

Growing and Living by Grace Through Faith
“A Supplement to Returning to Holiness”
(Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27)
By Dr. Gregory Frizzell

As you seek deeper surrender to Jesus, it is vital to understand your journey is not *just* about cleansing — it is about experiencing Christ in phenomenal closeness and victory! It is about learning to live and grow by grace through faith. By so doing, you will daily experience Christ’s glorious life and joy flowing through you. Jesus will become incredibly real in your daily experience. As you learn to more deeply cleanse and “yield your heart, Christ will empower every part of your being. Consider these awesome words from the Apostle Paul, “*I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*” (Galatians 2:20 KJV)

Oh friend, do you see it? The hope and power of all victory is your union, acceptance and power in Christ. It is Christ Himself living through you! In this journey, you will learn how to yield your heart to Jesus as your very life and power. And as you do, He fills you with a mighty river of holiness, life and power! (John 7:38) Ultimately, this journey is about removing the barriers so Jesus’ life can flood every part of your being. And even though you still have sorrows and struggles, you are “fully accepted” and loved through all the ups and downs of your journey! (Romans 8:37-39; Ephesians 1:6) By His indwelling presence, we learn to experience the glorious reality of 2 Corinthians 12:9. “*In our weakness, His strength is made perfect.*”

Best of all, we experience Christ’s daily victory by faith, not legalistic self-effort. In Romans 6:11, Paul said we are to “reckon” (or count true) our death to sin’s power. By faith we are to believe Christ’s life, death and resurrection as our own because we are “in Him.” According to Colossians 2:6, we “*walk in Christ the same way we received Him.*” And how did we receive Him? *By grace through faith alone!* So believer, as you pray through this process, you can trust Christ as both your *positional* righteousness before God and your *practical* power for daily, ever-increasing transformation. Cleansing and growth is not by our strength, but by His life in us!

At this point, I know some precious souls are thinking, “I tried trusting Christ for my victory and it just didn’t seem to work.” My friend, don’t be discouraged or think you are the “exception” to God’s promise of victory. You likely just need a better understanding of the “process” of growth and full victory (especially over strongholds.) In the next few pages, we will explain God’s process and rest assured — you are *not* an exception. God doesn’t have second-class children!

How to Experience Victory by “Grace Through Faith”
Far More Than Semantics!

At this point I need to emphasize that victory by “grace through faith” is far more than semantics or magic phrases. While grace by faith is not some magic verbatim phrase that God requires, the principle behind the phrase is absolutely crucial for true victory. Without even realizing it, many believers are trying to live and serve (partially) in their own strength. A proper understanding of grace causes believers to approach God in the one way that brings victory. Though God is not legalistic about exact phrases or wording, He is utterly serious about our humble dependence upon Christ alone. This section shows the simple steps of living in God’s fullness by grace through faith.

For practical help, I now outline the simple process by which we actually experience Christ in daily victory. Perhaps the best way to explain the pattern is to give specific examples. First, we take two common examples of someone struggling with either a temper or fear. You would start with *claiming by faith* the power of Christ's death, victory and resurrected life as your own victory over a sin or weakness. (Romans 6:11) When we are united to Christ at salvation, all He has done and all He is becomes our very life. (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27) We are already positionally blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him. (Ephesians 1:3) Our need is learning to *experience* His life in our practical daily walk. To walk in victory, we must trust Christ's victory in us and immediately begin to reject sinful actions or thoughts.

With attitude sins such as anger or fear, it is especially important to identify the underlying root of the sins. In other words, ask God to help you see "why" you are angry or fearful. As you see the underlying reason, you can then deal effectively with the root of the sin. If we don't take the time to identify the root of sin and self, we end up dealing only with surface symptoms (which yields no lasting victory.)

Identifying Your "Roots of Hindrance"

For most people, their hindering root is some area of unyielded sin, self-will or self-reliance. There may be some unyielded habit or an area in which we refuse to say, "not my will be Thine be done." *Indeed, the ultimate root of all sin is placing self and self-will ahead of God and His will.* Closely related is unconsciously trying to grow by our own strength rather than complete trust in Christ to live his life through us. Until we are willing to yield His Lordship and wholly trust Christ, spiritual power is seriously hindered. Yet every reader should take hope — God's grace is sufficient to help us fully trust and obey!

Your victory over anger, fear or any other sin comes by simple faith in Christ's resurrected life to flow through you. Just as we cannot earn salvation or achieve eternal life by effort or will-power, neither can we walk in Christian victory by mere force of human strength or will. Rather than praying "Lord help me live the Christian life," you pray "Lord, I trust Your indwelling Spirit to live through me." As with salvation, your daily victory also comes only by faith in Christ's life and power. While this may to some sound like "semantics," I again assure readers it is not. God is not interested in what we (in our strength) try to do *for* Him — He can only receive what we trust Him to do *through* us. (Romans 6:11-14; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27)

You continue in ever-increasing victory by *identifying* and willfully *rejecting* specific wrong thoughts or responses. Again, full victory comes by dealing with the source of the anger or fear, not just the presenting symptoms. With all of us, sin is a heart problem (Matthew 15:19) Only Christ can transform the core essence of our hearts. But there is great news — you can daily trust Christ's heart and life to flow through your own! As you trust Jesus and reject the sin, you must also take concrete (and consistent) steps to change wrong thoughts or words. In other words, you continually *embrace new obedience* to "replace" the old patterns. To experience spiritual intimacy and power in Christ, you would simply pray something like the following prayers.

