

Transformed By the Spirit-Free to fight back

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[0 : 00] We're in our series of transformed, living our new life. We're going to spend the next few weeks in Galatians as we look at how the Spirit can change our lives, how the Spirit can change us.

And we'll see that a life transformed by the Holy Spirit is free to fight back against sin and free to live a new life that is full of the good things that God promises us. A life empowered by the Spirit is free to fight back against sin and free to do good.

When the Allied forces invaded Germany, they were horrified at the conditions that they saw. The prisons of war and the concentration camps. We've all seen the pictures. The vacant stares, the skull-like faces, the sunken eyes, the emaciated bodies with their ribs showing.

In situations like that, the only hope for those prisoners of war is for an outside force to come in and save them. They're incapable of saving themselves.

They're held against their will by an evil force that is stronger than them. They're incapable of escaping it. They need someone from the outside to come in and do the rescuing. They're too weak to do it on their own.

[1 : 15] Another way of thinking of escape, the best escape stories, I think, are those ones done by the Navy SEALs. You've sometimes seen the movies. Now, we've seen so many of these movies, I can't even remember.

I tried to find a title. The first one I could think of was Rambo. But that's actually, it's not a rescue mission. I thought it was, but it's a strange story. It's the original Rambo back in the 80s.

But those stories of the Navy SEALs that are so specially trained with their night goggles, they come in at night, they take out the guards, there's people that are held hostage, they quietly steal you out of the camp, and just like that, you're free.

But, you're often still in enemy territory, because that's how you get caught. You don't get caught in your own territory, you often get caught in enemy territory. And so once you're free, you've got to be on your guard.

You'll look out for signs of the enemy catching you back. The one thing you're going to do is to follow the people who've come to rescue you, and you're going to listen very carefully to what they have to say, because they know the terrain, they know the enemy, and they've got the tools available to escape and to handle anything that comes your way.

[2 : 27] If you decide the moment you're free to start doing your own thing, or go your own way, your freedom is going to be very short-lived. You're going to get captured, or you're going to make a blunder and walk into a minefield, boom, you're dead.

Now, when we think of transformation, and how the Holy Spirit helps us escape from sins, where we're going to spend our time today, we sometimes make a mistake, or there's two ways of looking at how sin works, and how we escape it.

We see, according to the cross, we are set free from the guilt of sin, but we're also set free by Jesus from the power of sin. We save from the guilt and power of sin.

Now, in our tradition, in the evangelical tradition, we're very good at talking about how we save from the guilt of sin, how Jesus saves us from what sin has done in us, and what we've done.

But we forget that we're saved from the power of sin as well sometimes. So I want to look at that today. When we think of sin, we think of the things that we do wrong.

[3 : 33] You know, things like lying, getting angry, drinking too much. We've got that list in Galatians 5. And those things are true. But those things are really sins, the things that we do.

That's plural. Sin, singular, is a thing that lies behind our sins, that causes us to sin. We meet sin on the first few pages of the Bible.

In fact, there's a very good definition of what sin is from Genesis chapter 4. I'll have it up on the screen for us. It's a story of Cain and Abel.

And this is the first time we come across the word sin in the Bible. Although something has happened earlier on in Genesis 1 with Adam and Eve, something has gone wrong. Seems like some of their children have inherited something that they've done.

And it lands on Cain. Cain is upset with Abel. He wants to do something. And God confronts him. He says this, The Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?

[4 : 35] If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But, if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you, but you must rule over it.

Sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you, but you must rule over it. So what is sin described as here? What does that image of crouching do?

It's an animal, ready to pounce, like a lion. You know how lions get down when they're ready to, and their eyes just lock on you? Like this, and then you just know you're in serious trouble. If it catches you, you're a dead man.

So sin is described as this strange, sort of mysterious monster almost. It comes out of nowhere in the story of the Bible, but all it wants to do is to get stuck in and rip apart anyone that comes into its clutches.

It's a power. It's a force. It's a thing that has its own intentions and desires. Sin is crouching at your door.

