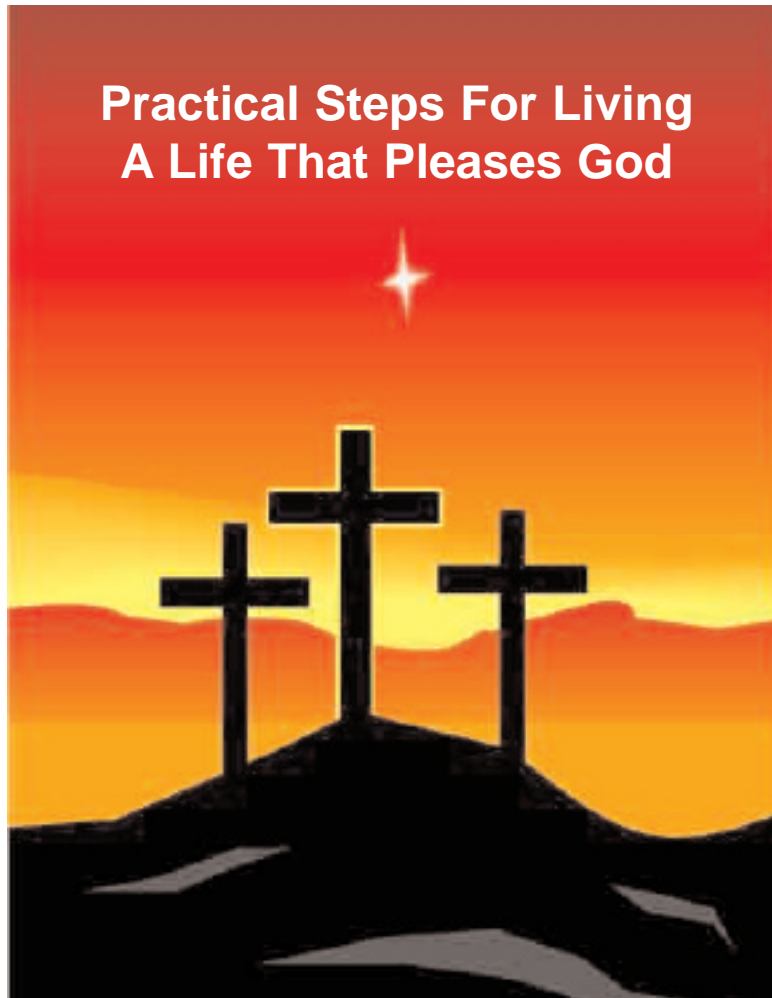


Lifebytes

18. Freedom In Jesus Video Series (Part 1) Certain Of What We Do Not See

The Powerful Influence Of Your Sin Nature



[For the video or audio of this series, go to our website or call 888-229-3041]



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The Powerful Influence Of Your Sin Nature

In Part 1 of our video series, **Freedom In Jesus: *Certain Of What We Do Not See***, we've been discussing the unseen world around us. This invisible reality is filled with the Holy Spirit, angels, and demonic forces. **ALL spiritual victory and defeat in our lives is accomplished in the dimension we CAN'T see.**

The servants of Satan assail followers of Jesus with strategies designed to destroy our relationship with our Lord and with one another. As if that weren't enough, unclean spirits operate in conjunction with two other forces to hinder your relationships.

The Bible refers to these other two sources of temptation as "**the world**" and "**the flesh**". So these three areas — the world, the flesh, and the devil — try to thwart your ability to wholeheartedly follow Jesus and to experience the freedom He promises.

We can think of the WORLD in terms of *mental enticement*. Words, images and feelings intrude into your mind every day through your five senses which can be instruments to seduce you away from obedient trust in our Lord Jesus.

The arena of our FLESH can be thought of in terms of *human frailty*. In other words, our flesh represents the weaknesses to which we're prone due to our sin nature.

If you're a follower of Jesus and RESIST the power and intervention our Lord offers you through His Holy Spirit, your sin nature will REBEL against God's ways. When you satisfy the cravings of your flesh by disregarding the boundaries of God's Word, you're at odds with Him.

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in our lives is accomplished
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This struggle between your flesh and your spirit doesn't mean you've lost your way on your life journey with Jesus. It exposes the reality that you need DILIGENT ALERTNESS to keep your heart right before Jesus and to cooperate with the Holy Spirit within you!

As an example for us in our daily determination to press on with clean hands and pure heart, the apostle Paul candidly exposes his own struggles.