A Sample Prayer for Victory Over Anger

"Lord, I trust Christ's death and resurrection to be my own death to sin and life in Him. I now reject anger and trust Your love and gentleness to be my own. I repent of my angry thoughts and words. (Be specific.) No longer will I yield my thoughts or words to anger. I now yield myself to loving kindness and grace. By Your Spirit, I choose to be kind and renounce all angry patterns."

A Sample Prayer of Victory Over Fear and Doubt

"Lord, I trust Christ's death and resurrection to be my own death to sin and my life in God. I reject my fears and trust Your faith and peace to be my own. No longer will I yield my thoughts to fear and doubt. (Be specific.) I now choose to trust Christ and cast all my cares on Him. By Your Sprit of faith, I choose no longer to be dominated by circumstances or feelings."

Overcoming Unclean Thoughts and Actions (Victory Over the Epidemic of Pornography)

Another practical example is that of overcoming unclean thoughts or habits. If a believer becomes dominated by impure thoughts, he or she must follow the same pattern of victory by grace through faith and obedience. *First*, claim (by faith) your death to sin and self in resurrection power through Christ Who indwells your heart. Through Christ, sin's power is broken by faith and obedience. As you trust Christ and yield in obedience, He manifests His life through you. Just as you are saved by grace through faith, so too you experience daily victory. (Colossians 2:6)

Second, identify and reject any patterns that feed or inflame the problem. Some prime examples are: certain internet sites, television programs, magazines or purposely frequenting places where you know you will be surrounded by those inappropriately dressed. It is utterly insincere to ask God for deliverance then continue patterns that fuel the problem. (If you sense you may have a stronghold, follow the pattern for victory on page 34.)

Third, replace the unclean thoughts by the renewing of your mind in holiness. By reading and meditating on God's Word, every thought can be taken captive to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5) And never forget — "we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16) When bad thoughts come, you can learn to switch your thoughts to certain Scriptures or truths to replace the unclean imaginations. I suggest that you pre-determine a phrase or Scripture you will use when your eyes or thoughts start to wander. Don't be surprised if at first this seems an impossible battle. The Holy Spirit will certainly empower and in time, the battle will lessen greatly. In the meantime, you are "accepted in the Beloved" and "justified by His righteousness." (Romans 4:5; Ephesians 1:7)

Dear saint, this same victory by faith will apply to every area of your life. Whatever you may deal with, you simply follow the same pattern as with anger or impure thoughts. Whether it is sins of thought, attitude, habit, addiction, impure thoughts or wrong relationships, you would embrace the same process of *believing* Christ in you, *rejecting* the sin and consistently *choosing* to think or act in His righteousness.

Through this pattern, you learn to continually "put off" the flesh and "put on" Christ by faith. By so doing, you continually abide in phenomenal closeness and intimacy with Christ (John 15:4-8) This continual close relationship pattern is the very essence of all growth, sanctification and power. Before learning this crucial issue of walking in victory by faith, it is important to understand some basic points of spiritual warfare. Under the next few headings, I address some that are key to victory.

Don't Rely on Feelings or Sight!

It is important to realize you may not immediately “feel or sense” the full victory. While there are certainly times God will grant immediate miraculous victory with one prayer, there will be other times we must embrace the process of faith and repentance. When that is the case, you simply keep *believing* Jesus to flow through you, continue *resisting* the sin and *choosing* to embrace righteousness. But remember, your actual “experience” of full victory will likely be a “process” of rejecting evil and embracing Christ’s life and thoughts. Do not panic or think “it isn’t working” if you still experience some struggles. In time, you will establish new habits and patterns of righteousness. More and more, you will experience the “transformation” that comes with the “renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:1-2)

The more you learn to believe Christ and yield to His Spirit, your struggles become less and less. If you continue to believe Jesus and choose obedience, you will in time experience full victory. And remember, as you believe Christ His glorious righteousness is “counted” unto you (though you are still a work in progress!) Especially for those in serious bondage or trial, you must not listen to the enemy’s discouraging lies. If you are willing to change, it is *not* “too late” and you are not “too far gone!”

Don't Give In To Discouragement!

Unfortunately, it is quite common for some to come to serious points of pain, loss or shame before they get serious about gaining full victory. Our merciful Father often convicts and pleads long for His children to address some area of sin or weakness. Yet if we ignore His voice or “put Him off,” He has little choice but to use stronger measures. God may well remove His protecting hand and allow us to start reaping what we have sown. For many, that means painful losses in relationships, money, health or opportunities.

Like the prodigal son in Luke 15:20, you find yourself in the pig-pen of loss and humiliation. But take hope child of God — the Father waits longingly for your return. *Do not think it is too late or that all is lost!* God is good at restoring the years locusts have eaten away. (But only if you are seriously ready to change.)