[5 : 38] It's lying just outside the door of our lives. If we knew that there was a really hungry, hungry lion behind that door, we would, not many of us would want to go through there.

But sin isn't just a lion. It's a real, horrible, scary monster. What sin wants to do is to take over our lives.

It desires to have you. Echoes of what Paul is talking about in Galatians 5. We've got the desires of our flesh. It wants something. It's hungry.

It wants to take over our lives. It wants to dominate us and control our lives. And ultimately, by doing that, it destroys them. The sin is like a deadly slave master that demands that we do bad things.

And then it dominates our will so we think we have no option but to obey it. It sort of tricks us into thinking, well, I've got to do what you say because for whatever reason, we're too scared to disobey or we think, yeah, that might be a good idea.

[6 : 41] Or maybe it's speaking to things that we want to do already. But once it does that, it just brings destruction and death. death, Cain gives in and he kills Abel.

And the result of that is Cain being rejected and outcast. So that's the very first time sin is used in the Bible. It's not a pretty picture.

It's very ugly. It's very dangerous. That should help us stay away from anything that looks like sin.

So part of our problem is that sin looks so enticing, doesn't it? Especially that list in Galatians 5.

Some of the things that Paul mentions in Galatians 5. Verse 21, the acts of the sinful nature, sorry, verse 19, the acts of the sinful nature are obvious.

Sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery. It could be fun if you like to live that lifestyle. There are consequences to living that lifestyle, but doing it, many people do it because it's enjoyable.

[7 : 40] But if you realize what's happening, what sin is doing behind that, you realize how dangerous it is and how really you want to stay away from it. Another story helps us get our head around what sin is and how it works.

And that's the story of the Exodus in the Old Testament. We all know it well, but it's a great imagery of sin and salvation. And here it's an imagery of slavery as well. The Jews are held as slaves by a powerful evil force that is making their lives a misery.

It's not great fun to be a slave. You don't get to decide what you do. This person tells you what you do the whole time and they're whipping you, they're making you work hard, and you know what?

They don't actually care about you.

In the end, they work you to death. It's not like they care about how your life goes. They just want you to do what they want regardless of how you feel about it. The only way for them to be saved, the only way for the Jews to be saved in that circumstance, the only way for any person caught in slavery is to be rescued by another force.

Yes, sometimes some people have managed to escape, but not an entire people. It's interesting in the history of escapes. It's not like a whole camp escapes. One person might escape. Do you

remember the movie?

[8 : 50] Some of us might remember the movie, The Great Escape. It's a Steve McQueen, famous scene on his motorbike trying to jump over the fence. It's a real life story. 75 escaped, which is incredible.

74 were re-caught. Only three got away. The escape that God does with his people, he takes, in the Old Testament, he takes an entire nation.

How many left Egypt? Can you remember? Was it one million? Men? It was a huge amount of people, wasn't it? Not just one or two.

So they're in captivity, they're in slavery, God comes in and saves them, and then once they're rescued, they're free to go and worship him, and then free to live the life that he wanted them to live, to receive his blessings, in order to put his blessings into the rest of the world.

So when we think of sin and salvation, maybe let's look at salvation. Salvation, then, is to be rescued or freed from a cruel, oppressive, powerful force that holds us in thrall, in bondage, in slavery to it, making us do the things that we hate.

[10 : 05] Slavery sucks all the joy out of living. So salvation, in this scheme, is rescue from slavery, rescue from something that's holding you to slavery, and it ends in freedom.

God frees his people so they can begin to enjoy life again. So part of salvation is being freed from the guilt of sin, but it's also free from the power of sin.

Well, who helps us do that? Who helps us escape? What does that escape look like? Well, here the spirit enters into the picture, and the spirit is the exact opposite of sin.

The spirit is the exact opposite of sin. Sin brings death and slavery. The spirit brings freedom and life. We first meet the Holy Spirit on the first page of the Bible.

