

Ammunition for Holiness

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[0 : 00] We studied for several weeks the law of indwelling sin.

! We know from Scripture we possess indwelling sin in our unredeemed flesh.! If we're not aware of what the Word of God teaches on this subject, we could probably figure it out from personal experience that we have indwelling sin.

And we're going to leave that topic behind. I think we've covered it adequately. We could go for a long time. It will probably be mentioned in here from time to time throughout the course of this study.

And we all know that we're in this daily moment-by-moment battle against sin. We're going to be focusing on that great topic.

Where do we go for help in the daily waging of our battle against sin? For the believers, we know that God has delivered us from the realm and reign of sin.

[1 : 22] God has done that by joining us to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Reformers, and even before their time, referred to this joining as our union with Christ.

Even Augustine wrote about that in the 400 AD. We are united with Him in His death. He died to sin, and we've died to sin, although the battle still rages.

And remember that the believer has been delivered from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and one day we will be delivered from the very presence of sin.

And what a day that is going to be. I heard Dr. MacArthur mention he's going to be fascinated about heaven and gold streets and pearl gates and all that for about ten minutes.

And then he will have his fill of that. But the fascinating thing, according to Dr. MacArthur, for heaven was a place of no sin. I mean, you think about that.

[2 : 32] A place of no sin. Our duty today is to resist sin, not allow it to reign in our mortal bodies.

This is probably as good a moment as any to insert probably the main passage this evening, taken from Romans chapter 6.

We're going to be studying a lot of verses tonight. Mostly Romans, but other writings of Paul and even into the Old Testament. But Romans 6, verse 11, So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin.

Now, he didn't stop there. He added, dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. A very pivotal passage of truth for us.

Because of our daily battle with sin, it is really easy to feel defeated. I have felt that many times in my soon-to-be 74 years.

[3 : 43] Many believers want to give up the fight. If any of you ever feel this way, welcome to the club.

Welcome to the club. We all go through periods like that. When we do, we must remember some basic facts concerning the Lord. First, God is infinite in wisdom.

He is infinite in wisdom. And for His reasons and purpose, He has seen fit to allow this daily battle against indwelling sin. What is the significance, though, of this phrase, being alive to God in Christ Jesus, especially if we still experience sin on a daily basis?

How does this fact help us in our pursuit of holiness in an unholy world? The very title of our course of study. Well, it helps us in several ways.

First, we are united with Christ in all His power. Very important point. We are united with Christ in all His power.

[5 : 00] And how powerful is He? Yeah. It's cloudy now, probably. But some might go out and look at the universe. He spoke that into existence with the Word.

Every molecule, every atom, to the infinite depths of the universe. We are united with Christ in all His power.

And please forgive me for a pun. That statement is powerful. It's a powerful statement. What are the benefits of being united to Christ?

More that we can even identify. We're going to spend eternity experiencing and reflecting on the benefits. But one thing that is brought to bear is this great truth and something to remember.

In this life, we cannot live a holy life in our own strength. Now, we all know that, but it bears repeating.

[6 : 06] Even in your prayer time, it bears repeating. Can't do it alone. We can't do it in our own strength. In fact, we cannot do anything spiritual in our own strength.

If we try to do it in our own strength, it becomes unspiritual, right? As the late Dr. Jerry Bridges said, Christianity is not a do-it-yourself thing.

It's not a do-it-yourself. If we were to list the holy men of the Bible, we would certainly put the Apostle Paul at or near the top.

Now, he had kind of a shaky start. You know, Stephen the martyr. He was, I think, you know, wanting to get the attention of the high priest.

Because if you say, well, he was the number one Christian that ever lived, I'm sure Paul wouldn't like that. He wouldn't like it at all. He described himself as a chief of sinners, as a wretched man.

[7 : 14] But listen to what Paul said in the letter to the church at Philippi. I'm reading out of Philippians chapter 4, beginning in verse 11.

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am in to be content. We need to do a word study someday on contentment.

I've learned to be content. I know how to be brought low. I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. And that Him there is Christ. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Paul's reaction to circumstances and our reaction to circumstances are all part of our walk in holiness.

[8 : 23] How we react to circumstances. That is why one cannot reduce holiness down to a simple list of do's and don'ts. Well, if you do these things and you don't do these things, you're holy.

It doesn't work that way. We know that we are striving properly for holiness when we seek to live our lives in conformity to the character of God and in obedience to the will of God.