*For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the **willing** is present in me, but the **doing** of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am **doing the very thing I do not want**, I am no longer the one doing it, but **sin** which dwells in me (Romans 7:18-20).*

It's crucial, if we want true fellowship with our heavenly Father and with anyone else, for that matter, that we personally EXPERIENCE VICTORY in these arenas of the world's enticements, our fleshly tendencies, and the devil's schemes.

And, once we gain victory, we need to be able to HOLD ONTO IT.

And then, we need to MINISTER THE MEANS OF THAT VICTORY TO OTHERS.

This is our purpose in this **Freedom In Jesus** series. So we don't have any misunderstanding of our goal, let's define the nature of our spiritual victory.

In Jesus our Conquering Lord, you're fully able to walk in union with Him, experience our Lord in your daily life, and obey ONLY the voice of His Spirit

within you. That's how you can live in union with Jesus in wholehearted love and trust.

If you want to CONTINUE to walk in this kind of victory, you need GOD'S perspective on the world, the flesh, and the devil as the Bible depicts them. In this Lifebyte and the ones to follow, we want to alert you to these three areas, and how they cooperate together to take followers of Jesus captive and bring defeat into your life.

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And then, we need to minister the means of that victory to others.

The Flesh, Our Sin Nature

When the Bible uses the word "flesh" in regard to humanity, it isn't describing our skin. The most significant meaning of the Greek word for flesh has to do with the CORRUPTIBLE CONDITION OF OUR CARNAL NATURE. Our innate carnality reveals the part of us that's morally inadequate. We're prone, and sometimes even driven, to rebel against God's commands. Our perspective, understanding and responses are HOSTILE to His will and plan for our lives.

Man's sin nature is another of the INVISIBLE factors in the unseen world. It's not some place in your brain to which you can point and say, "There's my sin nature!" But we know from the Bible AND from human experience that there IS a powerful propensity within us that draws us to sin.

God's Word makes clear that our sin nature is inherited from our first father, Adam:

Just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to ALL men, because all sinned (Romans 5:12).

When you were conceived, you received your spirit from God, and your soul and body from your parents.

Along with your soul — that is, your mind, will, and emotions — came your sin nature.

And, your sin nature operates by enticing your five senses to sin against God.



James warns of the deadly progression sin takes:

Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (James 1:14,15)

(See: Newsletter 2003-12 "Develop Christlikeness—Destroy the Curse of Eve")

Let's use the deception of Eve in Genesis as an example of how our sin nature entices us to react against God. Satan deceived Eve by intriguing her mind with arrogant lies and her eyes with greedy desire:

'For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you

will be **like** God, knowing good and evil.' When the woman saw that the tree was **good** for food, and that it was a **delight** to the eyes, and that the tree was **desirable** to make one **wise**, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate (Genesis 3:5,6).

Can you see how Eve's senses were enticed? The fruit was

- good for food,
- a delight to her eyes,
- desirable to make one wise.

These seem like very positive motivations that would compel ANY of us to grab the fruit. And we're sure some of you may have thought, "Too bad that forbidden tree was so enticing. God should have made it UGLY!"

But as with all of our Lord's commands, God had a wonderful reason for forbidding the couple to eat from that tree. Through their disobedience in willfully taking the fruit, they came to know the one thing our caring Lord didn't want them to know — **EVIL**.

And, that knowledge of evil would bring death upon mankind. That's why God warned them, "*You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you will surely die.*"

You understand why their disobedience was so foul to our HOLY God. He created this man and woman so that He could enjoy INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP with them in the Garden. In His purity and holiness, our Father didn't want them to know evil.

But He also created them with the **free will** to choose for themselves whether to obey out of love, or to disobey out of rebellion. And, like Satan who deceived them, they chose rebellion.

DECEIT AND REBELLION GO HAND-IN-HAND. For example, maybe Adam and Eve, like so many Christians today, believe that they can sin because there really are NO CONSEQUENCES to their sins.

Perhaps in the back of their minds they were beguiled by the same lie that deceives so many today: that God is so kind, He'll overlook when I violate His commands.

Tragically, that illusion would be quickly dispelled for Adam and Eve! Not only did they get thrown out of the garden, death came to all mankind through their disobedience, and OUR SIN NATURE became the heritage we all receive at conception.

We can only imagine the discord that must have been a constant companion for Adam and Eve in their relationship after they were banished from the Garden. Day by day they had to suffer the consequences of their decision to defy God's command and break intimacy with Him.



That GENERATIONAL aspect of our sin nature being passed along was tragically repeated in Adam and Eve's first-born son, Cain. The sin nature he inherited from his parents fanned hatred and jealousy into flame against his righteous brother. Out of the evil crouched in Cain's heart came the first murder.

