're the kind of people who really do live out that Hebrews Chapter 10 verse 24, stirring, spurring on. And that's a word of like even it makes me feel uncomfortable. Your best friend should make you feel uncomfortable. Because if you don't go to church for the next two weeks and they don't see you there, they should make you uncomfortable. They are godly people. They're always pushing you to deny the passions of your own heart and do what is right. They help you in the counterattack. They hold you up. Do you follow this? We need good, godly friendships. And I just have to say this strongly. Most of you don't have the right closest friends. You need the right closest friends who are godly people, who care a lot about you and themselves walking in the pattern of what God tells us to do, which is a pattern of putting to death whatever is earthly in me. Godly friends. I just tell you, it's so easy not to have godly friends. It's easy to have friends that just slap me on the back.

As long as I'm quoting the Proverbs, Proverbs Chapter 13 verse 20 I jotted down. "Whoever walks with the wise will become wise, but the companion," of back slappers, "of fools suffers harm." It's fine to have some back slappers in your repertoire of friends but let's make them not our best friends. Our best friends ought to be godly people. The top three people in your circle you feel that you say I think these are godly people and they're good for me putting to death the sin in my own life. Seven things. That wasn't what I had on my notes but seven things. You got them. That's the biblical survey of just what the counterattacks are like. You've got passions. Great. They want to sin, but we're going to fight those. We're going to as are text says abstain from those. They're waging war but I'm going to win the war with a counterattack. At least I'm going to make some progress in this.

Now back to our text. First Peter Chapter 2 verse 11. Let's look at the first part of this because it's the most encouraging part and I knew you'd need some encouragement about this point in the sermon. So here we are. Verse 11, "Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles." Those are three great words, beloved sojourners exiles. Beloved. Peter loved his audience. Right? And I can say I love you. Right? And I can say this: the reason I would want you to do the right thing is because I want what is best for you. I want to be the preacher in your life that says I'm against sin. I want you to be against sin. God is against sin. I want you to be righteous. I want you to be holy. But more than that there's a God who loves you far more than any preacher does. There are people who feel loved by Peter but they've got to feel loved by God even more.

The idea of God loving us, even though we're in this battle, he loves us and then he gives us two titles, sojourners. That's the word that is translated oftentimes in the Greek New Testament as the word "foreigner." You don't fit in. It reminds me of one of my favorite verses over there in Hebrews Chapter 11 that speaks of the godly people of the Old Testament who saw themselves as aliens and strangers on this earth. They just didn't fit in. And I just think that's a helpful word because it reminds us that everything outside of my passions in the world, as I said, the culture, Satan's temptation, they're all going to constantly try to inflame the passions of my internal flesh. So I just know I'm not going to fit in. I've got to turn away



from a lot of entertainment. I've got to turn away from a lot of things and a lot of indulgences that the world wants, meaning I just cannot be at home here. I can't ever rest. My head is always on a swivel and has to be because of the assault of sin in my life, because my passions are just waiting for some temptation to try and connect with the passion so that I can fall into sin and create all kinds of corruption or death in my life.

So I need to realize this world is not my home. And then the best word is the last one, "exiles." He describes them as exiles and says, you've got to abstain. But exiles, that's a great word, because it just means a temporary resident. You're just here for a while. You're just here and you're moving through and you are in exile. That means your home is elsewhere. You're an expat and you're headed back home. That's a great picture. And it's one that should encourage us because all of this is a reminder that all of the problems I have about not fitting in here, well against the promise of the kingdom I guess that won't always be the case, or exiles. Well, I know this isn't my home but I will be home one day. And when I am, everything's going to change.

Take a look at this passage with me and in Philippians Chapter 3. I mean, it can't get more encouraging than this in Philippians Chapter 3. Let's see if I can find that passage. Philippians Chapter 3. Just keep repeating that until it comes to me here. Philippians Chapter 3 verse 17. "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example we have in us." Now, the opposite is you can look around and see a lot of people who don't follow that, they're not putting to death whatever's earthly, and they're not denying their passions. "For many, of whom I've told you," verse 18, "and tell you now even with tears, they walk as enemies of the cross of Christ." They want an easy life. They want to not take up their cross. "Their end is destruction," they're on the wrong path, "their god is their belly." Talk about their passions. They just do whatever feels like they want to do. "They glory," they're proud of it, "in their shame." They should be ashamed of it. "Their minds are set on earthly things." But verse 20, "Our citizenship is in heaven." We're exiles here, we're sojourners here, we're aliens here, "and from it," from heaven, "we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, here's the deal. There's coming, the King, he's coming. He promised to come again. And when the Lord Jesus Christ shows up, "He will," verse 21, "transform our lowly body," bodies, earthly flesh, all the things in me that are fighting against my holiness, which he just described in verse 19, like people who just do whatever they feel, their god is their belly. My body, it wants to be my God, all the passions of my life that are sinful. But he's going to take this lowly body, the sin-infested body, all the passions of sin, and he's going to "transform it to be like his glorious body," his resurrected body. And here's the thing about his resurrected body: there's no temptation of sin, there are no proclivities to sin, no interest in sin, there are no magnets that want to sin. He's in his glorified state. How is he going to do that? "By the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." Do you think he can take your body and fix it? He can. It's called the resurrected body. It's called the glorified body. And one day our bodies are going to be made right and the war is going to be over. Not only is our war going to be over internally, but the tempter is going to be banished. The culture is going to be the kingdom of God, and now my body is going to be redeemed.