For some reading these words, great pain or loss has not yet occurred from your particular area of sin. So far, it has seemed somewhat “manageable.” For you, it is vital to remember God’s sobering warning in Numbers 32:23; “*Be sure your sins will find you out.*” This may be your last chance to seriously seek victory before a holy God must bring your sin’s exposure and the painful consequences of rebellion.

The words you now read may be your last opportunity to avert far more serious judgment. But think of how much God loves you. He has spoken to your heart at this exact moment in time. Dear friend, whether you are at the bottom of a pit or still in blessing, *now* is the moment to seek full victory and closeness with God. Let Satan neither lull you into a false security nor overwhelm you with hopeless despair. If you repent now, healing and victory can begin! Yet if you “continue to sin willfully after knowing the truth,” there can only be the expectation of devastating judgment. (Hebrews 10:26-31)

Learn to Recognize and Reject Satan's Tactics

(John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:9; Revelation 12:10)

As believers determine to overcome sins that have a strong grip, it is important to understand a few common tricks of the enemy. Indeed, our enemy makes every effort to keep saints

enslaved to a particular sin or weakness. In 2 Corinthians 2:11, we are warned not to be ignorant of the “devil’s devices.” Most of Satan’s tactics revolve around condemnation, lies, deception and strong temptation. (John 8:44; Luke 4:2; Revelation 12:9-10) To assist believers toward victory, I briefly describe three of Satan’s most common devices to prevent victory.

First, he suggests your battle for victory is just too intense and you may as well give up. A related suggestion is the idea, “it will always be this intense and you can’t stand it.” In our first step toward overcoming a particularly difficult bondage, it is quite common to initially experience unusually strong temptation. In your first challenging steps, you may be tempted to think, “What’s the use, I just cannot stand this kind of constant battle.” Friend, it is important to remember the battle *will* in time get easier. It will *not* always be as intense as your first steps toward change! (1 Corinthians 10:13 Ephesians 6:13)

A helpful analogy is that of overcoming the habit of smoking cigarettes. When someone is truly addicted, the first few days of quitting are often quite intense. Many confess that at first all they can think of is a cigarette. It is in this initial period that many grow discouraged and return to smoking. (They falsely think, “I just can’t stand this.”) Yet if they resist the early temptations, the intense cravings and thoughts gradually lessen. In time, they experience full victory.

While with some, God definitely grants an immediate miraculous victory, many experience some period of elevated battle and temptation. But whether the battle is long or short, victory is *certain* if we believe God and persist in obedience. What applies with overcoming cigarettes is just as true for overcoming wrong emotions, habits, relationships or thoughts. The point is simple — do not let strong initial temptations convince you full victory is impossible!

Though God may not make it easy, He will always provide the grace to make the necessary choices. Our Lord knows it greatly develops our character and faith as we endure and overcome in times of testing and trial. (Romans 5:1-3; James 1:1-2; Remember, your battles are not meaningless! You are piling up great eternal rewards from the very struggles you face in the path of victory. (Romans 8:18; James 1:12)

Second, the enemy may try and convince you spiritual victory is just not worth the cost of giving up a particular sin. In the early stages of warfare, the believer may be tempted to think the particular sin is really not so terrible and a gracious God will surely understand the weakness. They also may erroneously think they can keep the sin from getting totally out of control. Of course, either of these reasonings are utterly false and bring disastrous spiritual consequences. (Galatians 6:7-9)

Concerning some sinful bondage, victory is *always* worth the price of gaining full freedom! If for no other reason than pleasing Christ and ceasing to grieve His Spirit, we must never compromise by allowing a sinful pattern to remain. Any tolerated area of sin brings phenomenal loss of blessing and eternal rewards that “could have been.” Mark this well — no sin is *ever* worth the cost of all we surely lose. Don’t ever think, “my sin is really no so bad.” *All* sin brings consequences and lost blessings!

Third, do not let Satan cause you to live in condemnation simply because you struggle with intense temptations. It is very important to understand that temptation itself is not sin! After all, the Bible tells us even Jesus was Himself “*tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.*” (Hebrews 4:15b) The great apostle Paul describes times of intense struggle, temptation and even failure. (Romans 7) Yet, God used Paul to write much of the New Testament!

As the “accuser of the brethren,” our adversary is a master at planting an evil thought then condemning you for having it! While the phrase “accuser of the brethren” mostly pictures Satan

accusing us before God, there is little question that he also accuses and condemns us to ourselves. The devil knows if he can get you condemned and discouraged simply because you struggle, you will quit the battle and give up. If you think God is angry with you just because you are tempted, you will start thinking “what’s the use.” Dear saints, let us never forget, we are accepted in Christ and counted utterly righteous every step of our journey in growth (even in our battles!) To walk in victory, peace and joy, you must learn to reject the condemnation, discouragement and lies of the devil. And rest assured — by God’s grace you *can* find victory over sin, self and Satan. Your spiritual growth then explodes upward!