God even warned Cain he must

RESIST the enticement to give way to evil, and overcome its sharp claws: "...*sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you **must master it***" (Genesis 4:7).

Both our first parents and their first-born son reveal to us the motive of our own sin nature: TO ENTICE US INTO REBELLING AGAINST GOD'S COMMANDS. When we too give way to sin's enticement, fellowship with our Lord is broken as well.

The entire Bible demonstrates our innate frailty when faced with sin's bait. The Older Testament recounts in detail the sin nature even of those who've been chosen and set apart to be God's people.

Think about the paradox concerning the Feast of Atonement. In His grace our loving God accepted an animal sacrifice to pay the penalty of His people's sins each year. BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP THEM FROM SINNING. Rather than gratefully living with obedient trust in God, they grew even more detestable in following their sin nature. God finally had to drive them out of the land He'd promised them.

In essence, because of willfully giving in to their sin nature, the Israelites were banished just as Adam and Eve were. And, this unresolved slavery to sin continued right up to the coming of Jesus.

Paul sums up the battle we as followers of Jesus confront daily between our yearning to obey the Holy Spirit, and our propensity to give in to our inherited sin nature:

*So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is **contrary to the Spirit**, and the Spirit what is **contrary to the sinful nature**. They are **in conflict** with each other, so*

that you do not do what you want (Galatians 5:16,17).

Paul also reminds us all of how we can have victory over the battle with our sin nature: "*Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory **through our Lord Jesus Christ***" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

When we too give way to sin's enticement, fellowship with our Lord is broken as well.

You may have memorized the commands of God backward and forward, but KNOWING is not obeying! Our sin nature sees to it that in our own strength, we're POWERLESS to walk in a way that pleases our Lord.

But our Father's not dismayed by our weakness. As with any parent who sees their child earnestly trying, they'll lovingly do all they can to help that child.

First, consider what great love our Father has shown us to deliver His own Son as a sin offering to reconcile us with His holy and righteous self!

*For what the law was powerless to do in that it was **weakened by the sinful nature**, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a **sin offering**. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the **righteous requirements of the law** might be fully met in us, who do **not live** according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit* (Romans 8:3,4).

First our loving Father provides the penalty our sin requires by accepting the sacrifice of His Son. And equally as important: He also places His Spirit in each person who trusts in Jesus. AND, IT'S THE SPIRIT WHO ENABLES US TO

OVERCOME OUR SIN NATURE.

If you want greater insight into other factors that contribute to your victory, we encourage you to watch and discuss our video series, *Jesus In Your Home*, especially the segments on the *Gospel of the Covenant* and the working of the Holy Spirit.

The Severity of Sin

It's heartbreaking that so many who call themselves "Christian" openly sin and never repent. Satan's deception has convinced them that there's no consequence to their sin, so there's no need to confess their sins and turn from them. As we mentioned, many preachers in Christendom falsely teach that God's forgiveness means that they don't HAVE to turn away from their sins and live God's way.

If you want to be true to Jesus, we encourage you to trust God's Word even if it means discarding man's deception! The Bible warns us for our GOOD that if we continue sinning and don't repent, we become more deeply entrenched in our sin.

Both Jesus and then Paul made sure there was no doubt about the reality of SINFUL ENSLAVEMENT when you choose to abide in defiance of God's commands:

*I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a **slave to sin*** (John 8:34)

*Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are **slaves to the one whom you obey**—whether you are slaves to sin, which **leads to death**, or to obedience, which **leads to righteousness**?* (Romans 6:16).

When children of God continue to give in to their sin nature, they become so RESPONSIVE to sin that the writer to the Hebrews warns,

*It is **impossible** for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, **if they fall away**, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace* (Hebrews 6:4-6).

The Newer Testament writers all agree that people CAN choose to leave the path to the narrow gate. That's why they offer so many warnings against giving in to our sinful nature. Listen to Peter's admonition as if he were speaking to YOU:

*I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to **abstain** from sinful desires, which **war against your soul*** (1 Peter 2:11).

The coming of Jesus didn't end the battle that rages inside of each of us who follows Him. Our Lord calls us to STAY REPENTANT and CONFESS our sins, and to KEEP PRESSING ON through the skirmishes along the way until we see Jesus face-to-face. His sacrifice on the cross paid the penalty we fully deserve for our sin.

