

Lesson 4 – The Battle for Holiness (Chapter 6)

We may not like the fact that we have this lifelong struggle with sin, but the more we realize and accept it, the better equipped we will be to deal with it. And even though sin has been overthrown and weakened, its nature has not changed. So, if we are to wage a successful war against this enemy within, it is important that we know something of its nature and tactics.

First of all, the scriptures tells us that **the seat of indwelling sin is the heart** (Mark 7:21-23). The Bible paints a picture of the heart as the whole soul of a person and all of its faculties, as they work together in doing good or evil:

- The mind – as it reasons, discerns and judges
- The emotions – as they like or dislike
- The conscience – as it determines and warns
- The will – as it chooses or refuses

Jeremiah 17:9-10 tells us that the heart is *deceitful* and *unsearchable* to any one but God, so much so that it is some times difficult to know our own hearts (I Corinthians 4:3-5). None of us can fully discern the hidden motives of our own hearts. In addition, the heart is also deceitful and blinds us to entire areas of sin in our lives. It rationalizes, excuses and justifies our actions. Many times it causes us to deal with sin only halfway or fools us into thinking that mental assent to the Word of God is the same as obedience (James 1:21-25).

We need to ask God daily to search our hearts for sin that we cannot or will not see (Psalm 139:23-24). And God's primary way of searching our hearts is through His Word (Hebrews 4:12). And we must allow the Holy Spirit, *not ourselves*, to do the searching. If we do not, we fall prey to Satan's tricks of discouragement as we try to ferret out the sin in our lives.

Secondly, the **indwelling sin nature works primarily through our desires**. Desire is the strongest force in a person's heart. Take a look at temptation. When we give in to temptation, it is because our *desire* has overcome our *reason* in the battle to influence our *will*. James tells us that we are tempted when we are drawn away and enticed by our *desires* (James 1:13-14). And here's the kicker – we think that we merely respond to outward sources of temptations that are presented to us. But the truth is, our sinful nature is constantly searching out temptations to satisfy our *desires*.

Thirdly, **indwelling sin tends to deceive and distort our understanding or reasoning**. If the power of sin has been overcome, Satan has to resort to deceiving our very understanding of sin. We may come to believe that *we are beyond a particular temptation or sin*. We are drawn away from obedience by *the abuse of grace* (Jude 4 and Romans 6:1-2). We abuse grace when, after sinning, we only dwell on the compassion and mercy of God to the exclusion of God's holiness and hatred of sin. We are deceived when *we begin to question God's Word*. This was Satan's first tactic with Eve (Genesis 3:1-5).

The heart is unsearchable, our desires are insatiable, and our reason and will are continually being deceived. We need to be on guard. Jesus understood this (Matthew 26:41) as did Solomon (Proverbs 4:23). Let's next take a look at how to fight and win this battle.