Now that we highlighted some practical points about spiritual warfare, let us again reiterate the simple pattern for daily growth and victory. Though the basic steps are simple, it is vital to have them firmly etched in our minds and hearts. Once they are firmly in your heart, victory becomes more of an automatic lifestyle. The next section clarifies God’s simple pattern for victory.

Clarifying the Three Steps for Victory

“How to Live from Your Union in Christ”

(Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:6)

At risk of being redundant, I want to even clearer outline the basic process of life and victory by grace through faith. Since it often helps to identify steps, we now outline the specific patterns of power and victory. When believers truly understand the process of trusting Jesus as their life and daily strength, victory soon flows like a river! (John 7:38) Though some victories may take longer to fully “experience,” victory surely comes if we persist in faith and repentance.

Let me also say the process is really just a simple faith relationship with Jesus. Once you are familiar with the three basic steps you will not be aware of “steps” at all. It becomes the natural flow of the grace relationship with the Savior. Yet for absolute clarity, prayerfully consider the simple pattern of growth, life and victory.

Step One: By simple faith, claim your full acceptance and union in Christ’s death, victory and resurrection. When you were born again, all that Christ did in redemption and all He is now resides in you. (Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 2:20) God fully accepts you and grants power for Christ to live through you in holiness and victory. Christ’s death to sin is the strength for your death to sin. As He indwells you, Christ’s righteousness and life are now your righteousness and life. Because of Christ’s death and resurrection, the right of sin to dominate you is broken and banished! (Romans 6:14) Friends, we don’t labor and strive to somehow achieve righteousness and victory — we claim and live it out by faith. It is “Christ in us, the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:27) By the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, you lack no spiritual blessing or ability. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:3)

Step Two: As you see your various areas that need to change, daily reject the specific patterns of sin and choose to embrace specific patterns of Christ’s righteousness. You do this by trusting Christ’s indwelling power. (Romans 6:11-14; Colossians 2:6) While eternal salvation is instant the moment you are saved, sanctification is a life-long process of growth. Don’t grow discouraged or weary in the ups and downs of growth. If certain areas are especially difficult to overcome, ask God for insight into areas that may be strongholds. Again, prayerfully consider the “Seven Steps for

Overcoming Strongholds” on page 34. Through these steps, God gives clear insight for turning evil strongholds into strongholds of righteousness.

*Step Three: Keep **claiming** victory, **rejecting** sin and **choosing** obedience until you experience full victory in each area of need or struggle.* Do not be discouraged if particular battles do not disappear immediately. Keep claiming victory and choosing to yield your thoughts and actions to God. In areas of particular difficulty, get accountability partners to support you in prayer. In areas that are strongholds, you must specifically “declare war” and take steps to “tear down” patterns of sin. If you persist in faith and true repentance, you cannot fail to find total victory. (2 Corinthians 2:14; 10:3-5; Hebrews 6:12)

Even though you may for a time still struggle with temptation, do not be discouraged. As you keep believing Christ and repenting, victory will surely come. In the meantime, you are justified by Christ’s righteousness. (Romans 3:21-26) Do not grow weary in well doing; if you faint not, you will surely reap! (Galatians 6:9)

Some Key Things to Remember

Over the next few sections, I recap some helpful truths we all need to remember. As you grow and overcome spiritual battles, it is important to ever keep in mind certain liberating truths. One of Satan’s major tactics is getting believers’ minds off the freedom and victory we have in Christ. If he can get us into legalism and self-effort, we are doomed to live in powerless defeat. It is for this reason, we must continually be “*transformed by the renewing of our minds.*” (Romans 12:2)

Beyond question, who or what controls our minds controls our lives. Yet, every believer can learn to win the battle for the minds and heart. So how can we win the battle? Jesus said, “*The truth shall set you free.*” (John 8:32) Dear saint, as you learn to keep focused on certain truths and perspectives, your growth will be consistent and powerful. Remember the following truths and you will never be defeated!

Remember *Why* We Seek His Cleansing “*For God’s Pleasure and Glory!*”

It is truly important to stress *why* we embrace regular cleansing and repentance. First and foremost, we embrace cleansing and obedience to *glorify* and *please* God. (John 14:15; Ephesians 1:12-14) We do not embrace this cleansing mainly to “avoid problems or get blessings.” We do it to embrace loving closeness, obedience and surrender to our Savior. Indeed, cleansing is not about first seeking “blessings,” but intimacy with the “Blessor Himself.” In Him alone, is all fullness, life and joy!

It is further vital to realize that repentance is not merely about turning **from** sin, it is mostly about turning **to** Jesus in loving obedience and yielding. (Romans 6:11-14) Cleansing is not just *avoiding* and resisting sin; it is *embracing* Jesus and allowing His Spirit to flow through us! Though God will surely convict and correct sin (to set you free), the sin is not to be your continual focus — *Jesus* is your focus. Victory comes by continually confessing sin, surrendering to God’s will and believing Jesus to live through you. You do *not* gain victory by continually obsessing on your weaknesses. As you learn to continually “*behold Him (by faith), you are changed into His image from glory to glory.*” (2 Corinthians 3:18) But how do we daily behold Him? We “behold Him” mostly by effective daily abiding in His word and prayer.

