



Open Water Ministries

~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

“come just as you are”

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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Worship Music

[The Children's Song- Josh Garrels](#)

[The Stand-Josh Garrels](#)

[SISU-Josh Garrels](#)

[Slip Away-Josh Garrels](#)

Prayer

Lord, help me hold on tightly to the promises You have given me in Your Word. When I get physically tired or spiritually weary, please refill me with Your Spirit and recharge me with Your power so I can keep believing until I finally see the manifestation of my prayers. I know that You are faithful and that Your Word never fails, so help me remain steadfast until I see all Your promises come true in my own life. With the assistance of Your Spirit and Your power, I can and I WILL stand firm to the end. In Jesus' name I ask it. Amen

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

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[“What Time Is It?” Steve Mays](#)

If you have a prayer request...please e-mail it to us so we can pray for you...or a person.....

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Deuteronomy 6:1-25 (AMP)

1 NOW THIS is the instruction, the laws, and the precepts which the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land to which you go to possess it, 2 That you may [reverently] fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, and keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and be watchful to do them, that it may be well with you and that you may increase exceedingly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. 4 Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord [the only Lord]. 5 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your [mind and] heart and with your entire being and with all your might. 6 And these words which I am commanding you this day shall be [first] in your [own] minds and hearts; [then] 7 You shall whet and sharpen them so as to make them penetrate, and teach and impress them diligently upon the [minds and] hearts of your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets (forehead bands) between your eyes. 9 And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and on your gates. 10 And when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you, with great and goodly cities which you did not build, 11 And houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and cisterns hewn out which you did not hew, and vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and when you eat and are full, 12 Then beware lest you forget the Lord, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 13 You shall [reverently] fear the Lord your God and serve Him and swear by His name [and presence]. 14 You shall not go after other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who are round about you; 15 For the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and He destroy you from the face of the earth. 16 You shall not tempt and try the Lord your God as you tempted and tried Him in Massah. 17 You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God and His exhortations and His statutes which He commanded you. 18 And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may go well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers, 19 To cast out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has promised. 20 When your son asks you in time to come, What is the meaning of the testimonies and statutes and precepts which the Lord our God has commanded you? 21 Then you shall say to your son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and evil, against Egypt, against Pharaoh, and all his household, before our eyes; 23 And He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in to give us the land which He swore to give our fathers. 24 And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to [reverently] fear the Lord our God for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. 25 And it will be accounted as righteousness (conformity to God's will in word, thought, and action) for us if we are watchful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.

Chapter 6

So in chapter six:

NOW these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that you might do them in the land whither you go to possess it: That you may fear the LORD thy God, and to keep all of his statutes and commandments, which I command you. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of your fathers has promised thee, in the land that flows with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel (Deu 6:1-4):

This is called the great Shema, the great commandment.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD (Deu 6:4):

Or "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah".

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Deu 6:5).

Now when the lawyer came to Jesus and said, "Which is the greatest commandment?" Jesus quoted this, the Shema.

The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might (Deu 6:4-5). It is interesting that Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy more than, I think, any other book in the Old Testament. He was very familiar with this book of Deuteronomy. He used His passages when Satan was tempting Him and he quoted often from the book of Deuteronomy.

Now this Shema it is almost for the Jew his Magna Carta. I mean it's just whenever they would get together they would start to chant this. In their worship and feast services they would chant this, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one LORD:"(Deu 6:4). And I mean they really just chant it over and over and over again.

But it is interesting, in the Hebrew, there is a word for "one" which means a compound unity and another word for "one" which is an absolute unity. Now, we might say that we are one body gathered together here in Christ but we would use the word for a compound unit because there's a lot of bodies here, but we comprise a oneness in Jesus. So, there is one body in Christ that is made up of many parts, the compound unity. That Hebrew word for one, the compound unity, is "achad". Now there is another Hebrew word for one which means an absolute one, indivisible one. That word is "echad".

Now as we look at this Shema, the very heart of the whole Jewish faith and religious system, "The Lord our God is one LORD". If the word one Lord, the word "one" there is "echad", you can have absolutely no argument for the trinity at all. An absolute indivisible one and no place for the trinity. If the word "achad" is used for "one", you have then a compound unity. Very interesting because you know that the word "achad" is used. "The Lord our God is one LORD" the compound unity. The Father, Son, Holy Spirit, one Lord, one God, yet the compound unity, the three persons of the one God. It's right there in their very Shema, their chant, the foundation of their whole religious system is this verse, this scripture. And yet within it there is the idea of the compound unity of God, "The Lord our God is one LORD".