When we can say with Paul, I am content in whatever circumstances God allows in my life, that's a walk in holiness. That's a walk in holiness.

When we are convicted of a sin that we committed and we go to the Lord immediately, confess it, and He's faithful and just to forgive us, that's part of the walk in holiness. What was the secret though to Paul's contentment?

He drew his strength from and through the Lord. It came from the Lord. This is all very similar to Paul's prayer found in the chapter 1 of the book of Colossians in verse 9 and the following.

[9 : 41] And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.

Again, where do patience and endurance come from? The only source that it can come from is God who strengthens us with His power.

And how much power does He have? He has all power. It brings us to another great prayer of the Apostle Paul. This one found in the third chapter of the book of Ephesians.

And I'm starting to learn through this study that these verses, I read them just kind of as literature or words, but they're prayers. So much of what Paul wrote is actually prayer.

Verse 14 of Ephesians 3, For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory, He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and the length and height and depth, and to

know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

[11 : 49] So Paul here prays that believers would be strengthened with the power of the Holy Spirit in our inner being.

He also asks that we be granted the strength to comprehend the amazing love of Christ. Try to plumb those depths sometimes. It is a love that surpasses our ability to fully comprehend.

The Apostle then concludes his prayer with these amazing inspired words given to him by the Holy Spirit in verses 20 and 21, Ephesians 3, Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever.

Amen. Powerful words that Paul wrote to us inspired by the Holy Spirit. These are amazing passages of truth and we should dwell on these deeply in humble reflection.

These are good prayer closet passages to study, even to pray. The Apostle is reminding us that we are united in Christ with all of His mighty power.

[13 : 25] And that's vitally important to us because let's face it, every one of us in here is living out his life in a sin-filled world.

It's a world that is growing dark. We saw a video of Dr. MacArthur months ago. It's a world where people have been given over to depravity.

Not the church, not the kingdom of God, but the unbelievers to a depraved mind. That's a Greek word for a form of insanity. The Apostle is reminding us that we're united with Christ who has all power.

And we need that in this sin-filled world. I may be the only one that applies to, but that's uncertain. But there's a tremendous sense of hopelessness that is the direct cause of the power and presence of sin.

You could really be hopeless, you know, get this feeling of am I ever going to defeat this? I feel so hopeless. Collectively or individually, we probably couldn't count how many times we've given in to a particular sin, promised God, one thing about it, Lord, I'm never going to do that again.

[14 : 47] As long as I live, I'm never going to do that again. And then we find ourselves yielding to the same sin or temptation. And you know what?

When you get to that point, if you've ever been there, I certainly have, Satan is all too ready to whisper into the ear of our heart saying, you might as well give up.

You will never conquer that sin. Just give up. And you know what, brother, Satan's right. In our own strength, we cannot and we will not conquer that or any sin in our own strength.

But when this day and hour comes, we need to remember three things. We've been made alive to God through Christ. We're living.

We live in a very bleak graveyard in this world. You ever think of that? This is a graveyard. There's people out here going up and down 75 and walking around that are dead in trespasses and sins.

[15 : 57] We live in that world, but we have been made alive to God, the Father, through Christ Jesus. Second point, having been so united, it is now God who will strengthen us because we're alive in Him through Christ.

So He will strengthen every true believer. And third, by living in light of this truth, in other words, counting this truth to be true, we will experience the strength needed to fight temptation and the sins that seek to separate us from God.

The strength is there. It's there. And we can find it. When we realize that we're dead to sin, that sin no longer reigns over us, that we are alive to God and united to Him from which our strength comes, sin loses its power to reign.

That's how it loses its power. The greatest theologian, many would say, of the 20th century was Dr. David Martin Lloyd-Jones, a mentor to Dr. MacArthur.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones, and I use that word doctor, he was an M.D. before he went back to school and became a theologian and a brilliant theologian, I might add.

[17 : 27] This is what he had to say. To realize this takes away from us that old sense of hopelessness which we have all known and felt the terrible power of sin.

How does it work? It works this way. I lose my sense of hopelessness because I can say to myself that not only am I no longer under the dominion of sin, but I'm under the dominion of another power that nothing can frustrate.

However weak I may be, it is the power of God that is working in me. You know, when you lay down at night, let that be your last thought.

When you get up in the morning, let that be your first thought. The power of God working in every believer. Now Dr. Lloyd-Jones was able to cover all 16 chapters of the book of Romans and he did it all in only 14 volumes.