Remember to Keep Your Eyes on Jesus — *Not* Just Your Sin

(Romans 6:1-14; Hebrews 12:2)

In coming sections, we turn our attention toward a simple process of cleansing and fullness in Jesus. As you pray through cleansing Scriptures and questions, please understand you are looking into a “biblical mirror” of Christ’s holy image. (2 Corinthians 3:18; James 1:23-25) Do not be surprised when God reveals several areas yet needing transformation. Above all, remember why He asks us to “examine and cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” (1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 7:1) His conviction and examination is *not* to condemn His children. While conviction certainly brings “godly sorrow,” God intends examination to point us to Jesus for forgiveness, grace and victory!

In this journey, you will learn to let your weaknesses turn you to God in confession, faith and hope for change. So friend, every time you see a personal sin let it move you straight to Jesus, grace, forgiveness and change, *not* condemnation or discouragement. Though we must surely see and confess our sins, we must not succumb to morbid introspection. And even as God convicts and cleanses our hearts, we focus on Jesus who is our righteousness, life and victory! Always view your sins against the overarching backdrop of Christ’s cross.

While every sin should grieve us because it grieves God, it should also remind us that we are “justified” and “accepted” in *Christ’s* righteousness (not our own). (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 1:6) Even as you may wrestle with various points of sin and self, let it remind you that salvation and growth is a gift of God’s grace. Best of all, reflect on the fact His life within is your ever-present power to change! His indwelling presence is even your very ability to die to self and live unto Him. Best of all, His perfect righteousness is “counted unto you” throughout the lifelong journey of growth. (Romans 4:5)

Remember We are Saved and Changed By His Life Within!

(Romans 5:10; Colossian 1:27)

Dear believer, do you see the awesome truth of our glorious union with Christ? Even though ours is an ongoing journey of ever deeper cleansing and surrender, it is far more about looking to Jesus than to our sin. While certainly you will periodically examine your sins (to confess and forsake them), you will continually *gaze* upon Jesus, the “Author and Finisher of your faith.”

The indwelling Christ is your righteousness, your power to change and your very reason for doing it! Your victory comes not merely by trying to get “rid of sin,” but by surrendering to Jesus. When we learn to daily believe and yield to His fullness, His indwelling river of life flushes out the sin! It is the free flow of His life that sets you free from sin and self. He transforms us from within. As God clearly states in Romans 5:10, “*We are saved by His life!*”

Remember that Transformation is a Life-Long “Process”

As deeper cleansing, yielding and trust become your lifestyle, remember that sanctification is a life-long process, not an overnight wonder. There will certainly be times you confess and forsake a sin yet for a time still struggle. Do not be discouraged, do not give up and do not let your struggles cause you to avoid God! Simply keep on confessing and resisting the sin by faith in Christ. Even if at first you have to confess and forsake it several times a day, do not give up! Soon the battle will become less and less. If you faint not, you will experience full victory! “*Imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*” (Hebrews 6:12)

Remember to Be Alert to Possible Strongholds *(2 Corinthians 10:3-5)*

Let me also say that many working through this journey will become aware of sins that are particularly difficult to overcome. If that is the case, you may very well have a spiritual stronghold. As you pray through the Scripture questions, ask God to alert you to areas that are strongholds. In 2 Corinthians 10:4, God says our weapons are “powerful for the tearing down of strongholds.” In this text, the Greek word for strongholds (*ochurōma*) literally means to *fortify*, through the idea of *holding* safely. So then a stronghold is any sinful pattern of thought, attitude, belief or habit that persists and resists removal from one’s life. If you indeed have a stronghold, you will not gain full empowerment or victory until it is removed.

So how do you know if you have a stronghold? *You should suspect a stronghold if a particular sin or weakness is often repeated and seems almost irresistible.* A stronghold is even more likely if you have indeed tried to address the issues but consistently fail. If you find yourself repeatedly confessing the very same sin with little or no improvement, you have a stronghold! Some of the more common areas of strongholds are: anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, fear, lust (pornography), immorality, improper relationships, materialism, pride and unyielded self-will.

While strongholds in believers are tragically common, I have great news for every reader. No stronghold can stand against the victorious power of Christ! Friend, you were saved to walk in glorious freedom and victory. (Romans 6:11-14; 2 Corinthians 2:14; 3:18) In fact, your victory is already won by Christ’s death and resurrection. God saves none of His children for second-class status — you were saved for victorious spiritual freedom! Best of all, your freedom is already signed, sealed and delivered. You just have to claim it and follow God’s path of victory. To tear down strongholds, utilize the following simple process.

How to Gain Victory Over Any Stronghold! *Seven Simple but Powerful Steps*

1. *Ask God to help you clearly identify the specific stronghold and its root sin or sins.* (James 1:5) Usually there is some underlying area of compromise, disobedience or refusal to surrender that is blocking the flow of God’s power. (James 4:7) Any point of willful disobedience or neglect gives the flesh and Satan the opportunity for domination. It is important to realize your hindrance may be subtle and somewhat “under the surface.” For this reason, periodic deep searching of the heart is often crucial to full power and closeness with God. The very heart of effective spiritual warfare is full submission to Christ’s Lordship. Ask God to help you identify your strongholds and to understand clear steps for nullifying sin’s power.
2. *Approach your journey to victory in full faith you will succeed through Christ as your life and righteousness.* (2 Corinthians 2:14; Philippians 4:13) Remember, your victory will not come by self-effort but by believing the indwelling Christ to replace the stronghold with His own life and power. (Romans 6:11-14) Your victory is already won — you just have to claim and live it out by faith!

