

**Simply Christ**  
Gospel Newsletter  
*Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ*

December 17, 2022

## Religious Struggles

The following is a reply to questions we received from a pastor who believed that serving God required a continuous struggle with sin in our hearts. I am making this public in hopes it may help someone else.

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_,

I believe every sincere question deserves an honest answer. I accept your questions as sincere and will seek to answer to the best that God gives me understanding.

In your reference to Paul's words in Romans 7, you overlook that Paul is clearly speaking of his efforts to serve God under the Law of Moses before his conversion to Christ. He begins this chapter saying "*I speak to them that know the law...*" Romans 7:1. He then says, "***For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.***" Romans 7:5. It is from this basis that he describes the struggle with sin in his efforts to serve God under the Law.

His statement, "*For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I*" Romans 7:15 is what convinced Saul of Tarsus

that he was not “spiritual”, but as Jesus said, “*a servant (slave) of sin.*” John 8:34. This brought him to the realization that he, Saul of Tarsus, was “*carnal, sold under sin.*”

You quoted Paul’s words, “*But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members,*” but failed to see that four verses later Paul says, “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus **hath made me free from the law of sin and death.***” Romans 8:2. Under the Law of Moses, sin ruled over Paul, but in coming to Christ he was made free from that law of sin and death which had once worked in his members and made him a captive of sin.

The concluding verse of the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter tells us Christ Jesus delivered him from the “*body of death,*” and then gives a warning for all who think they can serve God through the carnal mind. Below is an excerpt from Leroy Surface’s commentary on Romans which I believe may be helpful in seeing the truth of this passage.

**“So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”** Romans 7:25

There are three words in this passage which are often overlooked, but are of great importance. The first is the word “So.” It comes from the Greek word “*ara*” and speaks of “drawing a conclusion.” This last sentence is Paul’s conclusion of this entire chapter that deals with serving God “*in the flesh.*” The second overlooked word of great importance is the word “*mind.*” This speaks of the “*intellect.*” Here Paul is referring to himself or

anyone else who may seek to serve God through the keeping of commandments. The intellect says, "If I know what is good and evil in my mind, I can do the good and shun the evil." Perhaps the most misunderstood word in this passage is the word "*but*." It comes from the Greek word "*de*" which is a primary particle (adversative or continuative). In this case it should have translated as "*also*." Properly translated this last sentence would read: **I conclude then (if) with the intellect I serve the law of God; (I will) also with the flesh (serve) the law of sin.** His conclusion is that if you are seeking to serve the "law of God" through your human intellect, you will also serve the law of sin with your flesh.

You mentioned John's statement "*And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*" I John 3:3. Peter makes a similar statement saying, "*Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*" Acts 2:40. I do not think Peter was saying we are to be our own savior, but to come to The Savior, Jesus Christ. Those who "*purify themselves*" are those who come to The Purifier, Jesus Christ. As John reminds us, "*the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*"

You mention the overcomer. So did John. He spoke to the "*little children*" (Greek: *tekion* an infant), saying "*Ye are of God, little children, **and have overcome them** (the antichrists): because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*" I John 4:4. These newborn babes in Christ were already overcomers, not because of their

struggles, but because of the greatness of Christ who was in them.

You mentioned the *“whole armor of God.”* Ephesians 6:10-17. This is not defensive, but offensive. It is the armor of the church to go forth with the gospel to see souls delivered out of Satan’s kingdom. Those who hide in a fort do not need an armor. We are clothed with faith, the gospel, truth, righteousness, and salvation. These are not giving us the victory over something within our own hearts, but are the tools of a warrior to stand against the powers of darkness which hold the souls of lost men and women. This passage is a reference to Christ putting on *“righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation”* to come deliver us, as spoken in Isaiah 59:17.

You mentioned that you are “dead to the penalty of sin.” Where is that found in the Bible? The word of God is clear. Those who are in Christ are *“dead to sin.”* Romans 6:2.

I do not believe or teach that a person cannot fall from the grace of Christ. The message of Jesus and the apostles was to *“abide in him.”* This is not through struggle, but through belief of the truth. John’s warning to the little children was against those who were denying that Jesus was the Christ. Those who believed such error would fall back into the struggles of religious darkness.

You quoted *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”* 1 John 1:10. Do you also quote *“And ye know that **he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not:***

**whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.** Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. **He that committeth sin is of the devil;** for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. **Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.** In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

1 John 3:5-10.?

You mentioned John's words "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8. These are a reference to those who walked in darkness but claimed fellowship with God. 1 John 1:6. These were like John's fellow Jews whom Jesus spoke of, saying, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, **they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.**" John 15:22. These rejected Jesus' message that sin in the heart is equivalent to committing the act of sin. "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matthew 5:28. They thought because they had "made clean the outside of the cup" Luke 11:39 they had no sin. That is a deception. Everyone has sin until Jesus washes it from their heart.

I know I have not addressed all your questions but the word of God is clear. Those who are struggling with sin to serve God are walking in religious

flesh. Before Paul warned of the *“works of the flesh”* in Galatians chapter 5, he said, *“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”* Galatians 3:2. The *“flesh”* was their trust in was Moses’ Law. Those who *“walk in the flesh”* are walking in fleshly religion, and the *“works of the flesh”* will be the end result. Those who walk in the Spirit are those who walk in the grace of Christ, and the *“fruit of the Spirit”* fills their heart and life.