And, His resurrection and ascension made it possible for us to experience freedom and victory through His indwelling Spirit. But just remember, if you're a follower of Jesus, realize there's a battle raging:

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires (Romans 8:5).

Don't be surprised or frustrated about the continuing battle going on inside you. You AREN'T a slave to sin any more if the Holy Spirit is within you, so you don't HAVE to give way to that old nature's call! BUT YOU MUST FIGHT AND RESIST!

Many of us DO get tired of fighting this battle. And many think that, because they're Christians, the battle should be less! That's a pleasant thought, but the Bible tells us otherwise.

Just so there won't be any doubt, Paul delineates indicators of the symptoms of our sinful nature at work:

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like (Galatians 5:19,20)

Jesus sacrifice on the cross paid the penalty we fully deserve for our sin. And, His resurrection and ascension made it possible for us to experience freedom and victory through His indwelling Spirit.

Our Personal Responsibilities In Light Of Our Sin Nature

When your sinful nature is enticing you to sin, it uses a deceptive rationale: **“What's wrong with it?”**

On the other hand, a follower of

Jesus who is determined not to sin asks: **“What's right with it?”**

A person who doesn't want to resist temptation will always rationalize through the deceptive question, “What's wrong with it?” This is a clear indicator that sin will prevail outward from his mind to his emotions to subsequent action.

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Remember, the Scripture writers understood that salvation was found at the END of your earthly pilgrimage when your name is proclaimed before the hosts of heaven. That's why they so heartily encouraged believers to RESIST their sinful nature and YIELD to the Holy Spirit.

With that same enduring view toward heaven Paul speaks with such intensity to the followers of Jesus in Galatia:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life (Galatians 6:7,8).

Scriptural warnings are just as appropriate for us today who yearn for eternal life in Jesus and are determined to FINISH THE RACE. We want to reiterate once again: NO ONE EVER OVERCOMES THEIR SINFUL NATURE BY THEIR OWN STRENGTH.

When you understand the true Gospel as a pilgrimage that LEADS TO salvation, you become much more aware of how critically you NEED the indwelling Holy Spirit. He's the One Who enables you to resist sin and live in conformity to Jesus.

(See Newsletter 2001/04 "The Awesome Preeeminence of Jesus")

Each day the indwelling Holy Spirit enables us to focus on Jesus, rather than on fear that we'll give way to our sin nature. *"Rather, **clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature**"* (Romans 13:14).

So, what ARE our responsibilities to God in light of the reality of our sin nature? First, we need to face the fact that our sin nature IS an active force that's working AGAINST our human frailty.

Second, we who follow Jesus ARE capable of sinning IF we give way to that sin nature.

And, finally, we need to be honest with ourselves. Yes, our gracious Father has equipped us with spiritual weapons to prevail over sin. But the caveat is: Don't let ourselves be deceived into thinking that sin isn't all that big a deal to God. It is! Or why else would the Son of God become man and pay the penalty for our sins on the cross?

Yes, the penalty has been paid, but you must recognize your sins, confess them, and turn away from them.

*If we claim to be **without sin**, we **deceive ourselves** and the truth is not in us. If we **confess** our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we*

*claim we have **not sinned**, we make him out to be a liar and his word has **no place in our lives*** (1 John 1:8-10).

When we confess our sins to our Lord, we're AGREEING WITH HIM that we've violated God's commands. Repentance calls us to TURN AWAY from that sin AND to turn toward God for the Holy Spirit to help us live HIS way.

In our years of ministry we've observed a correlation: If a congregation has a mortgage on their building, sin will not be addressed in the manner God requires. The clergy won't speak from the Spirit to confront and convict people of their sins because people are needed to pay the mortgage.

Be careful if you're in a congregation in which religious leaders are so bent on what's called "church growth" that they no longer confront people about sin. The Bible declares that the unrepentant must be cast from our midst. (See Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:5). We're even to turn the unrepentant over to Satan for the destruction of their sin nature so that they WILL repent and return to God.

We want to ask you three questions:

- Are you currently fellowshiping with unrepentant people who are NOT in fellowship with our Father?
- Has anyone been removed from your faith community for sin of which they refused to repent?
- How would the leadership of your faith community recognize that there are unrepentant people among you?

We want to encourage you to make sure you aren't in fellowship based on

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sin. False teachers today, influenced by the spirit of lawlessness, have duped many into living under the control of their sin nature without fear of consequence. And those entrapped by lawlessness don't even realize their separation from fellowship with God.

