

DAY 8





Daily Living



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Isn't Christianity just another religion of rituals and good works?

All through life, individually and in community, we struggle with good and evil. We are neither all good nor all bad, but some of each every day. Our problem is not only with **sins of commission**, but also with **sins of omission**.



Because of this struggle, religions have evolved, setting rules of conduct, modes of worship and ways of trying to appease some deity for our failures.

Christianity **IS** a religion in the broadest sense of the term, but, upon inspection, it **IS UNLIKE** any religion. Religion is man reaching up to God, trying to please God with good deeds and sacrifices. But Christianity is God reaching down to man, through Jesus, offering salvation to all who will accept it, without requirement of any merit on our part.

This is a huge difference. Religions are hard work, and essentially futile. Authentic Christianity is not religious practice, but a different kind of life ... a radically different way of dealing with sin.

What should I do when I can't stop sinning?

There are two parts to the way Christians deal with sin: the **PENALTY OF SIN**, which requires one-time action; and the **POWER OF SIN**, which requires continuous action.



1. **PENALTY OF SIN.** This is the most critical part and **the difference between heaven and hell.** After death, every person will stand judgment before God for sins of a lifetime. No one is pure enough for heaven. However, as explained

in **Days 5 and 6**, God says that he will accept a substitution: **Jesus life for my life!**

It is at this point where Christianity is completely opposite from religions: Here we have a once-for-all sacrifice for all sins – past, present and future – and no need to offer further sacrifices. The **penalty is paid in full.**

But after dealing with the **PENALTY** part, there is still the problem of sin in daily living.



2. **POWER OF SIN.** After accepting Jesus as Savior, we sin less, but we are still sinners. We constantly struggle with **bad things we do and good things we don't do.**

Man is a trinity created in the image of God; we are more than just body (physical) and soul (mind, will and emotion), more than animal life. As explained in **Day 5**, there is also a spirit (God-connection) within us.

Our spirit is where divine nature and human nature meet. It is the doorway to our life at the highest plane of existence.

The way we defeat sin is not by sheer will-power and discipline, but rather by **letting the Holy Spirit into our lives to overpower the sin.**

OVERPOWER THE SIN

To illustrate, think of the spirit part of us as a room without windows. When the door is closed, there is darkness and confusion, a breeding place for sin. When we accept Jesus as Savior, the door opens and the Holy Spirit enters, as light. Now we have greater discernment of right and wrong, and a greater love for people. Now we see and understand things that didn't make sense when groping in the dark.



Throughout the Bible, God's presence is described as **light** ... and we understand the characteristics of light:

- *Light cannot be grasped or held*
- *Light itself cannot be seen, but reveals everything in its presence*
- *Light overpowers darkness, but darkness never overpowers light*
- *Light is warmth and energy*
- *Light fills all space made available to it, but will not invade space closed to it*
- *Light is never consumed or exhausted by anything in its presence*
- *Light fades the further we move from its source*

The concept is simple, yet profound: **In the presence of light, sin becomes distasteful to us.** Our motivations change with less self-effort. In the light, **WE WANT TO DO GOOD!** Choices become clearer and decision-making becomes better. Impulses, addictions and lethargy that once gripped us move out when the Holy Spirit moves in.



But there is still a problem. Frequently, we don't want so much light, because it exposes too much, so our human nature prompts us to close the door a bit. It's not that we shut out the Holy Spirit completely; we just give him less access. The result is not that we lose our salvation, but that we lose joy (a Christian term for spiritual happiness), lose clear direction, and lose power over sin.

To restore a diminished relationship with God, we need to open the door wide and **let the Holy Spirit clean and reorganize.** It is God doing the work, not us. 'Filled with the spirit' is a Christian term for this renewal. Opening up to the Holy Spirit is an act of the will – a surrender – usually facilitated by prayer and Bible reading.

How should I pray?

Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them how to pray. He gave them a model prayer, recorded in **Matthew 6** and **Luke 11**, consisting of **five points**:

MODEL PRAYER

- **Submit humbly to Almighty God**
- **Ask God to align us with his will**
- **Ask God to supply our daily needs**
- **Ask God to forgive us, and we forgive others**
- **Ask God for spiritual guidance and protection**

Prayer is for adjusting us to God's purposes, not for us telling God how to bless our endeavors and fulfill our desires. **We don't give God directions**; we ask for his guidance and strength.

Jesus said further that we should pray with sincere faith, without public piety or vain repetitions, and listen as well as petition. He also said to pray for others and think of ways we can help them. He said to pray often, formally or informally, word-by-word with articulated language or thought-by-thought in spiritual harmony, alone and with others.



Even if we have already been saved from the penalty of sin, we need to **confess known sins and truly desire to cooperate with God in not repeating them.** Confession and repentance cleans the contamination of sin from our lives and relationships.

How should I read my Bible?

An important way God speaks to us is through the Bible. When we read it, we know we are getting God's words, not human philosophy. The Bible keeps God's message from becoming distorted over time.

The Old Testament has hundreds of commandments regulating worship and conduct. Most are arcane and no longer fit modern society, but dozens – including the Ten Commandments – are still relevant for today.

As recorded in **Matthew 22**, Jesus was asked which is the most important of all these commandments. He answered:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.

'And the second is like it: **Love your neighbor as yourself.** All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.'



We don't need a long list of **dos** and **don'ts** that choke us. That's what Jesus came to replace. Mostly, we just remember the two guiding principles and apply them to every situation.

In the Gospels, we read the teachings of Jesus. In Acts and the Letters, we read the Apostle's instructions to new churches. We get into greater detail – about specific sins (like lying, stealing and gossip) and about specific virtues (like compassion, charity and fidelity) – and the Holy Spirit uses these words to activate our spirit and identify issues that need personal attention. **The Bible shapes our Christian life style.**



Bible commentaries, books, sermons and testimonies, when in accord with the Bible, can also be helpful in keeping our spirit **clean and strong.**

What should Christian life look like?

Christian life is a journey, and we experience spiritual growth and maturity along the way. Not everything happens at once.

In **Galatians 5** we have a list of **nine qualities that characterize a life directed by the Holy Spirit**:

'The fruit [result, consequence] of the spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.**'



These qualities express themselves in practical ways: Positive attitude. Loyal and compassionate friend. Good listener. Good citizen. Feeding the hungry. Caring for the sick. Giving to the poor. Working for social justice. Cleaning the environment. Encouraging the downhearted. Acting with honesty, integrity, responsibility and consistency. **And more ...**

Christian life, lived in the spirit, is quality life.