

# The Battle Inside, But Christ Is Victorious

August 5, 2018 – Ephesians 4:17-24

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*“So I tell you this and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality (worldly / Gratification of physical appetites) so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way (Through the sinful nature). Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*

You might have seen the cartoon that has the man with an evil looking devilish demon on one shoulder, and on the other shoulder a nice well-spoken angel with a halo. The Devilish demon is shouting into the man’s ear. “Go ahead and do it, you will never have a chance like this again. Nobody is looking, go ahead give that checkout clerk an earful, Everyone is doing it.” While the Nice well-spoken angel is gently saying, “Just walk away, Don’t do it. Be nice! God wants you to love everyone, even your enemy and to pray for those who persecute you.”

What is going on when we have those internal Battles?

It is the battle between the sinful Nature / Old Adam and the New Man, or as the Lord tells us through the Apostle Paul in this section from Ephesians:

**Vs. 22 – You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;**

**Vs. 23 – to be made new in the attitude of your minds;**

**Vs. 24 – and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**

If you do not have this struggle between doing what is God pleasing and what is sinful, you have either

- killed you conscience by continually sinning,
- or you have died and gone to heaven and no longer have the sinful/ old self,
- or you are an unbeliever living with only the sinful nature with which you were conceived.

There is no such thing as being born with good inside of you. This is a false teaching which is in the world. Instead we must let Scripture be our guide, and let God do the speaking as He tells us in His Holy Word, the Bible.

Passages such as Psalm 51:5 tells us that we have been sinful from conception.

**Psalm 51:5 – “Surely I was sinful from Birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”**

And we learn that our sin, my sin begins in the heart as Jesus clearly tells us in:

**Matt. 15:19-20 – “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man unclean; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him unclean.”**

Our natural sinful state is referred to as The TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF MANKIND.

Some people will deny that babies are sinful and instead think that babies are so cute and cuddly that they could not possibly sin, yet the question to ask is: “Have you ever seen or heard of a baby who has died?”

Why do people die, including babies? God tells us in Paul's letter to the **Romans 6:23** – **“For the wages of sin is death”** People die because of sin, whether we are Old Folks, babies and everyone in between.

And so everyone is born with a sinful nature, that is the OLD Self. The Old Adam as some of you may have learned from Catechism class. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, in the Garden of Eden, they lost the Image of God. They Lost all Perfection and Holiness, and unfortunately they only pass on their genes and sin. Unbelievers only have a sinful nature. Believers have BOTH the sinful nature AND the New Self. Thus the believer has the internal battle against and with sin. This is exactly what the Apostle Paul is telling the Congregation in Ephesus. Before they were believers they only had the Old, Sinful nature. God through the Apostle Paul gives a clear and vivid picture of the sinful nature when he writes:

**Vs. 17 – So I tell you this and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.**

**Vs. 18 – They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.**

**Vs. 19 – Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality (worldly / Gratification of physical appetites) so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.**

BUT SOMETHING Happened!!!!

**Vs. 20 – You, however, did not come to know Christ that way (Through the sinful nature).**

**Vs. 21 – Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.**

**Vs. 22 – You were taught, with regard to your former way of life**

You HEARD and were TAUGHT of Christ and in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. In other Words, through the Word of God these Gentiles were brought to Faith in Jesus. Through the Word of God they were made alive in Christ Jesus as the Apostle Paul said earlier in

**Ephesians 2:4 – “But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.”**

**Luke 8:15 – “Those having heard the Word held fast and produced fruit.”**

Yes, even infants are brought to faith in Jesus as Paul says to Timothy

**II Timothy 3:15 – “And how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”**

Even as an infant Timothy knew the Word of God and was a believer as God created faith in his heart even as an infant, and this would have been in the waters of baptism.

If you are struggling with sin, that is good! It means that you have the New Man, that is the Holy Spirit living in you. Even the great preacher – The Apostle Paul struggled with sin. Notice in the last verse of this section from Romans, where and how the Apostle Paul was rescued.

**Romans 7:15-25 – “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. **For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.** So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”** AMEN