It is important to stand strong in the belief both Satan and the power of the flesh are fully defeated by Christ’s death and resurrection. Because of God’s forgiveness and Christ’s indwelling life, you can resist the devil and he must flee. (James 4:7) You can claim victory over sin’s domination and it must yield! (Romans 6:11-14) As you keep resisting the devil

and rejecting fleshly impulses, you will (in time) experience full victory. You overcome your strongholds by consistently believing and obeying the glorious facts of Romans 6:11-14. While experiencing full victory is indeed a process, it is one for which you already know the outcome — complete victory!

3. *Adopt an intentional, God-led plan of action for repentance and growth.* (2 Corinthians 10:3-5) It is very important to embrace specific steps to overcome the area of weakness. You cannot be general, haphazard, or inconsistent in your approach. Tearing down the stronghold usually involves specific steps of intentional obedience. You cannot just pray and expect God to swoop in and take you over like a robot. While victory is certainly by Christ's power alone, you must take Spirit-led steps to cooperate with the renewing of your mind and changing of habits. (Romans 12:1-2)

The children of Israel are a perfect illustration of the process for victory. (Joshua 1:3) Even though God had given them the promised land, they had to go out in faith and physically *take* the ground. In other words, you cannot trust Jesus for a pure mind then choose to watch unclean programs, neglect Scripture or entertain wrong thoughts. If we are not willing to adjust our habits, there will be no lasting victory. But again, do not think I am talking about somehow achieving “perfection” in order to gain victory. God's grace is greater than our weakness!

4. *It is often essential to find godly prayer and accountability partners.* (Matthew 18:19; James 5:16) Counseling with a pastor, friend or counselor is also invaluable. Remember the words of Ecclesiastes, a “*threefold cord is not quickly broken.*” (Ecclesiastes 4:12) The principle of James 5:16 is especially powerful. “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Until we get serious (and humble) enough to confess sins to others in prayer, we are probably not serious enough to see victory.

5. *Do not be surprised by increased temptation, spiritual warfare or intense resistance to your initial quest for a deeper victory.* (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10) Even the unique Greek wording of the texts reminds us we are in a very real and personal spiritual war. In Ephesians 6:10, God says we “*wrestle (esti)* not against flesh and blood.” The particular Greek word literally means to *throw* (in various applications, more or less violent or intense) strike, throw (down), or thrust. Certainly no one has ever “wrestled” with an opponent at a distance or in a casual, impersonal manner. God's word paints our spiritual battle far more as “hand to hand combat” than long distance bombing campaigns. Yet our method of “warfare” (*strateia*) is with spiritual weapons, not fleshly strengths. (2 Corinthians 10:3-4) Our primary spiritual weapons are God's Word and prayer.

While our victory is already fully won by Christ, we must *possess* and *enforce* that victory in the very strongholds the enemy has held captive. Though we already have “positional” victory in Christ, we gain “practical” (experiential) victory by the ongoing process of believing, yielding and obeying. By “enemy,” I am referring to Satan and his forces as well as our “flesh or old man” which always resists the rule of Christ. (Romans 6:6; 1 Peter 5:9) Thus when you first claim your victory over a stronghold, the enemy may try and overwhelm you with more temptations than ever. If this occurs, don't be surprised on think you are unusual. In fact, this can in some ways be a good sign! It could well mean the enemy is getting nervous and desperate to cling to his stronghold.

In 1 Peter 5:9, the writer uses the analogy of a lion lying in wait to suddenly ambush (or charge) his prey. As you set your heart to walk in victory, the enemy may suddenly attack with a wave of temptation or trials. It is at this point of increased attack, many saints become bluffed by the devil's assault. He may whisper such thoughts as, "see you cannot be free, you're worse than ever." Dear believer, do not listen to his discouraging lies! Remember the increased temptations will *not* continue indefinitely. In time, most battles grow less and less until they are hardly even a struggle. And never forget, God not only promises to keep the temptation from becoming unbearable — He promises a way of escape! (1 Corinthians 10:13)

All you need do is follow the simple instruction of James 4:7 until you experience full victory. "*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*" (James 4:7) Friend, do you notice that the beautiful little word? The devil will "flee" from you. It carries the picture of a whipped pup tucking his tail and running! But friend, you need to understand he may not flee immediately. Though the battle may involve a process, do not let him bluff or discourage. You must also reject thoughts of hopeless condemnation if you should have an occasional lapse. Remember the devil is an accuser, bully and liar. Do not let the enemy discourage or intimidate you in the days of increased battle. In due time, you will reap victory and he will flee! (Galatians 6:9; James 4:7)