God is creating, but he's using the Holy Spirit to do that. Remember, it's hovering over the waters of the deep, and then order comes out, and life happens. That picture of Eden as the trees blossom, and the water comes down, and there's this beautiful garden.

[11 : 12] In Genesis 2, when God makes Adam, and he makes him alive, he does it by breathing his spirit into him. We're all alive because we're breathing.

If you stop breathing, you're going to be dead fairly quickly. So one image of the spirit we need to have in our minds is he's someone who brings life and breathes new life into things that are dead. He wants things to thrive and grow and to be beautiful and to bring blessing to others. That's why in the Old Testament, the imagery of living water is often associated with the spirit.

Streams, rivers, like water in a barren land, the Holy Spirit is the source of life that has been, a source of life to lives that have been left barren and broken and devastated because of sin.

I wonder if you picked up that imagery in that reading from Isaiah. Isaiah 32, I think I've got verse 15 up on there. This passage talks about a time when God is going to move.

[12 : 26] Interestingly, God is going to move to bring his spirit to undo bad things in the world. Barrenness and brokenness. Verse 15, well, he says, verse 14, fortresses will be abandoned, the noisy city is deserted, citadels, watchtowers become a wasteland.

So God's land, he's talking about the land of Israel, has been laid waste because of sin. And he says it's going to stay that way until, verse 15, until the spirit is poured upon us from on high.

And then the desert becomes a fertile field and the fertile field becomes like a forest. In that Isaiah passage 32, it starts off with the arrival of a king.

The first few verses, it says, see, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice.

And then when this king arrives and the spirit is poured out, what will happen to people?

In verse 2 and 3, each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm. Like streams of water, there's that imagery again, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.

[13 : 45] People who have been saved by Christ become life-giving forces themselves. We receive life and then that life bubbles up out of us into other people. It changes, it transforms the world.

This is terraforming, but it's more human forming, human reforming as well. So what the spirit does is he works against the results of sin.

He overthrows and undoes what sin causes. He changes lives that are empty and lifeless and fills them with goodness and blessing in life. Does that help us put in the picture of what sin is?

It's a slave force. Salvation is escape from that slave force. The spirit is the person that undoes what sin has been doing in our lives. So sin is this force that holds us captive.

Salvation then is freedom. Where does the spirit come in? Well, what he does is he frees us and then he empowers us. He gives us power to fight back against sin.

[14:49] So when we've been freed, we're still in enemy territory. There's still a battle to be fought. When you're held captive, you're often held with handcuffs or bonds, whatever.

Salvation is having those bonds broken free, right? But you have your bonds broken free but you're malnourished. You're hungry. You're lost. You don't know how to get out of enemy territory.

You need that seal team to show you the way and to give you food for the journey. The spirit is our source of strength and our guide. He makes sure we can fight back against the enemy that wants to trap us again and shows us how to stay away from those traps.

So, in Galatians, back in Galatians 5 in verse 16, the center part of this passage where Paul talks about what the spirit does. He says this, But I say, walk by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Walk by the spirit and you won't gratify the desires. You won't go to, you won't do the things that your flesh, your sinful nature tells you to do. For the desires of the flesh are against the spirit and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh.

[16:01] For these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things that you want to do or things that you should be doing. So, when we get saved, we are freed, but that's when the battle kind of starts.

Think of a prisoner of war situation. You've been freed, you get given a weapon, now you can, now you can fight back against those guys that took you enemy, took you prisoner.

That'll be great. You can get your revenge. For the first time, once we've been freed by God and freed by the spirit, we have a fighting chance against this ravenous beast called sin that wants to kill us.

And we're strong enough, we're empowered enough to actually do it. We can actually fight back and get a stranglehold and make sure it doesn't control us anymore. The spirit is like a force in us that makes us big and strong.

You know, like in the movies. Oh boy, I don't know if it is like in the movies. But, maybe with those superheroes, they look like a normal person. Yeah, like Superman. Boom, they change and they come out, they're big and strong and they can take on all the evil forces.

