

How to Overcome Difficult Sins

Fred R. Coulter—April 18, 2015

- How do you overcome sin that is hard to overcome?
- What do you do?
- How do you do it?

Let's look at the two extremes. You have Satan on the one hand, then you have the world and you have self. Then you have Christ and then you have God. That's the spectrum of human life.

God calls us and He reveals to us what sin is, because 'there is way that seems right to every man' and every woman regardless of where they are, regardless of what they are doing. The people in the western world think they are right in killing the Muslims. The Muslims think they are right in killing the Christians. Everyone doing their own thing. They think they are right.

When we come along through the days of Unleavened Bread, we understand that leaven, during the Days of Unleavened Bread, is a type of sin. How does sin come along? *A little bit at a time!*

Here's something fundamental concerning human nature we all need to realize. Human nature is what Paul says. He defines it this way: 'The law of sin within my members.' That law of sin is combined with the law of death. Paul defines it as '*the law of sin and death.*' This is very easy to read, but hard to understand.

Romans 8:2: "Because **the law of the Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus..." Isn't that interesting? In other words, there's a proper operation of the Spirit of God working within us.

What is the basic thing that it is working in us with the Holy Spirit within us, **the law of life? Truth!** What is the law that is working within us, **the law of sin? Cannot stand the Truth, especially if it has never been taught the Truth!**

Look at the younger generation today. They have their minds blown out by false education, teaching them nothing. They can't even be decent human beings. In case you haven't seen it on the news, they had public rape on the beaches of Florida during the spring break. How bad will human nature be? *Satan will take it step-by-step by-step!*

What is going to happen to whole world? *The whole world is going to end up worshipping Satan the devil and the beast (Rev. 13)!* They don't have the Spirit of Truth. They cannot come to understand the Truth, because it is not understood by human rationale. Just a little bit of it, which is 'the wages of sin is death.'

The first understanding you start having, in understanding God's way, is you recognize that sin is the transgression of the law. Generally, God waits until your life is really messed up and you cry out to God. Within us is this 'law of sin and death.'

"...the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus **has delivered me** from the law of sin and death" (v 2).

You read that, that is past tense, but it is also past tense prophetic, not yet fully accomplished. Why? *Because when you receive the Spirit of God, God does not remove 'the law of sin and death'!* You're still a human being. Therefore, there becomes this tension between right and wrong, Truth and self, Truth and lies. What is our heart? We begin to understand that '*the heart is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things*' (Jer. 17:9). That is the law of sin and death. That is human nature.

- What is the deliverance?
- Does God do this universally?
- Immediately?

or

- Are you also involved in the process?
- *You are involved in the process, mentally and spiritually!*

Deut. 30 here is what God has set before all human beings. This is multiplied when you apply it spiritually to those who have the Spirit of God.

Deuteronomy 30:15: "Behold, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil." Understand this: We're human beings and God has made us the way that He has made us. We do have 'the law of sin and death' within us, but He has given us the mental ability to choose. All of this goes on right up in our mind; this is the home of conversion.

When you're converted, in your mind is where God the Father and Jesus Christ has placed the earnest of the Spirit to lead us and guide us. That has not replaced all of human nature. That has not released us, yet. It is a progressive thing to be released from 'the law of sin and death.'

Everything you do is a choice. Some choices may be automatic and emotional. That's a result of the fact that you haven't grappled with the problem of 'how do I solve my anger.' Something comes up and you fly off the handle. I'm sure none of you have ever done that, even after conversion have you? Or you do something that you know you shouldn't do. It's choices!

Verse 15: “Behold, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil, In that I command you this day to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways...” (vs 15-16). That’s the first key to overcoming: loving God, having your mind

- fixed on God
- fixed on God’s way
- fixed on His love

What does it say about loving God? *That if we keep His commandments we love God!* That is the practical action of the love of God in keeping the commandments of God.

