

Being a Spiritually Minded Christian
Part Seventeen
Overcoming the Flesh

John 10:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

- *This one verse summarizes the Gospel message and provides an overview of the entire Bible.*
- *God's desire and plan is to save, bless, and give abundant life. The devil's sole motivation is to steal, kill, and destroy.*
- *John 10:9 provides us with the context to understand John10:10.*

John 10:9 (NKJV)

⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

- *Jesus is the door and the way that we receive salvation, "he will be saved" and the way we receive freedom and the abundantly overflowing life, "he will go in and out and will find pasture."*
- *While Jesus does the saving, and healing and provides us with the fullness of life, we have one small but important part to play. "If anyone enters by Me" We need to choose to enter in and accept Him as our Saviour and Lord to be saved. Then we need to learn to continue in our walk of faith and obedience to Him in order to experience abundant overflowing life.*

Joshua 24:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ "Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!

¹⁵ And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

- *Joshua beautifully summarized the choice Israel had to make, "choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve."*
- *Israel had experienced God's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt and witnessed many miracles as they journeyed through the wilderness. Now it was time for them to enter the Promised Land and into the purposes God had for them as a nation. They had to decide how they were going to live their lives—either continuing to serve God in*

their new relationship with Him or revert to their old ways of living and thinking and return to the bondage of sin.

- *Joshua even described what it looks like to serve the Lord, “Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!”*
- *“Fear the Lord” – This is the awe, wonder, and sheer delight of knowing the Living God.*
- *“Serve Him in sincerity and in truth” – God does not want us to be “religious,” but to have a real relationship with Him.*
- *“Put away the false gods” – God wants us to learn to put all our trust and confidence in Him.*
- *In a similar way, once we have put our faith in Christ and have been born again, we daily have a choice whom we will serve. We can either learn to walk in the abundant overflowing life of faith and obedience that God has for us, or revert back to our old ways of thinking, speaking, and living.*
- *For believers this choice is not about justification, deliverance from the penalty of sin since we are now saved, but about sanctification and learning to walk in freedom from the power and control of sin and its destructive habits.*

Genesis 2:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.

⁹And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

- *From the very beginning of the Bible, God’s intent to bless mankind is clearly seen.*

Genesis 2:16–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

- *From the very beginning God gave mankind a choice. He didn’t block the way to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but gave clear instructions not to eat of it and also outlined the consequences if they disobeyed. “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

- *What some people fail to recognize when reading Genesis 2 is God's generosity. "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat" and His wonderful provision, "out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden."*
- *The warning that God gave to Adam was very strong and clear so he could fully understand the consequences of sin and rebellion, "for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." God wanted to protect mankind from the loss and destruction that sin would bring to them both personally and to all their descendants.*
- *"God's commandments are not restrictive but protective." Ken Raymer*
- *Satan, appearing in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve by contradicting God and questioning God's motives. The serpent "said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:1, 4-5).*
- *Satan's temptation distorted God's character and appealed to Eve to become vain and seek self-exaltation, "you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The sin of pride and selfishness has become deeply ingrained in our sinful fallen nature.*
- *Once Adam and Eve rebelled against God by not only eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but by believing the lie regarding God's character, death resulted on a number of different levels.*
- *First there was physical death. Once a flower is cut from the plant and is separated from the roots, the process of death begins. It may not become apparent immediately, but from that moment the flower slowly begins to wilt and fade. In a similar way, once Adam and Eve sinned the process of death began working in their mortal bodies through the course of aging and disease.*
- *A second form of death occurred because of sin. Because God is holy and we are sinners, nothing unholy or defiled can approach God, "who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see" (1 Timothy 6:16) and "You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God." (Joshua 24:19).*
- *Even the very definition of eternal life is not just living forever, but living forever in a relationship with God. "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3).*
- *If a primary understanding of eternal life and Heaven is having unbroken fellowship with God, then Hell is eternal separation from God. "These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." (2 Thessalonians 1:9).*

- *Once my brother was speaking to an atheist and made this profound comment, “You many not believe there is a God but there is one thing that you can know about God. If there is a God you are separated from Him and the thing that separates us from God is our sin.” “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2).*
- *Our sinful and selfish condition is described in Romans 3:*

Romans 3:10–18 (NKJV)

¹⁰As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one;

¹¹There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.

¹²They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.”

¹³“Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit”; “The poison of asps is under their lips”;

¹⁴“Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”

¹⁵“Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶Destruction and misery are in their ways;

¹⁷And the way of peace they have not known.”