6. *Be persistent, patient and determined.* (Matthew 18:1-9; Luke 11:5; Hebrews 6:12) If you pray, believe and don't give up, God will surely release His mighty power. Though there may well be some ups and downs, do not be discouraged or condemned. If you persist, you will experience full victory! (2 Corinthians 2:14) Saints, the only way we lose a battle is by default. In other words, we only lose if we quit! Yet, if a believer refuses to give up and keeps believing, victory is certain. Though we may fall and skin our knees a few times, in time we will run without stumbling. (Isaiah 40:31) "*Faith and patience inherit the promises!*" (Hebrews 6:12)
7. *Let God replace the stronghold of evil with an opposite stronghold of righteousness.* (Romans 12:1-2) A helpful practice is to identify the opposite characteristic of righteousness that should "replace" the habit of evil. (Examples: lust/purity, anger/gentleness, bitterness/forgiveness, fear/peace, pride/humility, self-will/surrender, etc.) By God's grace, determine to establish specific patterns of new actions and attitudes to replace the old. Be intentional about taking specific steps to develop new habits of righteousness.

Two wonderful Bible sections to regularly pray and claim by faith are the Beatitudes and fruits of the Spirit. (Matthew 5:1-12; Galatians 5:22) As you make these characteristics the center of your prayer focus, you soon begin to change into Christ's very image. The fruits of the Spirit and Beatitudes are a very good "snapshot" of the image of Jesus. By regularly praying through the Beatitudes and fruits of the Spirit, you are daily beholding His image. From "glory to glory you are thus changed into the very same image!" (2 Corinthians 3:18) By the daily fullness of God's Spirit, you will soon be filled with strongholds of righteousness.

Learning to Live in the Flow of Christ's Life
The Daily Fullness of the Holy Spirit!
(Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:18)

Instead of just focusing on “getting rid of the sin,” you focus even more on “embracing the opposite trait of righteousness.” Again, you do this by trusting the indwelling Christ to flow through you in transforming power. Your victory is by grace through faith, not religious self-efforts or human will power. You do this in the moment by moment process of “reckoning faith” and repentance. (Romans 6:11-14; Galatians 2:20) Though you must certainly take the specific ongoing steps of resisting the sins and yielding to Christ, your total reliance is upon Jesus’ continual acceptance and power. His indwelling life is your power for death to sin and triumphant living!

We now come to the *third foundation* of victory — the daily fullness and power of the Holy Spirit. Actually the three foundations are closely connected and best experienced together. In fact, it is hard to fully experience one without the others. For this reason, all saints should grasp the basic process by which we walk in the fullness of God’s Spirit. The next section makes daily fullness clear and simple.

How to Experience Daily Fullness of God’s Spirit!
(Acts 1:8; Ephesians 5:18)

Dear reader, it is vital to understand the purpose in confession is *not* just repenting of sin, it is receiving the continual fullness of the Holy Spirit. One thing is certain — we can do nothing without the daily fullness and power of God’s Spirit! (John 15:5) Spiritual fullness is a very real daily experience, not some theory or mystical doctrine. The New Testament frequently refers to believers *asking, receiving* and *walking* in the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit. (Luke 11:13; John 20:22; Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:18)

Make no mistake — walking in the daily fullness and power of the Holy Spirit is not just important, it is essential to Christ’s power flowing through His people. For this reason, learning to experience the continual fullness of Christ is not an option, it is God’s direct command! “*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation: but be filled with the Spirit.*” (Ephesians 5:18)

The Greek words in this text are rich with meaning. First, the tense is that of a *command*. We are commanded to be filled. Second, the word (*plerōma*) “be filled” in the Greek tense is better translated “be being filled.” Beyond question, we are both commanded and equipped for the continuous relationship of Christ’s fullness in daily life! Always remember this crucial truth — yesterday’s anointing, closeness and empowerment will not do for today.

Four Reasons Daily Fullness is So Essential!

To take this issue seriously, it is crucial for believers to understand *why* the daily fullness of God’s Spirit is so essential? Until we understand the absolute necessity of being continually filled with the Spirit, we may treat it in a somewhat casual or optional manner. The truth is, we can do *nothing* without Christ’s fullness and power. (John 15:5) Spiritual fullness is utterly essential for four vital reasons.

(1) *Daily fullness of the Spirit is essential to the supernatural life, joy and holiness of Christ flowing through us.* (Galatians 5:22) In other words, the daily fullness produces in us the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit. Only daily fullness can produce a passionate love for God and burning love for souls. We cannot “work up” passion or achieve it by human will-power. Neither can we

manufacture true joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness (faith) or self-control. Yet, daily fullness and surrender to Jesus causes God's holy character and power to gush from our innermost being. (John 7:38; Galatians 5:19-22; Ephesians 5:18) We should also become aware of all the glorious attributes of Christ, not just the nine fruits mentioned in Galatians. By daily spiritual fullness, *all* that He is can flow through His children.