[17:14] It'd be nice if the Holy Spirit did that work, bam, and we were big and strong and we could fight everything like in the movies. It's not quite like that, although it is like that as well. But in our passage, we see the fruit of the spirit.

Fruit implies growth, which implies time, implies development. So it's not all wham, bam, right there on the spot.

Nevertheless, once we get the spirit, we get to fight this battle against sin and we get to start winning. The Holy Spirit helps us fight off those urges that want to pull us back.

Sin wants to pull us back to the dark side. The Holy Spirit wants to help us or helps us fight off those urges and instead live lives that we were originally created to do. To be a Christian then, in this sort of context, is to make war, to fight back.

A serious, deadly war because the consequences are serious and deadly. Sin wants to kill you and if it gets a chance, it will do so. So if you've ever been in a fight to the death, I've been in a few fights, I've lost every single one.

[18:27] I've never been in a fight to the death. The closest I got was when three guys jumped me and I thought I might, the only thing I did was get out of there as fast as I could. But I'm pretty sure that if we're in a fight and someone's got me in a stranglehold, I will do things that I don't normally do because I don't want to die and I'm going to fight with every ounce of my strength against this thing that's trying to kill me.

You with me on that? So that's a good way to look at sin. That helps us go, yeah, you know, sin looks tempting but it's trying to kill me. I need to fight back against this thing.

The battlefield sadly isn't out there, it's inside here because this section talks about our flesh, that's us. It's both the physical thing of my body, my mind which is physical, it's our brains, our feelings by the way are just as physical.

They're not not physical, we all feel feelings in our stomach, in our chest. When we get angry, it depends where you, some people feel it in their hands, some in their temples go, so feelings are just as physical but the battlefield is our mind, our bodies, our souls.

So this is what spiritual warfare is about and this is how God helps us stay away from these things and be, escapes and stay safe and enjoy life.

[20 : 03] Having said all that, here's probably the reason why many of us fail to live the transformed lives that we want because we might not understand that there's a spiritual battle going on.

How many of you thought, hmm, you know, I'm going to go to church today, I'm going to be trained for war. We don't go to church, sing a few songs, say a few prayers, hey man, this is a, this is a training ground for war.

We've been freed, so if we don't think of sin properly or salvation, sin as a force that wants to keep us, salvation is freedom, we'll just stroll through the battlefield not even knowing that there's a battlefield going on.

You just, la la la la, bam, minefield gone. La la la, boom, you get shot. What? Smelling the flowers. You don't see that on a battlefield. You don't see that as a prisoner of war.

When they escape, man, they are alert. They are watching out for stuff that's going to catch them. They don't want to go back to that because it's horrible down there. You don't want to be a slave again. You don't want to be a prisoner of war.

[21 : 10] You want to be free. When the Spirit sees people wandering around aimlessly, he's like, hey man, what are you doing? Let's get out of here.

Follow me. I know the way out. John Piper has some really good insight into making war against sin. He's quoting a book actually in one of his sermons on addictions and how to deal with it because addictions and sin really are the same thing.

He says this, there's a mean streak to authentic self-control. Self-control is not for the timid. The only possible attitude toward out-of-control desire is a declaration of all-out war.

There's something about war that sharpens our senses. You hear a twig snap, a rustling of the leaves and you're in attack mode. Someone coughs and you're ready to pounce, to pull the trigger. Even after days of little or no sleep, war keeps us vigilant. So a good way to have, to understand how our lives can be transformed is to realize, okay, we're in a war situation here.

[22 : 25] I've got my flesh fighting against me because it's, some, the sin is still there and it, if it gets a chance, it's gonna, it's gonna kill me and I don't wanna be killed.

I'd rather live so I'm gonna fight back with everything I've got. The only possible attitude toward out of control desire is a declaration of all out war. I guess you get three types of people in this warfare scenario.

The outside force comes into the prisoner of war camp and they find some people don't wanna be free. They're happy to stay in the prisoner of war camp. They've made friends with the enemy. Maybe the enemy has promoted him a bit, given them a position of authority. They get nice food. They get wined and dined. Yeah, they're gonna join the enemy.