I don't actually own that set of commentaries. If I did, I would give it to Pastor Mike because he wants it. But I do have his commentaries on the six chapters of Ephesians which he was able to cover in a mere eight volumes.

[18 : 47] As Dr. MacArthur says, he's pretty thorough. He's pretty thorough to say the least. Well, tonight is lesson 10 in our study pursuing holiness in an unholy world.

This pursuit goes far beyond taking in mere theoretical information. And then we just neatly put it on a shelf in our minds and then in a moment of desperation we hope we remember where we put it and we pull it out.

I mean, I can't remember where six of my seven wedding rings are. Diane keeps replacing. But I know where one of them is. Number seven. That's another topic. Believing and living the fact that we are dead to sin and alive to God is something we must do daily in our walk with Christ.

Remember, in this life and in this world, we are walking through a minefield of sin. I see it everywhere. I see it everywhere, guys.

You can't turn on television. You sure can't go to a movie unless it's Sabina of the Nazi years. And even that was a little wild to start with because they were wild before they got saved.

[20 : 08] I knew them both personally. But this is a minefield. And three things you should realize about mines. I've been around them. First, they are hidden.

They are deadly. Hidden, deadly. Third, they harm not only the person that steps on them, but those that are around them as well.

Those that are around them. The Puritans spoke in terms of forming the habit of resisting sin by realizing we are dead to sin and alive to God.

Romans 6.11 is but one verse that aids us in this battle. And there are many, many more. We can resist sin and temptations, but we must look to Christ for the power we need to do that.

Look to the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot do it on our own. We look to the power of the universe for successfully resisting.

[21 : 21] And He is that power. So the first implication of being alive to God is that we are united with Christ in all of His power.

There's another implication of being alive to God. He has given us His Holy Spirit to live within us. Remember when He said, I will not leave you as orphans. I am going to send another, even the Holy Spirit. He sent another, didn't He?

And we are not orphans. And He said, actually, you will do greater things than I did. You've got to be kidding me. He raised people from the dead. But remember, He never ventured over 200 miles from the place of birth.

We have a global command. And many of you have been overseas and ministered as I have and others of you have. He has given us of His Holy Spirit to live within us.

[22 : 29] How is that possible? It is made possible because of our union with Christ. We are united to Christ. The Holy Spirit is the agent of this union.

And we actually studied this when we were learning about salvation God's way over the last three years. Union with Christ was one of the main topics in that.

It is the Holy Spirit who gives us spiritual life and strength to live that spiritual life. That comes from the indwelling Spirit of God.

From that study these words should be familiar to you in Romans 8, 9-11. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.

If, in fact, the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now, this is a powerful, inspired statement. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.

[23 : 35] There is no shading in there, is there? But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

boy, that's... as they say, that'll preach. That'll preach. Paul said this again in Philippians chapter 2, verse 13.

It is God who works in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure. God's working in the life of every believer.

Living a holy life was a huge topic in Paul's various letters. We read this in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

[24 : 46] For God has not called us for impurity. God has called us in holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

And remember when you come to the word therefore you've got to figure out what it's there for, right? It just... it speaks to what just immediately preceded it. Because God has called us not in impurity but in holiness.

Therefore, if we disregard that then we're in deep trouble. Deep trouble. I would say people that make a habit of disregarding that need to go back to the beginning to see if they're in the body of Christ.

That is about as plain a text in all Scripture. Paul here connects the giving of the Holy Spirit with our holy living.

He says if He's there you're going to see a change. You're a new creation. The Holy Spirit was sent to make us holy. Okay.

[25 : 58] How does He do that? By conforming us to the very character of God. He conforms us to the character of God. We are intimately connected to the indwelling Holy Spirit from which the very power of Christ is made real in us.

There's a connection there. We can read these verses without explanation because they're so plain to us about our connection to the Holy Spirit and to our striving to live a holy life.

That's what we're doing. Paul says this in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 flee from sexual immorality.

Run away from it. Now you know I'm standing up here saying and we live in a culture that's consumed by that don't we? I mean it's consumed. This is inspired.

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you whom you have from God?

[27 : 21] You are not your own. And then Galatians chapter 5 but I say walk by the Spirit and if you do that Paul says you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Going right back to that statement about fleeing from sexual immorality. He takes us right back to that. If you walk by the Spirit you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

We will probably eventually get into a detailed study of the third chapter of Colossians. There's several verses in there that really hammer away on our battle with sexual immorality.