Scrutinize Your Own Life For Sin

The Bible assures us of a key promise based upon righteous standing before God:

*For the **eyes of the Lord** are on the righteous and his **ears are attentive** to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil (1Peter 3:12).*

To assure us that righteousness is key to our prayers being heard by God, James reminds us of Elijah, who was a man just like everyone else:

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. **The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.** Elijah was a man just like us. He **prayed earnestly** that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. **Again he prayed**, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops (James 5:16-18).*

John reiterates how to restore righteousness when we fail and commit sin: *"If we **confess** our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).*

So why would anyone want to hold on to unconfessed sin if God doesn't hear their prayers?

And, how do you know when you've sinned? Stop and think about that for a moment: God DOESN'T HEAR the prayers of the unrighteous. Yet, the prayers of a righteous person are **POWERFUL** and **EFFECTIVE**. A person who has their prayers answered like Elijah has TESTIMONY TO THE FATHER'S GLORY to match!

Please answer these two related questions:

- How are your prayers being answered by your heavenly Father?
- What testimonies to His answers have you shared with others in the past few days?

The Bible is the only source for us to use to understand what our holy God considers sin. We wrote our booklet, **Christian Halakhahs**, to explain how we must apply the Bible to all areas of our lives: family, business, and extended spiritual family. Failing to do so leaves us exposed to unintentional sin due to our ignorance. And ignorance isn't an excuse our Lord accepts!

A person who has their prayers answered like Elijah has testimony to the Father's glory to match!

Steps For Establishing **Halakhahs** (From **Christian Halakhahs**)

When you are prompted by a need or concern, begin to prayerfully seek God to determine HOW THE WORD WOULD APPLY. Your personal *halakhah* is your prayerful, scriptural application.

- 1 **Prayer.** To establish a *halakhah* for your particular issue, PRAY. Ask for a spirit of wisdom and revelation (see Ephesians 1:17), entreating the Father to convey HIS WILL regarding your issue or concern.
- 2 **Bible passages.** Next, ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind any verses or passages from the Bible that would APPLY TO YOUR SITUATION. Don't try to apply anything to your situation *until* you are sure that you have compiled all possible biblical references. Some verses will be more pertinent than others. That is, you'll recognize one or more of the verses as more foundational to the issue. Other verses will add understanding to the foundation. When you have taken the extra pain to pursue all the biblical leads prompted by the Holy Spirit, a sense of peace will probably rest on you and anyone who may be sharing this investigation with you.
- 3 **Biblical application.** Armed with the appropriate verses and passages, you can ADDRESS YOUR PROBLEM AND CONCERN. Be careful to not get into "if—then" reasoning as you try to apply the Word to the situation. The normal tendency after pondering the Bible application to the situation is to immediately draw conclusions and ask questions. What will this decision cost you? How will this affect others? What changes will you need to go through if you decide to live by this new conviction? No matter how strong the urge is to weigh the personal cost of your decision — don't! You must first determine in your

heart that you *do* have the correct biblical application for your situation. The Holy Spirit will again give you peace if this is what God wants for you.

- 4 **Action to take.** Only after you are convinced in your heart that you have correctly applied God's Word to your situation is it time to take the next step, APPLICATION OF GRACE. Grace is the power and desire to uphold God's truth in your life no matter what it costs you. Remember, you are applying *halakhahs* to your life because of your LOVE FOR JESUS. The goal is not right behavior for its own sake. If correct behavior in the hopes of gaining God's favor is your motivation, you will become prideful. You may even develop a disdain for others who don't live or think the way you do. God's grace will enable you to keep your new conviction because of your desire to LOVINGLY OBEY HIM. Continue to pray for grace. And repent of your failure for not having known these new truths or lived by them before this time.

If this method hasn't been part of your faith enactment before, it may take a little time to develop the halakhic process for yourself and for those close to you. Be patient with each other! Each of the four steps is important. Go over them again to be sure you understand the importance of each one.

A few case studies:

Using the steps we outlined, we encourage you to biblically define when a person in sin against a holy God.

1. A woman has a baby and decides to return to work and place the baby in day care. Her family doesn't need the money. And, her husband prefers that she stay home with the baby.

2. A man has a chance for a promotion which will require him to spend many more hours away from his family. His wife is opposed to him accepting the promotion.

3. A person in your home group watches TV programs which are immoral and sinful according to God's Word.

Think about real-life situations going on in your own home or workplace, or among your own extended spiritual family. How can you establish appropriate halakhahs that will reflect the mind of Christ, the will of your Father, and the power of the Spirit?

**Fear of God, Personal Responsibility,
Deference and God-dependence
are foundations of the
Hebraic Restoration.**