

DCF:

The numbers go up. The numbers go down. Italy, China, Singapore and the United States. We've all had those numbers flash on our TV's or on our computers as we surfed the web. We've seen the curve go up. We've seen the curve go down. And then we see the numbers rise again. Our world has been dealing with the covid pandemic for months now, and I bet you're getting a bit tired of dealing with it. I know I am. As we struggle with this new challenge in our lives, have you ever had this thought "Will it ever end?"

As hard as it is to deal with this, you do know, don't you, that you have experience dealing with this question? Of course you do! When it comes to our battle against sin, our struggle to live as Christ wants us to live, we've asked and answered that question many times. **“WILL IT EVER END?”** We know that every Christian battles against sin as they live in this world, and we know that our sinful nature will never give up this side of heaven. Come with me to the Word of God, and be reassured by our Lord. Let's go to the book of Romans, shall we?

### ***Part One: Every Christian battles***

The apostle Paul is talking to believers, believers who want to live for Christ. There was a problem. It wasn't always happening. And their failure to live completely for the Lord seemed to be frustrating his hearers. Paul could understand why they were feeling this way since he had the same experience. It was from his personal experience and the insight that the Holy Spirit gave him that enables him to explain why we don't always live for the Lord.

Now, Paul is talking only to believers. Believers want to please God because of all that He has done for them. A believer knows that Jesus died to pay for all our sins. A believer knows that Jesus' perfect life replaces our imperfect lives in God's eyes. A believer knows that heaven is now our eternal destination. A believer knows that God loves him, is with him always and is always guiding and protecting him. A believer also knows what thoughts, words and actions please our Lord. Knowing all this, believing this, having faith - motivates us to strive to live for God as a way of saying thanks. It's like a child who has been given a fantastic birthday gift doing chores around the house without being asked. He wants to show mom and dad he appreciates what they did, so he does things that he knows will please his parents. Or a husband, picking up around the house and vacuuming before his wife gets home from work just because he loves her and knows that this will please her.

Because of faith in Jesus, a believer wants to please God by loving Him above all things. ***“In my inner being I delight in God's law”*** Paul tells us. A believer wants to please God by listening to His voice as he reads the Bible. A believer wants to please God by caring for his neighbor, by being honest and dependable, by telling others about the Savior. A believer wants to please God by avoiding sins that give Christians a bad name. Things like drunkenness, lying, cheating, gossiping and hateful words. These are all things that Christians, that you and I, want to avoid.

It doesn't always work out that way, does it? Paul knew this. Listen to his words. ***“For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do.”*** There are times believers carry a grudge, or take someone else's words and actions in the worst possible way. We get envious of others' success or blessings. We sometimes lie or shade the truth just a little bit. Yeah, we're guilty of it. And of course we all know of other believers who have done those things, too. The fact of the matter, as Paul points out, is that every Christian battles.

Why is that? Paul tells us. ***“Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.”*** We have a sinful nature living in our hearts. Sin has corrupted our nature. We inherited this corrupted nature from our parents, who inherited from theirs. We trace this spiritually genetic flaw all the way back to Adam, who infected every human being with sin. Not only does our sinful nature not do what God wants us to do, it also fights against the will of God. When our faith nature wants to do what God wants us to do, our sinful nature rises up like an attack dog to battle our desire to please the Lord. And the battle continues.

## ***Part Two: It never gives up***

It's exhausting, isn't it? And sometimes we wonder if it will ever end. Even right now, as we sit in church and try to do the one thing that pleases God above all things - listening to Him - the battle rages on. Our sinful nature is trying to get us to daydream and not pay attention, isn't it? We try and focus on what the Lord is saying and our sinful nature pops other thoughts into our heads. "I've got to go shopping for some parts for the car. I wonder if the fish will be biting later. I haven't heard from my kids for a while. Maybe I'll call them later. Boy, my foot really hurts today. Maybe I better wear my other shoes when I get home. Do I need a haircut?" Our sinful nature tries to distract us from listening to the Lord in oh so many ways, doesn't it?

That's just one example. There are tons of others sins that we battle on a daily basis. We sometimes hope that as we grow stronger in our faith we will be able to defeat our sinful nature. And perhaps, we've conquered a few sins. Maybe we've won the battle against gossip - at least for a while. Maybe we've won the battle against envy, or lying or greed. For a while.

But make no mistake. The war rages on. Our sinful nature will never give up. And just when we think we've won one battle, our sinful nature attacks us on another front. It always seeks out our weakest spot. When battling our sinful nature, it's like playing spiritual whack a mole. You smack one temptation down, and another pops up. Our sinful nature will never give up trying to lead us into sin.

Why? Because the ultimate goal of our sinful nature is to drag us into hell. Remember, our sinful nature hates God and wants nothing to do with God. It will try to either deaden our consciences so that we ignore or forget God, or it will try and get us angry with God so we reject Him. Paul knew what his sinful nature was trying to do, and describes his feelings this way - ***"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"***

Our sinful nature never gives up, but neither does Jesus! He continues to gently and consistently come to us in His Word and reminds us that He has conquered sin. He has conquered death. He continually washes us clean from sin and takes away the eternal punishment of sin. Our sinful nature might be whispering in our ear "You're sinful, you're sinful." Jesus tells us "You're forgiven. You're forgiven." ***"Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!"***

While we live on this earth, we will always struggle with our sinful nature. That's a given. Sometimes by the grace and power of God, we'll win the battle, but the war goes on. Sometimes, we'll fail, but forgiveness is always there. It's hard. Sometimes it's depressing. It's always wearying. But it will end. In paradise, our sinful nature will be cut out of our lives. No more will we be tempted to sin. No more will we suffer those less than God-pleasing thoughts. No more conflict in our hearts and minds, only the pure desire to praise God with our entire being. Can we even begin to imagine what that is going to be like? No conflict, only a pure focus on our Lord? Will the battle ever end? Yes, in heaven!

Until the battle ends, our Savior continues to encourage us in our spiritual warfare. Remember you are forgiven. Remember what pleases the Lord. Remember that the Holy Spirit gives you the strength to battle against sin through the Word. Perhaps these words of our Lord will strengthen you in your daily battle, from Philippians 4:8. ***"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."***

Will it ever end? By the grace of God and the work of our Savior, we know it will. May God keep us strong in our battle against sin.

AMEN