(2) *Daily fullness is essential to our having the spiritual power to pray, witness and minister with true New Testament impact.* To be empowered, we must pray and witness "in the Spirit," not human ability. (Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:3-5; Ephesians 6:18) The fullness of the Holy Spirit not only produces the character to "be holy," it is the power to "do" things that bear eternal fruit. (John 15:4-5) By His life in us, we can pray, preach, teach, witness, write, plant churches or minister with world-changing power! (Zechariah 4:6) Daily fullness especially determines our power for prayer, ministry and soul-winning. It also produces supernatural joy and peace in the midst of life's struggles. For those under persecution, this kind of fullness is essential for victorious suffering and bold witness. None of us will "sing in prison" without His miraculous grace. Yet with His fullness, we will sing glorious praises from the very depths of our hearts! The fullness of God's Spirit gives us a joy to sing in prisons, sickrooms and times of deepest hardship. (Acts 16:25)

(3) *The Holy Spirit is our "comforter and helper."* (John 14:16-18) In Him we find comfort, grace and strength in all our burdens and struggles. Indeed, we cannot share comfort and strength with others if we are not comforted ourselves. Dear saints, we will never have the "joy of the Lord" without the genuine fullness of the Holy Spirit. If we lack the joy of the Lord, we will never serve or witness in full power. Without His fullness, we could never maintain victory in the persecutions and painful trials of life. It is very likely that worsening persecutions are indeed on the way. As signs of God's judgment rise in our nation, it is increasingly vital for believers to have power for joy in the midst of trials. By daily fullness of the Holy Spirit, such joy is totally within reach!

(4) *He is our teacher and revealer of the mind of Christ.* (John 14:26) Through the Holy Spirit, we receive insight into God's Word. We also receive frequent promptings of God's voice in our daily lives. The Holy Spirit is crucial to hearing God's voice and sensing His presence. As we learn to daily hear His word, our faith increases dramatically. (Romans 10:17) And when our faith is strong and vibrant, *nothing* is impossible! (Matthew 17:20; Mark 11:22-24)

In the next section, I outline a simple four step process for experiencing the deep cleansing and fullness of the Holy Spirit. While you don't have to legalistically go through all of these every day, this general pattern will become second nature as God's Spirit guides. If we are to experience spiritual fullness, this or a similar process is essential. The pattern represents basic closeness and surrender to Christ's Lordship. My friends, such closeness is *not* optional. Prayerfully read the next two sections and let them become your way of life. You will never be the same!

The Simple Steps for Cleansing and Spiritual Fullness *Walking in the "Relationship" of Closeness*

In this section, I present a condensed version of yielding all areas of our lives to Christ's Lordship. Each life is actually made up of seven major areas. Yet for purposes of simplicity in quiet times, ministry preparation or daily life, I have combined the seven into four. Though I mention four steps, please do not let this seem complicated or difficult. When you fully understand the simple elements, these will begin to occur quickly and naturally throughout your day. As with walking by grace through faith, the pattern becomes natural and you're hardly

aware of “steps.” It’s just the natural flow of your abiding relationship with Christ. For complete cleansing and fullness, embrace the following basic pattern.

(1) *Take time to allow God to search your heart for sin. Fully confess and forsake whatever He reveals.* If you have only a short time, simply pause and ask God to reveal any attitudes, thoughts, words, relationships or disobedience that might hinder your fullness and power. Be sure to pause long enough to let God speak. (Ten seconds is not enough!) Simply confess and forsake the things He brings to mind. At least *periodically*, take more extended time and allow God to search your heart with greater thoroughness. To do so, pray through the “Four Categories of Cleansing” (listed in the next section.) Generally, the more thorough your cleansing and yielding, the more thorough will be your fullness and power. The more we are yielded, the more Jesus manifest His own glorious presence.

(2) *As you confess your sins, ask God for wisdom in making concrete steps of repentance.* Remember, we must confess and forsake our sins. (Proverbs 28:13) Be specific in how you will change the particular points of sin. It does little good to confess sins generally. Until we move to specific repentance and change, we aren’t very serious about following Jesus as Lord and Master.

(3) *Specifically ask Christ to fill and empower you with the Holy Spirit. Claim His fullness by the simple choice of faith.* (Luke 11:13) Ask in faith for the fullness of God’s presence. Do not rely on your feelings. You are forgiven, filled and empowered by faith, not feelings. As you claim His fullness, go ahead and pray or minister with full confidence. We do not have to beg God to fill us — He already desires to do so.

(4) *Stand confident in the fact Christ’s righteousness is “counted” unto you.* (Romans 4:5) Rest in the confidence God now empowers you for spiritual growth and dynamic witness. You are accepted, filled and empowered by *His* righteousness, not yours. Do not let continuing awareness of your inadvertent imperfections cause you to doubt that Christ’s life and power can flow through your life. God doesn’t require “perfect” vessels, just those ever seeking to be yielded. Whether it is prayer, teaching, witness or just loving your family, go forth in the confidence of His fullness.

And now dear believer as you work through **Returning to Holiness**, embrace God’s promises and go straight to your Lord in confidence. “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” (1 John 1:9) “*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*” (John 6:37) As you work through the seven categories of cleansing, look to Jesus — the author and finisher of your faith. Pay careful attention to prayerfully read all the Scriptures. After all, it is God’s Word that cleanses and transforms, not the words of an author.