

Spiritual Warfare -- Power To Choose

Once we invite God to come and live in us, by His Holy Spirit everything does change and everything must change. We are alive as we've never been alive before we have power like we've never had before. The Bible describes that power for us. ***I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church.*** (Ephesians 1:19-22)

Not only do we have this incredible power and authority, but we have lots of opportunities to put this power into practice. We've lived by our own thoughts and desires for many years and as we now live according to the Holy Spirit we will see again and again areas where our lives have to change from what they were to what pleases God.

Live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer subject to the law. (Galatians 5:16-18)

Many times every day we will need to exercise the new power that is in us to choose for the new desires that the Holy Spirit is putting in front of us. The difficult part is that from the left eye we see what the Holy Spirit wants us to do and from the right eye we see the familiar desires that have been our life patterns for years. God doesn't simply rip those pictures out of our mind. God gives us the power of the Holy Spirit to make the choice for what's right. Our part is to make the choice. God will never take that responsibility from us. He's given us the freedom to choose and now the power of the Holy Spirit to choose well.

How will I know if I am making the right choice? Again, God is so kind and helpful. He gives us very clear indicators from daily life that will help us know if we are straying from the path.

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong

except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

We can clearly see how our lives in addiction were not lives controlled by God's Spirit. We can also clearly see how much of our lives still need to be transformed through ongoing surrender to God's healing and renewing.

When God comes to live in us, our Spirit is made alive and will live with God forever. Now the process that goes on in us is the transformation of our soul (thoughts, emotions, will to choose). As we practice and grow more skilled in surrendering these invisible areas to God, we will see changes in our visible world - our words, our actions, our attitudes, our work, and our relationships. ***He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like [Jesus] and reflect his glory even more.*** (John 14:17, 2 Corinthians 3:18)

What's the evidence of the new life? ***But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.*** (Galatians 5:22-24)

Clearly, God makes changes in us. Just a clearly, it is we who have to choose to nail our passions and sinful desires to the cross. We have to die to the things we used to want. In fact, we have to put them to death - actually kill the wrong desires and passions in us. We have to say "no" to them in order to live in love and joy and peace now. And that's where we begin to experience what many have described as spiritual warfare - the battle of the invisible kingdoms.

We have the power to make this choice. We have God's Holy Spirit living in us giving us overwhelming power to choose life. But, the choice is ours. What choice will I make? There is no in between. Either we choose for life or death, for sinful desires or Godly desires.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. In what areas do I see the battle of the natures in me?
2. What am I doing to put to death the sinful desires in me?
3. How am I choosing life by the Spirit of God today?