¹⁸“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

- *However, there is a third and more insidious form of death. When Adam sinned and came into agreement with Satan, Satan’s rebellious and destructive nature was implanted into man’s mortal body and has been passed down to all his descendants. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12).*
- *Apostle Paul described the inner conflict and turmoil that arises when someone who desires to serve God finds himself doing the very opposite. “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.” (Romans 7:19).*
- *Paul recognized that there was a sin nature in him that subverted his own desires and caused him to do things he no longer desired to do. “Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” (Romans 7:20).*
- *Every person ever born finds there are forces at work within him or herself that cause them to act or react in ungodly and destructive ways, whether they want to or not. “I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.” (Romans 7:21).*
- *Paul then identified the source of this evil that caused him to continue to live in the bondage of sin. “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.” (Romans 7:23).*

- *Paul not only identified the source of this sin nature but he also identified the exact location where it resides—our mortal bodies. “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.” (Romans 7:18).*
- *Paul concluded with this cry for help as he saw himself caught up in this continual cycle of sin. “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24).*
- *God does not leave us to languish in our turmoil but provides a way for deliverance, freedom, and victory, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.” (Romans 8:2–3).*
- *The Law of Sin and Death is defeated by the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus—our new nature in Christ.*
- *In our mortal bodies, our flesh contains the sin nature that we inherited through Adam. When we put our faith in Christ and we are born again, Christ’s divine nature is implanted in our reborn spirits, “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.” (1 Peter 1:23).*
- *God’s warning to Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” contained a severe warning, but it also made provision for salvation, deliverance, and freedom from the curse of sin.*
- *God’s heart of love for mankind is seen in His response to Adam and Eve after they chose to disbelieve God and rebel against His commandments. Adam and Eve were aware of their nakedness, and the sins that had defiled them, but God in His love and tenderness clothed them not only to hide their shame but to protect them from judgment so they could be redeemed. “Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.” (Genesis 3:21).*
- *Just as death was a consequence of sin on a number of levels, God also uses death on a number of levels to bring about salvation, redemption, and freedom.*
- *Without death Jesus Christ could not have died for our sins and redeemed us. We would have been eternally lost and separated from God. “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” and “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” (Romans 5:6, 8–9).*

- *Jesus came as a man and tasted death for everyone so that we could live. “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.” (Hebrews 2:9).*
- *Adam ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil which resulted in death for all mankind. Jesus hung on the cross, the tree that brought death, so we could be freed from the curse that came from Adam’s transgressions. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.”)” (Galatians 3:13).*
- *Through Jesus’ death on the cross all our transgression were wiped out and the Law could no longer condemn us to eternity in Hell, “having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:14).*
- *Once we put our faith in Christ, the blood of Jesus washed us clean from our sins. When the books of the Law are opened they will be blank when it comes to our transgressions. All that will be found under our name is: “Paid in Full by the Son of God” and “declared righteous by faith.” (Romans 5:1).*
- *Death has another wonderful benefit because through our physical death or by being raptured, we will experience a bodily resurrection and receive incorruptible and immortal bodies. “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).*
- *Through our resurrection we will experience the final aspect of our salvation which is glorification—deliverance from the presence of sin where we will never again experience sin, temptation, sickness, suffering, or death. “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” (1 Corinthians 15:53–54).*
- *Through Jesus’ death we experience justification and are freed from the penalty of sin which is eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire.*
- *Through Jesus’ death we will experience glorification which is freedom from the presence of sin and suffering in our resurrected immortal incorruptible bodies.*
- *However, there is one more important benefit to death that we can possess – sanctification – freedom from the power and control of sin in our daily lives.*

- *We who are born again have had our sinful passions and lusts crucified with Christ so we can learn to live a life of faith and walk in freedom, “knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” (Romans 6:6).*
- *Before we received Christ, we were slaves of sin and had no choice, but now we can choose whom we will serve. “And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” (Romans 6:13).*
- *We can have dominion over our fleshly impulses and no longer have to allow sin to control us. “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” (Romans 6:14).*
- *The Bible repeatedly exhorts and encourages us to recognize our new identity in Christ so we can walk in a new way. By faith we can consider ourselves dead to sin so that we can live for God through our new life in Jesus. “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:11).*

Genesis 3:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴So the LORD God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life.