And I'm sure we'll spend some time there in a future lesson before we finish this. Obviously the only way the sinful heart the heart that the Old Testament prophets said was deceitful and desperately wicked the only way the sinful heart can be overcome is through the indwelling Spirit of God who gives us strength.

The only way we get the Spirit of God is through Christ union with Christ through salvation through the cross. The Apostle Peter described this as the only avenue left open to us to escape the corruption of the world.

[28 : 51] He said there's no other path to escape the world's corruption through the Holy Spirit who indwells us placed there by Christ Jesus who saved us.

If Peter considered this world in his time to be corrupt what would he consider our world to be? You know?

What would he think of our world? So do we have any hope of being strengthened toward holiness? The answer is yes and now I'm going to offer at least two qualifications.

The first qualification is the intake of the word of God on a consistent basis. What do I mean by that?

You've got to feed your minds and I have to do that with his truth. And when I wrote that I couldn't help but inject there I feel like I'm bordering on hypocrisy myself because I don't take in God's word nearly as consistently as I should.

[30 : 05] But we have to. Particularly given where we're at in the 21st century and what's going on around us. The Puritans talked about taking in the word of God in a humble and consistent manner.

And that's pretty strong because you remember they'd only had access to the word of God a few generations. The Catholic Church had locked it up. They changed it to the altar.

They didn't want the priests to read it. You had to be a bishop, an archbishop, a cardiner, or the pope to read it. That's why they call that the dark ages.

I'm reading a biography now of Wycliffe. It's amazing what those guys went through to unchain the Bible. Luther husked before them by a hundred years.

Amazing studies. Just amazing. I do that in my light reading. But we need to be strengthened in holiness and the first thing is taking in God's word on a consistent basis.

[31 : 14] Listen to what God says through the prophet Isaiah 66.2. This is the one to whom I will look. God is speaking. This is the one that's going to draw my attention.

He was humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. And I got to suggest we live in a culture that needs to tremble.

But we live in church. the churches of the western hemisphere or the east or wherever need to do some trembling. We really do.

We really do. This is a time to be engaged in trembling. So we should be humble and consistent in the intake of God's word.

In that way we are expressing our dependence upon the indwelling spirit of God. There's another way we can express this dependence.

[32 : 25] Pray for holiness. Ask the Lord to make you holy. To take those steps necessary to make you holy.

And that's not to be prayed lightly. If you're serious you're going to probably see a lot of radical changes not the least of which is you're going to become very aware of sin in your life.

And you have to deal with that. You'll have to deal with that. Pray for holiness. We read earlier that Paul prayed for the Ephesians to be strengthened by the Spirit of God with the power in the inward being.

We also looked at Colossians where Paul asked God to fill them with the knowledge of God's will through spiritual wisdom and understanding. Paul's stated goal was that we might be enabled to live a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing to God in every way.

Worthy and pleasing to the Lord. Striving for holiness is a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing to God.

[33 : 45] And again, I have to say, in this life, we strive. We don't arrive. There are some denominations that teach you do. Wesley thought you could.

John Wesley, and on his deathbed, he said, I never got there. I never made it. But he thought he could. we strive. Get the glory, you're going to arrive.

To attain any degree of holiness, we must depend on God's Spirit working in us. We pray that God will reveal our sins to Him so that we might confess them.

If we do, He gives us a promise. He says, I'm going to forgive you that sin and cleanse you of all unrighteousness. That's a promise you can find in 1 John 1.9. I've said many times before you embark on any spiritual pursuit, go to 1 John 1.9 and say, Lord, is there anything in my life that I need to confess?

When you put your head on that pillow and I just say, Lord, is there any sin that went unconfessed today? Don't say that out loud. If you're married, you'll have a long conversation.

[35 : 04] like, what sin are you talking about? That's between you and the Lord. Just talk to God about that. When we have God's strength and power living in us, obedience, then we can live a life of obedience to Him.

Now we can go another step and live a life of obedience to Him. Now, there's great irony in my statement there because that concludes tonight's lesson because next week we're going to be talking about obedience.

obedience and specifically obedience and not victory. So many people are talking about victory. And Diane wants to sing victory in Jesus at her funeral someday.

And I hope I'm not there to see it. I hope I've already gone. But next week, we're going to see God's not looking for victory. He's looking for obedience. obedience. And it's going to fit right in to what we've been talking about here this evening.

Thank you.