The emotional aspect is--because we’re emotional and we’re thinking--that our emotions are now to be trained to completely yield to God and His way. That training is much like an infant learning to walk. How many times do they fall down? *Many times!*

I was going in a store in Hollister and coming out of the store was this mother and about an eight-year-old girl. She was trying to see how fast she could run. She didn’t do anything wrong; there was nothing wrong with it. But she ran, really lickety-split, and I thought, she must be 8 or 9, but I wonder how many times she fell down when she was learning to walk. But look at her now.

What is the difference? *Practice! Practice! practice!* That’s how we learn to overcome. Same way. Start with loving God.

“...to walk in His ways... [Jesus said, ‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.] ...and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments so that you may live and multiply” (v 16). Transfer that over to the New Testament: That you may live to grow in grace and knowledge and attain to eternal life. Those are the stakes that are involved.

Then He says, v 19: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you...” Do a study about heaven and earth and the Word of God. If you ever at any time think that the Word of God does not apply, then the heaven and earth does not exist and you do not exist. It is a foolish question to even contemplate. Think on that.

Now let’s see what happens. Rom. 7 is one of the most difficult chapters in the Bible, because there are many different ways in which Paul refers to law. What is the process of conversion with God’s Spirit for us? *To have the laws of God written in our heart and in our mind so that we can learn to think God’s way!* So that we can have the thoughts of what God has given and we study. That’s why we study every day. That’s why we pray every day.

You can know this: if you don’t study and you don’t pray, BANG! You’re going to end up

doing something and you’re going to say, ‘I haven’t been studying and praying!’ We have the greatest opportunity. No generation in the history of the world has had the whole Bible available the way we do today.

The next time you say you’re too tired or that you will put it off, your human nature is there saying, ‘It’ll be okay.’ Then you put it off again. ‘It’ll be okay; God understands.’ God says, ‘Yes, I understand.’ God wants our full cooperation, but we have our part in delivering our mind and thoughts from ‘the law of sin and death’ with the Spirit of God in us.

Before God called any one of us, you look out there in the world, we knew nothing about God, didn’t know anything about His commandments. People who went to church on Sunday, if you had anything to do with them, most of them ended up being so obnoxious that you couldn’t stand them. It’s just like that fellow who said he read the Bible and became an atheist. Probably because most of the people that he met, who were supposed to be Christians, were no different than he was. The reason is, God does not give the Holy Spirit to them. If they’re sincere, the Holy Spirit may be *with* them.

But witness what has happened to Protestantism. One of the final major warnings to Protestantism we have right here in Appendix N in *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order: Rome’s Challenge to the Protestants*. That was in 1893, the same year of the first Parliament of World Religions in Chicago.

Brethren, that was a tremendous warning to Protestantism, because all of the Protestants’ admissions that Saturday is the Sabbath occurred after being confronted by Cardinal Gibbons. ***They knew!***

When anyone knows and does not do what is right, judgment is coming because of the judgment not to do. God deals with us mercifully, that is true, but look at it now, 128 years later. Look at Protestantism today, fulfilling exactly what Jesus said, ‘To you (those who are Christ’s) it has been given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been known.’ It’s not given to them.

The reason is because they won’t listen or repent. So, what they have has been taken away from them. I’ve got a report of a Protestant minister who says he’s still going to run his church but he doesn’t believe in God and he doesn’t believe in the Bible. ‘But you all come and bring your own god.’ You can go online and find the report.

- Does he think he’s right? *But of course!*

- Does Satan have him wholly captured? *Yes, indeed!*
- Does he know what sin is according to the Word of God? *No!*

Here's what happens when you are converted: God begins dealing with you so that you see the greatness of the laws of God, the commandments of God, the Spirit of God, the Truth of God, and your own human nature. This is why God called Saul who became Paul. As far as Judaism was concerned, Paul was blameless. As far as God was concerned, God had to reveal it to Paul. When Paul finally understood it he said that 'grace was shown to me who is the sinner' (1-Tim. 1). What happens?