One last passage. Go to Romans Chapter 8 with me. This is a great text that ties it all together. Romans Chapter 8. What I'm trying to get us to say, you might as well write down the third point. You need to "Look Forward to Ultimate Victory." And this fuels us on. We're aliens, sojourners and strangers. We're passing through. We're going to our victory. We're going to our homeland. And when we get there all the passions of the flesh, all the hostilities and conflict within me, they're going to be gone. And you need to start getting motivated by that. Because here's the thing. You're fighting a battle with lust. You're fighting a battle with greed. You're fighting a battle with idolatry. You're fighting a battle with worry or anxiety or whatever you're fighting a battle with. And I just want to remind you, Christ is coming back and he's going to win this battle. You're fighting things that will be vanquished. You're fighting things that will be defeated. And you're fighting for someone who's not here but when he gets here, he's going to fix it all.

Just one of my, speaking of my favorite verses, there are a lot of them in the sermon today, Romans 8:18. "I consider that the sufferings," Romans 8:18, "of this present time," which include the battle within my own heart, "are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." That's the Bible word for it, glory, to be made right. "For creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God." Now you think you're redeemed, but you're not redeemed fully. Your heart is redeemed. You're now made alive to God, but you're still enmeshed in this sinful, fallen flesh. But one day it's going to be fixed. You can't wait for that when God says, "Ta-da" finished product. Here's Jim, here's Bob, here's Sue, here's Brenda. Completed redemption. Right? "And creation's waiting for that when you're revealed as the heirs of God."

Verse 20, "For the creation was subjected to futility, Genesis 3, "not willingly, but because of him who subjected it." God took the world and subjected it to sin, even your body and its cravings. He's made it that way because of your moral rebellion, Adam and Eve's moral rebellion, and we as moral offspring of Adam and Eve, we have this body that's all been messed up. It's all subjected to futility. But the good news is he didn't do that and said, "There you go. You're punished now forever." No, "but in hope." Why? Because he's going to turn it around, verse 21, "That the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption," including all the internal desires that you're fighting against, "to obtain the freedom of the glory," the greatness, the perfection, "of the children of God."

"For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with the pains of childbirth." Some things are amiss along with tornadoes and earthquakes and tsunamis and everything that goes on in this world. It's been groaning and waiting for this to be done. Verse 23, "And not only creation, but we ourselves." Hey, Christian, you know this. "We have the first fruits of the Spirit." The Spirit is there over our shoulder in the cockpit of our lives saying fly this plane in this direction. He's pushing us in that direction, but we're groaning because we can't do it well. We're bad at it. We're bad because the passions of our flesh are at war with us. We're surrounded by hijackers, "but we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons." What are we waiting for? "The redemption of our earthly bodies," our passions, our humanness, our fallen humanity. "For in this hope," and that's what we're all waiting for, "we were saved."



God took our hearts and said, I'm going to forgive your sins and make you alive to me. But it's not done yet. "Hope that is seen," if it were done, then it "wouldn't be hope." The Bible talks a lot about hope because that means it's not finished yet. "For who hopes for what he sees?" If it's right in front of you, you wouldn't be hoping for it, it would be there. But it's not there yet. "For if we hope for what we do not see," well, then, "we wait for it with patience." That's just a great text. You need to know that you will win this war and the victory is coming and you may not win it this week, next week or a year from now. But one day Christ will return and it could be this week. And he's going to take your body, First Corinthians 15, and transform it instantaneously "in the twinkling of an eye" and you will never again have a godless impulse coming from within you. It won't happen anymore. So keep fighting because Christ's going to win this thing. And so we fight as imperfectly as we do. We all stumble in many ways, but we keep at it because God's going to win this thing. I want you to leave with a sense of being clean from sin because you've confessed it and moving into this week saying, I'm ready to fight the battle.

Pray with me. God, we're grateful for the practice of the Lord's Supper. It's a tactile experience that we have of eating and ingesting these elements to remind us how desperately we need this, Jesus Christ, in alien righteousness. Again, just to quote Martin Luther, that external righteousness could be applied to us to be like it says there in Colossians Chapter 3, "our life is hidden in Christ." I mean, we are clothed as Galatians says with Christ, we have all of our sins forgiven and washed by the blood of Christ. So help us never grow weary of confessing our sins as painful as it can be, as sobering as it can be, and let us get off our knees and get back into fighting this battle. God, we know we need your word. We need a reminder of our testimony. We need a vigilant war-like mindset. We need Scripture, we need preaching, we need friends, we need small groups. We need all these things to be regularly, consistently applied so we might find increasing victory. We know that ultimate victory is not coming until you come and you take us home and then you establish your kingdom. But for now, God we'll just keep at it. Renew our energy and our strength. Allow us to fight well this week, this battle that wages war against our soul.

In Jesus name. Amen.