They think they're gonna stay. Do you remember when the Jews came out of Egypt? They were upset with Moses at one point. Hey man, what did you bring us to die for? We had the flesh pots of Egypt.

[23 : 29] It was nice back there. You get others who are freed but they're not really into fighting. They're gonna complain. Ah, this journey is long.

This is so difficult. Ooh, I'm so scared. Yeah, it's scary. Yes, the journey is long but you need to start fighting. You can't just walk around and not bother.

You're gonna get taken out and if you live like that, well then, you are gonna get taken out. You're not gonna stay free for very long and then you get others who take the fight seriously. Give me that weapon.

Let's go. I want my revenge on those guys. I want nothing to do with them. You tell me what to do. You're the boss. We're gonna win this fight. Well, okay, that sounds great but what does this spiritual warfare look like on a daily basis?

Well, very often it looks like spending time in prayer. John Piper talks about how in the same talk about how he's home one evening that was snowed in.

[24 : 32] He's in America and they don't get this often. He gets a chance to spend time with his family and he was looking forward to it. They were gonna play some, in his mind, they were gonna play some games together or sit and chat around the fire.

It was gonna be really enjoyable. Maybe play some board games. His wife and his kids walk in and they'd say, oh no, we're gonna go, we're gonna go upstairs, we're gonna watch a movie, a certain movie that John Piper wasn't interested in and he said he was so hurt.

He wasn't consulted. He could feel, and he, he said he could feel his, this hurt and his anger and, and sort of jealousy rising in him as they, as he realized that his plans for the evening were gonna be, gonna be dashed and he knew that if he said something then and there he was gonna say something that was gonna hurt that relationship.

If you think about those sins in verse 19 and 20, there's sins of hatred, of discord, of jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy.

And those, not all of them, but part of that is how you speak to people and what you say hurts them and breaks that relationship and John Piper knew that was gonna happen. So what does he do? he can feel it happening, he walks up, he excuses himself, he goes upstairs and he says he spent half an hour in prayer, how's that?

[26 : 02] Killing the sin of jealousy and pride and half an hour later, he walks back down and enjoys watching the movie with them. Now, it's, it's, it's, it's, it's, it's, on one hand you think, okay, guys just watch the movie, you know, don't be so ridiculous.

But if you know you're gonna say something bad and you're gonna make sin happen in your space, then you've gotta do something about it. That's actually, that's a hero thing to do. To go off for 30 minutes and make sure that you're able to come back and speak nicely to your family, that's, man, that's, that's powerful stuff.

So what are some of the things that the Spirit does that helps us fight off these sins? Well, essentially, he leads us. He leads us. verse 18, if you're led by the Spirit, you're not under law. Your sinful nature and the Spirit are in conflict with each other, but if you're led by the Spirit, you won't be caught under law, this law, I guess, of sin here. Like a freedom fighter leading his captives away from sin and away from things that trap us in sin, those things in verse 19 and 21.

He tells us what sexual traps to avoid, what things not to say when we're upset, what not to do when we're angry, what situations to avoid, to stay away from. In the addiction world, they talk about people, places, and things.

[27 : 30] Be careful about the peoples that trigger you. Be careful about the things that trigger you and the places. They've got to have a whole new set of friends. Sometimes they've got to stay away from places altogether for a long time until they're strong enough to handle it again.

But if the Holy Spirit is leading, he's saying, come, watch out, don't do this, don't do that, our job is to listen to him because he knows better than we do how to stay away from sin and what sin is really like.

We mustn't listen to ourselves because we're so good at telling us that it's okay. It's not that we say, hey, I'd really like to do it. What we sometimes often do, hey, you know, it's not a major thing.

You know what, I'm sure I can handle it. I'm sure it'll be okay. It's not a major thing. I didn't kill someone. I just spent the evening shouting at my wife. I didn't, I didn't, again, kill someone.

I just got really angry and I hit the wall. We can trick ourselves into thinking, oh, sin isn't that bad.

