

CHAPTER 4: SATAN'S Strategies to KEEP SAINTS IN A State of SADNESS, DOUBTING, QUESTIONING & Discomfort

DEVICE 5: Satan tells believers that spiritual struggles are exactly the same as the struggles of non-believers. The truth is both struggle but in ways that are as different as light and darkness, heaven and hell. This will now be shown with support from scripture:

1. Every fiber in the believer's being is against sin, while an unbeliever may condemn sin, but their heart still longs to get away with committing the sin. Paul asks teachers to consider whether they practice what they teach - (you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. (Rom. 2:21-23 ESV)).

A genuine believer may still struggle to avoid sin. (For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. (Rom. 7:19-20 ESV). The difference is that a genuine believer doesn't want to sin.

2. A Christian is in conflict with all sins of every possible kind, from the smallest sin to the greatest sin (Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. (Ps. 119:104 ESV)). while an unbeliever will consider some sins to be okay.

Because sinning is a betrayal of Christ, and insults what He did for believers, love for Christ will motivate Christians to hate sin. In the end, the believer realizes that there will be no relief in the struggle until every lustful desire is put to death (Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Col. 3:5 ESV)).

Paul explains: [So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (Rom. 6:11-14 ESV)].

On the other hand, a person who is not motivated by a love for Jesus Christ loves some sins, and hates only some sins.

3. A Christian has many reasons for opposing sin –
 - love for God [For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. (1 Jn. 5:3 ESV); For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (2 Cor. 5:14-15 ESV)],
 - a desire to glorify God [So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31 ESV)],
 - a desire to have fellowship with God [If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 Jn. 1:6-7 ESV)],
 - gratitude to God [Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High,¹⁵ and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." (Ps. 50:14-15 ESV)],
 - Christ's death on the cross [He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Pet. 2:24 ESV)],
 - a desire to proclaim the excellencies of Christ [But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Pet. 2:9 ESV)],
 - Christ's intercession on our behalf gives us strength to resist temptation [Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb. 7:25 ESV)],
 - the indwelling of the Spirit [But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.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. (Gal. 5:16-17 ESV)],
 - the seal of the Spirit [And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph. 4:30 ESV)],
 - the witness of the Spirit [For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (Rom. 8:13-14 ESV)],
 - and the comfort of the Spirit [But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (Jn. 14:26 ESV)].

The unbeliever does not have these reasons to oppose sin because they belong only to those who belong to Christ.

4. The Christian's conflict with sin is constant. After the Apostle Paul had been a Christian for a number of years he wrote about this struggle [For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (Rom. 7:22-23 ESV)]. On the other hand, an unbeliever, according to Peter's words, returns again and again to his or her sin [They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. (2 Pet. 2:19-20 ESV)]
5. The Christian's conflict with sin runs to the deepest core of the believer. The inner conflict is found in every human faculty – moral judgement, the mind, the will, and the emotions. This is because both the old nature and the new nature have all the same faculties. For the non-believer, the struggle is between the conscience and the will only.
6. The righteousness of the believer gains ground in the conflict with sin. Sin of non-believer however, is gaining ground against the sinner's soul.

To wrap up: The believer's sinful self has been crucified with Christ [And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Gal. 5:24 ESV)]. But the sinful nature in the believer is dying an excruciatingly slow death. Instead of letting this discourage believers they would do best to consider the battle against their old, sinful nature as an opportunity to grow increasingly humble, wakeful, and watchful. God wants us to keep our spiritual weapons in our hands, not set aside gathering dust from lack of use.

Mortification of sin is a daily act. We must all "die daily" (²³ And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23 (ESV)). Christians hang between flesh and spirit. The day is coming, though, when Christ's victory will be final, and that victory in us will be complete and we will no longer desire to sin. For now, believers can seek after no greater pleasure of conquering human corruption, especially the corruption of sin in their own souls.

Questions

1. *How does knowing the truth about the struggle with sin help a Christian when Satan tells a Christian that his struggle is no different than any other person's struggle with sin?*
2. *A person who is not in Christ will avoid sin mostly because of he or she fears the consequences. How is it different for a Christian? (See the statement of truth #3).*
3. *If we think of this as part of spiritual warfare how important is it to know which side you're on? (When Satan tells us our struggle is no different than the non-Christian's struggle, it's like saying it doesn't really matter which side you are on).*