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, soul, and might. Now, these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart [first of all]: [secondly] you shall teach them diligently to your children, now you're to talk about them when you're sitting in your houses, and when you're walking along the path, and when you're lying down, and when you rise up. And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they might be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the posts of your house, and upon your gates. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land that he swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you the great and goodly cities, which you did not build the houses, but you're full of good things, which you did not fill, and wells that you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees, which you did not plant; when you have eaten and are full: Beware lest you forget the LORD, that brought you out of Egypt. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, [or reverence Him] and serve him, and shall swear by his name (Deu 6:5-13).

Now, God wanted them to have His Word and the thought of God just permeating their very life and their lifestyles. I like it. I think that we need to have more talking about God. Now when you lie down at night, now usually they of course just had one room the whole family would lie down in one room, just talk about God. When the lights are out and it's dark just start talking about God and the law of God and the commandments of the Lord. When you wake up in the morning, start talking about the Lord. When you're walking with your children along the path, talk to them about God. When you're sitting down at the table, let your conversation be about God. Let it be just so much a part, let it be not just a part, let it be the totality of your life; just the Word of God and the things of God.

Bind them on your wrist, put them in the frontlets and so they had little leather pouches and they'd the commandments in these pouches and they tie them on their foreheads; these little boxes with the law of God tied there between their eyes. They'd wrap them on their wrist, they'd have the little masseuse on the door and in the masseuse a little copy of the law on the doorposts; they would just tack it up there. And they do today in the orthodox homes. They'd go in and out of the house. They'd kiss their fingers and touch the little masseuse the law of God. It's signifying the love for the law of God.

I think that's great. I love it. Write them on your dashboards. You know, just surround yourself with the Word of God, the commandments and the statutes of the Lord. Let it become just that vital part of your life you're living. You know, it's an interesting thing in Malachi it says, "and they that love the Lord spake often of him. And God kept a book of remembrances" (Malachi 3:16).

You know the neat thing about it whenever you get together with your friends you start talking about the Lord, the Lord always eavesdrops. He loves to hear what you're saying about Him. "And God keeps a book of remembrances and they shall be accounted as his precious jewels in those days. "They that love the Lord spake often of Him." Oh, that we would just talk about Jesus. When we lie down at night, when we get up in the morning, when we're walking in the path, when we're going places and we just surround ourselves with the awareness and conscienceness of Him.

Now he warns them not to forget.

Not to go after the other gods, the gods of the people around about you: (For the LORD God [again a warning] is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth. Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him at Massah (Deu 6:14-16).

When Satan said, "Hey, command this stone to be made bread." Oh no, he said, "Jump off the temple here." And we'll get to the place in a little while "man shall not live by bread alone," that comes. But when he said, "Jump off the temple because it's written he'll give his angels charge over thee, keep thee in all thy ways, to bear thee up lest at any time you dash your foot up against a stone." And Jesus said, "It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Jesus is quoting here Proverbs the sixth chapter. He knew it.

Thou shall not tempt the LORD thy God. But you shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he has command you do. And you shall do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it might be well with you, that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to give to your fathers. To cast out the enemies from before you. And when you son ask you in time to come, saying, What are the meaning of the testimonies, and these statutes, and these judgments, which the LORD God has commanded you? Then you shall say unto your son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt: and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the LORD showed us signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and all of his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from there, that he might give us this land [and so forth] (Deu 6:16-23). It's interesting to me that God was always seeking to strike questions in the mind of a child in order that the child might learn. So many things that were deliberately designed to create curiosity and questions in the minds of the children. God has put that curiosity into the heart of a child; and as a parent, use it. Take time to explain to your children when they ask their questions. Don't just brush them off and say, "I don't have time." Sit down and answer their questions. God has given them the questioning art in order that they might learn. Take advantage of it and teach them the ways of the Lord.

(Through The Bible; C 2000 Series; Chuck Smith; 1979-1986)