Romans 7:6: "But now we have been released from the law..." That is the covenant marriage of Israel and God. That does not do away with the laws of God, because Jesus said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall never pass away.'

"...because we have died *to that* in which we were held..." (v 6)--released through the death of Christ, who was the husband.

The choice for God was that either all Israel die and the covenant comes to an end or He would die and the covenant comes to an end. Marriage is binding until death, whether good, bad, different, lovely, sweet, difficult, hard to handle. That's the way it is; that's life!

How did they die? How did you die? *All of you died in baptism, symbolically into the death of Jesus Christ, co-crucified with Him!* After you're raised out of the watery grave, what do we have to do? *Paul said, 'I die daily.'* We have to pick up our cross and go forward! We have to crucify the passions of the flesh. That is overcoming; that is long-term. Some sins are harder to overcome than others. God knows that.

"...because we have died *to that* in which we were held... [Old Covenant] ...so that we might serve in newness of *the* spirit... [New Covenant] ...and not in *the* oldness of *the* letter" (v 6)—the *newness of Spirit in the mind!*

Verse 7: "What then shall we say? Is the law sin?..." That's exactly what the Protestants say: 'the law is a curse.' Remember that the next time someone steals something from you and you get angry because they stole it. If the law is done away and the law is a curse, then stealing is no longer a law. So don't get upset, be happy. 'Thank you, Lord, they took my stuff away from me.'

"...MAY IT NEVER BE!..." (v 7).

Here's a Pharisee, blameless, zealous, killing Christians and putting them in jail. As a Pharisee Paul was an expert in the law, mostly of the traditions. But notice what he said:

"...But I had not known sin, except through the law. Furthermore, I would not have been conscious of lust, except *that* The law said, 'You shall not covet'" (v 7).

You can't be conscious of lust without the Spirit of God. You see something someone has; you have to have it. Covetousness is that inner desire that you want exactly what someone else has. It's called in modern parlance 'keeping up with the Joneses.'

Verse 8: "But sin, having grasped an opportunity by the commandment..." Every 'thou shalt not' operates automatically, just as sure as taking a hammer and hitting your thumb; the pain comes instantly.

All of the commandments of God are working all the time, everywhere in the world! The more that people break the laws of God, the worse that it is. Those who keep it in the letter of the law and have some semblance of law-keeping, they are blessed according to that. They are called the good, sincere people in the world.

However, they still have human nature, but they have been taught to not do sinful things. They've been taught to tell the truth, be kind to other people, to help other people. They teach their children, etc. God expects that of everyone. Then there's us, like Paul.

Verse 8: "But sin, having grasped an opportunity by the commandment, worked out within me every *kind of* lust..." What happened? The knowledge of God's law spiritually, he says we obey in the Spirit. To want something that someone else has is stealing in your mind.

Let me tell you the difference between being judgmental and judging. Everything you need to do as a Christian is a judgment or a choice. Here's a difference between judgmental and judging:

Judgmental: You look at a person and you think you can read that person's mind. 'I know what you're thinking.' How do you know? *You may guess somewhat correctly, but you don't know what's in that person's mind!* God is called **the heart knowing God**. Only God knows the mind. When you are judgmental, you are judging the motives of that person as if you can read their minds. **That is being judgmental!**

Jesus said, 'You will know them by their fruits.' You can see the result of their actions. That is different. We have to make judgments every single minute of every single day. That's why we have the

mind that we have and that's why we talk to ourselves. It's called consciousness. It's okay to answer yourself if it's the right answer.

So, he didn't realize how bad sin really was until he had the Spirit of God to be able to assess things spiritually God's way.

"...worked out within me every *kind of* lust because apart from law, sin *was* dead" (v 8). In other words, there can be no sin if there is no law or if you don't understand it, you don't understand sin.

Verse 9: "For I was once alive without law... [Who killed Paul?] ...but after the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Who killed Paul? *Baptism! He died!* That means *a change of thinking*.

Verse 10: "And the commandment, which *was meant to result in* life, was found *to be* unto death for me; because sin, having taken opportunity by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*" (vs 10-11).