¹⁵And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”

- *The first Messianic prophecy recorded in the Bible is found in Genesis 3:15. In the midst of this very dark time of defeat and failure for Adam and Eve, God spoke a word of hope and redemption—a Saviour is coming who will not only defeat Satan, He will defeat sin!*
- *“I will put enmity between you and the woman.” There is a spiritual battle going on between mankind and Satan, but “her Seed,” who is Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, will come and totally defeat and vanquish Satan.*
- *“You shall bruise (crush) His heel” – This signifies the great suffering that Jesus would experience at the hands of man and the devil as He was crucified. Although Jesus suffered greatly it did not result in defeat but in victory for only His heel was crushed.*
- *“He shall bruise (crush) your head” - This signifies the total and complete defeat and humiliation that Satan experienced at the resurrection of Jesus Christ as his head is crushed, speaking of total destruction. Jesus overcame the devil, the world, and the flesh to become the Saviour of all of mankind, “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:15).*

- *The crushing of Jesus' foot and the crushing of Satan's head actually occurred concurrently.*
- *While Jesus was hanging on the cross for our sins (His heel being crushed), Satan's kingdom and the power of sin was being destroyed (his head being crushed).*
- *Through Jesus Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus placed His heel on the head of Satan and crushed it and brought to an end any hope for Satan's kingdom to be established. With the serpent's head crushed, all he can do is wiggle his tail.*
- *However, this Messianic prophecy also contains a prophetic picture regarding our battle with sin, "between your seed and her Seed."*
- *The fullness of the Son of God dwells in every born again believer. Jesus' divine nature and character dwells fully in our reborn spirit. The corrupt nature of sin dwells in our mortal flesh.*
- *1 John 4:4 speaks about Christ in us being greater than the things in the world which is the devil. "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." However, there is another aspect to this verse. Even though Christ is in our reborn spirit, our flesh is still in this world. Christ in us is greater than our fleshly impulses that are in this world. We can overcome and control our flesh so that it is subject to us in all things.*
- *We do not overcome our sinful habits by battling them in our own strength but by counting ourselves dead to ourselves and alive to Christ. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20).*
- *Paul learned to live an overcoming life by choosing to daily die to himself and live for Christ. "I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. (1 Corinthians 15:31).*
- *Therefore the big question is how do we reckon ourselves dead to sin and count ourselves crucified with Christ and experience this reality? "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:3).*
- *Paul discovered the secret to a victorious life. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:2-4).*

- *The secret to overcoming sin is not to focus on battling sin, but yielding to Christ and abiding in Him. “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” (John 15:4).*
- *The more one focuses on sin the more one becomes sin-conscious, but the more we focus on Christ the more we become God-conscious, “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” (Hebrews 12:2).*
- *The secret to have our prayers answered and our lives changed into the image of Jesus is abiding. “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” (John 15:7).*
- *The Bible instructs us to do three main things:*
 - *“Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).*
 - *Meditate upon the Word of God day and night. (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2).*
 - *Do not forsake Christian fellowship. (Hebrews 10:25).*
- *The purpose of these actions is that they help us to abide in Christ. “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16).*

1 John 2:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

- *Learn how to overcome these three areas of temptation.*

Thoughts from Leonard Terry

- *The lust of the flesh is the worship of comfort and pleasure.*
- *The lust of the eyes is the worship of things.*
- *The pride of life is the worship of self.*
- *The lust of the flesh is the worship of comfort and pleasure and we must learn to worship Christ with thanksgiving and this will produce joy.*
- *The lust of the eyes is the worship of things and we must learn to worship Christ with contentment for His provision and this will produce satisfaction.*
- *The pride of life is the worship of self and we must learn to worship Christ with humility and servanthood and this will produce character.*

- *Past: I need to be thankful for what He has already provided.*
- *Present: I need to be content with what I have day by day.*
- *Future: I need to practice humility in my future service for Him.*
- *God did not save us to give us a wonderful life.*
- *God saved us to honour Him.*
- *It takes away from our narcissism when we stop asking, “Where is this wonderful life that You promised?” We become God centered when we begin to ask, “What can I do to honour You?”*
- *If each one of us, each day asks God, “What can I do to honour You today?” we would live such wonderful lives.*
- *The problem with Christians who give into temptation is not that their desires are too strong, but too weak. They are too easily pleased with foolish, destructive, and sinful behaviours which provide only a fleeting moment of pleasure instead of persevering to find the enduring joy and satisfaction of a life that is lived for Christ. (HWK)*
- *“We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” C.S. Lewis*
- *When we don't surrender to the will of God during a trial, we mumble, grumble, and stumble, instead of knowing, flowing, and growing in the will of God. (HWK)*
- *The natural mind wants to reform the flesh—that is called religion.*
- *The carnal mind embraces the flesh.*
- *The spiritual mind crucifies the flesh.*
- *Let us learn to be spiritually minded by being Christ focused and Christ centered and we will find a source of unquenchable joy, “whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.” (1 Peter 1:8).*