We do that very often. Even if we don't enjoy it, we know it's bad, but it's not that bad.

[28 : 34] No, no. You've given into sin. The crouching tiger is right there. It's going to eat you if you're not careful. So that's why we listen to the Spirit because he's like, yeah, you need to be careful about that.

It's worse than you think. It's deadlier than you think. Stay away. The other thing we must do, so we must follow the Spirit's lead. We must keep in step with the Spirit, verse 25.

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let's walk together with Him. This walk together is a lifestyle thing.

But it's a military, it's actually a military terminology there, to walk in step. It's what soldiers do when they march in order. Remember those of us, oh, well, I didn't serve, but I spent time, spending a lot of time marching in my pipe band.

And you've got to march down, halt step, one, two, rechts, met three of my ship. Oh, I can't even remember. Turn right, turn left. If you want to stay in step, you've got to listen to what the commander is telling you to do.

[29 : 39] He's not suggesting, and then if you move out of step, you break formation, you're man alien, every sniper on the battlefield is going to train on you and you're dead within three or four seconds. People often talk about the Holy Spirit prompting us.

We must listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Yes, but be careful of thinking of those promptings as mere suggestions. They're the commands of your battlefield commander who's there to keep you safe and to defeat the enemy.

He's telling you what to do and what not to do. You ignore them, the commands of the Holy Spirit, at our own peril. Paul ends that section in verse 21-22, verse 19-20-21.

He says this, I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this, who live in the flesh, who listen to their sinful nature, will not inherit the kingdom of God.

It's a warning we've got to take seriously. All right, so the Spirit leads us away from danger, but He also, from the danger of sin, danger of death, but He also frees us to do good.

[30 : 59] Essentially, the Holy Spirit restarts what was missing in our lives when we lived in sin. It's interesting, the word for sin, the Hebrew word and the Greek word, both mean the same thing.

If you're a Christian, you might know this, but it's to miss the mark, to miss the target. It means we've failed something as a human.

So, we were created to hit the mark. We were created in God's image to glorify God and to live in good relationship with Him, good relationship with each other, good relationship with the world around us.

We reflect His image and carry out His plans. Remember? Fill the earth and subdue it. We're His representatives on earth. Bring blessing into the world.

Bring goodness into the world. Bring life into the world. And sin, when we give in to sin, we miss the mark of what God intended us to do. And instead of life, we bring death. Instead of goodness, we bring chaos and disorder and evil.

[31 : 58] Instead of blessing, we bring curse. In Romans, Paul says, we've all fallen short of the glory of God. That's the missing of the mark.

We're supposed to be glorious representatives of God on earth. We can do that again, but it needs the Holy Spirit in our lives. We can't do it by ourselves because the flesh, it's just too strong.

By living in the flesh, our lives become barren. They become dry. They become full of ugliness and strife. I mean, just imagine living like the people that are ruled by those things in verse 19 and 20. Sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery. I don't, you know, some people say it sounds like fun. It's not fun. It's horrible. None of those relationships work out.

Did you all see the Amber Heard and the Johnny Depp or some of the Amber Heard and Johnny Depp trial? They're not living happy lives. That doesn't sound like fun. Selfishness, fits of rage, factions, fighting, jealousy, envy, drunk, it just, it just is not enjoyable.

[33 : 05] It's just a life that's full of chaos. Living by the Spirit means that God's original purpose for us begins to re-emerge in our lives. That's the fruits of the Spirit in verse 22.

It's almost like, it's almost this organic growth. It almost happens automatically because the Spirit has started to enter our lives. The fruits of the Spirit is love and joy and peace.

Just reading it, you sort of, it just feels so calming, doesn't it? patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Nurturing this process of the growth of the fruit of the Spirit is not rocket science. It means that we must do the things described in verse 22 and 3. They're not feelings, they're actions. Okay?

A boxer, how does a boxer become a boxer? He trains. He boxes. He's got to go to boxing practice. Don't become a boxer in the ring.