If you have a sin that you're needing to overcome, the problem is not the law or commandment of God. With the Spirit of God in you, God is revealing that sin to you within so you can repent and change and that you can understand the Word of God that it needs to be part of your very existence.

Verse 12: "Therefore, the law *is* indeed Holy, and the commandment Holy and righteous and good."

What is the trouble? The law of God? *or* Human nature? *Human nature!* If you don't believe that, look how absolutely horrible that the federal government is in its lawless activities where beginning with the President, too many think that they are a law unto themselves and they can make their own laws as they go along. They can ignore the laws that are on the statute books. They can do anything they want to because 'I am who I am.'

Look what it's done to the nation and the government. Look what it does to anyone's life who thinks that the laws of God have been done away. They may be able to be good for a while, but that is human good, not converted good.

Verse 13: "Now then, did that which is good become death to me? **MAY IT NEVER Be!** But sin, in order that it might truly be exposed as sin in me by that which is good... [the Spirit of God and the Law of God] ...was working out death..." Bringing to his consciousness that 'the wages of sin is death' and giving him a guilty conscience.

What do you do when you have a guilty conscience? What is God trying to communicate to you? *That you need to repent!* That's what God is doing. This is the battle that's going on in the mind.

Today Satan is out there and he's got all kinds of things. We have a machine right in our house. It may be 16 inches or 32 inches or 42 or 66 inches. It may be flat, round and you may have 1, or 2, or 3, or 5. You have your hand-held phone, your computer and Satan is in on all of that. We are confronted with the world in our lives, in our mind, more than any other generation because of that.

Richard lives out in the desert. You have peace and quiet when you turn off your television. You're not confronted with a lot of lust and it's easier to recognize sin, because you don't have a lot of this coming into your mind. But you go in and turn on the news and, lo and behold, everything is there that is just sometimes so base it's unreal. There are channels devoted to sex sin, child pornography, all of those things.

I was trying to find a program. I got tired of the news because there was death, mayhem, war, rape, lying of the government. It was too much. I was channel surfing and came to *Forensic File*. There you find how they solve murders. I said, 'Look at that. I try and get away from it and it's right there.'

So, you go to a sports channel and what happens? *A fight breaks out!* or *There's an argument with an umpire!* Look at how evil human nature is. This is why we need the Spirit of God to overcome. This is what Paul was talking about here.

"...sin might become exceedingly sinful... [you see the spiritual application of it] ...For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, having been sold *as a slave* under sin" (vs 13-14). Even though God had called him, *he still had to work to overcome*. That is the key. That's why he said things were working in him to cause him to do things he didn't want to do. Yet, he still did them, and he called that 'the law of sin.'

Verse 15: "Because what I am working out myself, I do not know...." He doesn't understand. 'How can I do something when I know I shouldn't do it. How does that work? *I don't understand that!*' It's because you're still carnal to a certain degree; it's because you're still human. The Holy Spirit of God is an earnest down payment in your mind and you are not yet perfect. Perfection does not come until the day of the resurrection. So, we're always going to have things to overcome.

Look at those in the Old Testament. They were going along really, really good. God delivered all of David's enemies and he was there in his house of cedar and he was playing on his lyre/harp and he said, 'Oh, God, I'm living in this house and you live in a tent. Let me build a temple for you.'

Nathan the prophet came along and said, ‘God will do all that’s in your heart.’ That was a good thought. But God said, ‘I have not dwelt in a temple, only in a tent or tabernacle. Furthermore, your heart has been after me so much that I’m going to give you a perpetual dynasty.’ David was overwhelmed at that. God said, ‘Your son is going to build it, not you, because you’re a man of war, a bloody man.’

All of this God promised. David was just brought low in humility and love for God, thanksgiving. Then he got up to go about his business. One day he was on the roof of his house and he saw this woman Bathsheba. She knew where he walked. She was as involved as he was, because she knew her husband was gone to the battle.