[34 : 08] You become a boxer before you enter the ring, before you enter the fight. How does a soccer player become a good soccer player? He spends hours and hours practicing his skills. A Formula One driver practices driving.

A Christian practices these things because these are Christian virtues. They're given to us by the Holy Spirit. We mustn't feel love, we must be loving towards others.

Feel love is great. Feel it, go for it. But don't just feel it, do it. Joy. It's not just a feeling, be joyful. Say things that let people know that you're full of joy. Be at peace.

Spread peace. Don't spread chaos. Be patient. Don't be impatient. Practice kindness. Do kind things towards others. Be good.

Be faithful. Be gentle. Be gentle how you speak. Be gentle how you respond. Be gentle when you're agitated. One preacher says his mother, he knew when she was agitated she used to have a string of prayer beads in her pocket.

[35 : 16] And you, her agitation looked like this. But all you could hear was as she went through the prayers. but that's okay.

That's a, that's better than slam the door. Self-control. Gentleness and self-control.

We've got to practice these things. So, these are the markers of God's people. Like any weapon of war, it only gets better the more we practice it. Right? Soldiers are full-time warriors.

They spend hours drilling with their weapons so that when they're faced with the enemy, they know what to do to defeat them. It's the same with the fruit of the spirit. The spirit has made them grow.

We must put them into daily use. That's the only real way of getting them going in our lives. The fertilizer, I guess, is just us doing it. Yes, it'll start small. Yes, it'll be wonky.

[36 : 12] Yes, it'll be wobbly. We won't quite do it. But just by doing it, you're going to practice getting it better and better and better. We get better and better using them. When temptation comes calling us back to our old sinful lifestyles, we get better at saying, no, I'm going to practice patience.

I'm not going to be impatient. I'm not going to be angry. I'm going to be forgiving. I'm not going to say ugly, rude words. I'm going to keep my mouth. I'm not going to repeat the thing that I heard about that person and go tell the other person.

I'm just going to keep quiet. I'm actually going to say nice things about the people that others are speaking badly about. Sometimes, we'll put up a good fight.

And we'll win a particular battle. Other times, our fight will be half-hearted. We'll take a wallop. But if we keep on fighting, the promise of ultimate victory will be ours.

In verse 24, Paul says, those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Jesus has defeated sin. And sin, if you think about it, is the third most powerful force in the planet, in the universe.

[37 : 15] after God, after the devil, sin is the most destructive force out there. Jesus defeated it. And not only that, he's then given us the most powerful force in the universe, the Holy Spirit, God himself in our lives, to fight back against the thing that he's already defeated.

Does that help you go, hmm, okay, maybe I can actually win this war? This is not a fight we can lose, but it is a fight we've got to fight with everything in me, every day, so that I get more of the good stuff and less of the bad stuff.

Last bit of encouragement for us in this fight, we're not alone in this fight to change our lives, to stop sin, and to do the good things God wants us to do.

Jesus didn't free me on my own. He's freed thousands of others with me. You're sitting in front of me. He's freed us together. We are now a band of freedom fighters set free in order to help each other stay free and help each other enjoy the good things that the Spirit promises to do in us.

But we'll look at that in more detail next week as we look at how the church is involved in transformation. Why don't we pray and ask God to help us do the things that He gives us the power to do?

[38 : 37] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word that gives us so much encouragement but also warning. Encouragement, Lord, because sin is defeated by You and by Your Spirit and we've got Your Spirit, Lord.

But a warning because sin is evil and it's still kicking around. And so, Lord, we want to enter this battle but fully armed so we can put up a good fight.

Lord, help us to practice our drills to spend time in prayer, to cultivate the fruits of the Spirit by actually just doing them regardless of the circumstance.

Even if we do them not as great as we can. Lord, will You please help us send Your Spirit to empower us, Lord, change our hearts and minds, help us to remember the things in Your Word that will help us fight off sin and bring goodness and blessing and life back into our lives so we can do the same for others.

In Jesus' name, Amen.