Look what happened. You know the whole story. How long did this thing go on until Nathan had to come and tell David, ‘You are that man.’ David got carried away with his lust. He thought, ‘I’m the king,’ rather than being grateful and humble after all the promises God gave him. He let sin within rule, and he sinned.

So, God had to correct him. David repented, that’s true, but God said, ‘Because you did this thing, all your wives are going to be used as ‘sex objects’ beginning this day. You are going to have enemies coming against you all the time. Your whole household is going to be in turmoil.’ Look what happened with Absalom and Tamar; all the sons vying as to who is going to succeed David when he dies. all because he sinned. So that punishment came.

There are times when we have to go through correction. If you’re older:

- remember Hezekiah and what he did
- remember David and what he did
- remember Ahaz and what he did
- remember Asa and what he did

Those are dangerous years, especially if you add in all of the other things.

Verse 15: “Because what I am working out myself, I do not know. For what I do not desire to do, this I do; moreover, what I hate, this *is what I do*... [you hate sin, but you end up doing it] ...But if I am doing what I do not desire to do, I agree with the law that *it is good*” (vs 15-16). The Law doesn’t change for the convenience of your thoughts. The Law remains eternal and true.

Verse 17: “So then, I am no longer working it out myself...” I am not deliberately doing this. You may be for a time under the temptations of Satan the devil and you yield to it.

“...rather, it is sin *that is dwelling within me*” (v 17). That’s where the long-term overcoming needs to be understood.

As long as we are in the flesh we’ll have ‘the law of sin and death’ working in us. But if we use the law of the Spirit of life *to overcome, to put down, to change, to grow*, then we won’t be falling into the trap of these sins.

Here is what it all leads to and this is what God wants us to understand, v 18: “Because I fully understand that there is not dwelling within me—that is, within my fleshly being—*any good*. For the desire to do good is present within me; but how to work out that which is good, I do not find. For the good that I desire to do, I am not doing; but the evil that I do not desire to do, this I am doing. But if I do what I do not desire to do, I am no longer working it out myself, but sin *that is dwelling within me*. Consequently, I find this law *in my members*, that when I desire to do good, evil is present with me” (vs 18-21).

That equates to the long-term overcoming of sin. Have you ever done something really, really good and then the next day you had a huge gigantic blooper that was really, really bad? *Yes! You still have things to overcome!*

Verse 22: “For I delight in the Law of God according to the inward man; but I see another law within my own members, warring against the law of my mind... [here’s the battle going on] ...and leading me captive to the law of sin that is within my own members” (vs 22-23).

What does God want us to do? Why does He allow this to continue? Because He wants us to come to this point of abject repentance to God, so He can give us more of His Spirit and help perfect us.

Verse 24: “O *what a wretched man I am!* Who shall save me from the body of this death? I thank God *for His salvation* through our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of this, on the one hand, I myself serve the Law of God with *my mind*; but on the other hand, with the flesh, I *serve* the law of sin” (vs 24-25). That is, when I sin. Perfection is not complete until the resurrection.

1Cor. 10 is the battle as described. This is why, brethren, that a great mistake that the ministry has made in the past is to correct the brethren from the pulpit, rather than teach them how to correct themselves. ***No correction is worth anything unless you correct yourself!*** That’s called ***self-control with God’s Spirit!*** God has given us His Spirit and the tools to overcome:

- it is a work
- it is a labor
- it is constant

Stop and think about this for a minute. Remember what it said after Jesus was done with the temptation of Satan the devil. He overcame everything. He was victorious. It says that Satan 'left him for a time.' Likewise with us. We may go along and everything will be nice and smooth for a while. Then all of sudden BANG! What happened?

- the world's still here
- Satan is still here

Who does he want to get to most of all? He accuses us before God day and night (Rev. 12), but we overcome him with 'the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony and not loving our lives unto death.' That's where it comes. Here's how it goes:

2-Corinthians 10:3: "For although we walk in *the* flesh, we do not war according to *the* flesh." You cannot take human rules of self-discipline and make it work spiritually, regardless of how close it may be to the spiritual application. That does not have the Spirit of God.

Give you a good example: Michael Phelps won 18 gold medals, the perfection of swimming, but he got arrested for drunk driving. They suspended him for six months.

When you rest on your laurels, that's exactly what Satan wants you to do. Then BAM! It might be, 'Here's something real nice for you to think about.'

I saw this ad on television of this woman who was so enraptured with herself: 'How beautiful I am, how lovely I am, how good I am, I have all of these clothes and all of this money.' Is it good if you're nice looking? *Yes!* Is it good if you have money? *Yes!* Is it good that you are able to do things? *Yes!*

But when your mind is on yourself and you worship yourself and you have all of these idols in your mind, you become vain and worthless. You can be subject to worse sin, because that's the first step that Satan wants you to do. I thought, how many young girls are going to see that and think that is what they want.

"...we do not war according to *the* flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to *the* overthrowing of strongholds" (vs 3-4). Those are the long-term sins you need to overcome--*the strongholds*.

Some people can admit it. Like this one murderer who said, 'You better not release me, because I'll murder again.' He understood his stronghold and he knew the only way to keep from acting upon it was to be incarcerated. But that didn't amount to repentance.

Here's what you do: When you have a sin, when you have thoughts that you need to overcome, don't go along and say, 'I don't need to think this way.' True, you don't need to, but you need to grab it.

- Is it a fear?
- Is it an anxiety?

Whatever it is, you mentally grab hold of it and bring it before God. Pray about it and ask God to help you overcome it. That's how you handle it.

Verse 5: "Casting down *vain* imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God... [the vanity of human nature] ...and **bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ.**"

If you have something, like songs do. You get a song in your head, it's just like it's running on a repeater recording. You don't want it, you didn't want it in your mind; you don't know how to get rid of it. Sometimes it would take you two or three days to get it out of your brain. That shows you how you are affected by the world. Same say with whatever the sin is. It's a *stronghold*. You need to grab hold with God's Spirit.

Verse 5: "Casting down *vain* imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ." That's the day-by-day battle that we need to keep in mind. So, when these sins come along,

- repent of it immediately
- ask God to cleanse your mind
- put it out of your mind

I've got one channel that's blank. So, on the television, if there's too much going on, you just hit that channel and there it is blank. It says if you want to subscribe go to 9425. Whatever your thing is to avoid it, do it.

Verse 6: "And having a readiness to avenge all disobedience, whenever your obedience has been fulfilled." That's how we overcome.

- Is it vanity?
- Is it lust?
- Is it anger?
- Is it bitterness?
- Is it being turned off?

Whatever it is.

Always remember that ***God is always right!*** That's going to take some prayer. There are things that get in your mind.

I remember talking to one man. He had a life where all he did was swear and curse. It was

indelible upon his mind, written. Like it says there of Judah: the sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron and point of a diamond.

When he was praying to God, he ended up swearing and cursing. He said, 'I've got a big problem. What do I do?' We went over this. I said, 'That's your stronghold and you really need to work on it. You need to ask God to cleanse your mind, get rid of these thoughts. You need to study the Bible.' For him I recommended that he study the Proverbs.

- study the Word of God
- ask God to erase it
- ask God to put it out

You have to come to the point that you grab that problem and look it square in the face and know that you need the help of God to put it out and to get rid of it. You do it through prayer and study. God will help you in it and you will overcome it. He did overcome it. It took him quite a while.

Remember, we're not perfect until we hear that trumpet blow!

Scriptural References:

- 1) Romans 8:2
- 2) Deuteronomy 30:15-16, 19
- 3) Romans 7:6-25
- 4) 2-Corinthians 10:3-6

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Revelation 13
- Jeremiah 17:9
- 1-Timothy 1
- Revelation 12

Also referenced: From *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order: Appendix N: Rome's Challenge to the Protestants*

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