Not long ago I received a letter from a young man who told me of his intense struggles with the flesh. He described his discouraging track record of defeat after defeat, almost echoing Paul's cry in Romans 7:24: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It was easy for me to relate to his experience. All of us have suffered through similar tough times in our walk with the Lord. Although we long for a life that pleases God, the power of the flesh proves too much for us and we fail. Throughout the history of the church, men have searched for ways to get the flesh under control. There was a time when many Christians believed that the only way to achieve victory was to lock themselves in a closet at a monastery. They would deny themselves contact with anything or anyone who could possibly make them stumble. But even a casual look at the diaries they left behind shows that isolation didn't help. Jerome, the famous theologian of the early church, lived for many years in a room that amounted to little more than a cage. His only contact with the outside world was a tiny window through which he would receive his meals. He closed himself off from everything and everybody in order that he might give himself totally to the study of God's Word, meditation, and prayer. But his personal journals record that the strictness of his lifestyle and the thickness of the surrounding walls didn't keep a barrage of horrible thoughts, imaginations, and fantasies away from his mind as he sat in his dark little cubicle. Our help doesn't come until we realize the answer is far beyond our own resources. Crying out to God is the secret to our deliverance. The flesh is a terribly strong enemy. Some Christians fight a losing battle with the flesh their entire walk with the Lord. They feel like the Israelites, who perished in the wilderness without ever entering into God's rest. Why do such believers never enjoy God's victory? It's simple: they spend all their effort and energy trying to live a godly life in their own strength. Instead of turning their lives and struggles over to God, they keep searching for some new technique, some new method, some new program for righteousness. And none of them ever work. As long as any of us try to deliver ourselves from "the body of this death" by desperately searching for another program or a formula to guide our efforts, we will fail. Our help doesn't come until we realize the answer is far beyond our own resources. Amazingly, crying out to God in weakness is the secret to our deliverance.

Not Another Self-Improvement Program; Our total powerlessness is a difficult thing for most of us to admit. We like to think of ourselves as strong, capable people, able to handle our own affairs. How many times have we started some self-improvement program, convinced that if we would just set our minds to it, we could easily lose a few pounds or get back in shape or eliminate a bothersome habit? But the sad fact is that as long as we think we can change our own lives by our own power, we never will. One of the greatest barriers to growth in the Christian life is the notion that we can live a life that pleases God by our own efforts. If we think we can do this, we will try to take credit for it. "See, putting away that bad habit wasn't so hard! I knew I could do it!" At that point we are not giving God glory, but writing a success story with ourselves as the star. We begin telling others how our formula will work for them as well, and God becomes further and further removed from the picture. Predictably, despite our great self-confidence, the first wind of tragedy or disappointment causes our whole house of cards to come crashing down around our ears. God will allow us to follow these self-help, self-improvement programs until we have tried them all. He will allow us to play out our own efforts until we finally come to the honest confession, "I can't do it. I can't be righteous in my own strength. Oh, wretched man that I am!" Such honesty is extremely difficult for us because it forces us to admit our own inability, failure, and weakness. We hate to come to these conclusions because they repudiate our pride. It is only when we admit our utter powerlessness, however, that we find hope. When we finally turn to the grace of God, the Lord intervenes and begins to do a work that we could not do for ourselves. It is not until we find ourselves driven by desperation to a cry of helplessness and hopelessness that we begin to enjoy real victory in Christ.

The Struggle Begins; In one sense, the fact that a battle exists at all is a real cause for rejoicing. If we hadn't been made alive spiritually by God, there would be no conflict. If my spirit were still dead in trespasses and sins, I wouldn't be struggling with evil desires. I would dive right in and live after the flesh. The fact that we find ourselves in this fight is strong proof that we are indeed children of God. And we are in a fight. Who can deny there is a ferocious battle going on inside each of us? In Galatians 5:17 the apostle Paul tells us, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Peter knew all about this struggle. At one time the burly fisherman boasted to Jesus that even if all the other disciples fled, he would not. Yet before the night was out he denied his Lord three times. Jesus had been right all along: the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Like Peter, we oftentimes react impulsively before we can get a grip on ourselves. We want to do right but find ourselves doing wrong. As Paul wrote, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:21-23). We cannot know God's victory until we realize a war for control is constantly being waged within our members between the Holy Spirit and our flesh. Our flesh is not yet dead. Although we began to taste and enjoy the benefits of the Spirit when we committed our lives to Christ and although the fleshly nature was taken off the throne of our lives, the battle is not yet over. Before our conversion the flesh enjoyed dominating and controlling our lives, and until our bodies are redeemed, it will never give up its struggle to bring us back under its power.

Are Our Desires Wrong? It is important at this point that we not make the mistake of thinking that our bodily drives and appetites themselves are evil. Our bodily desires were created by God and are absolutely necessary for sustaining life. The strongest of all fleshly desires is our drive for air. There is nothing wrong with breathing, but it is possible to twist this natural function and use it to inhale cocaine. In so doing we take a natural, God-given function and pervert it to an unnatural end. The Bible calls that "sin." Second only to the drive for air is our body's craving for moisture. There is nothing at all wrong with thirst, until we decide to quench it by sitting in a bar throwing down drinks until we can barely see straight. Again, we take a natural drive and use it for a purpose other than that for which God intended. Our next strongest drive is hunger. There is nothing ungodly about eating, until we become so consumed with food that it begins to affect our health. Normally we associate an abuse of our natural desire for food with gluttony, yet equally harmful is the obsession some have with being thin. They live to count calories and compulsively exercise themselves into the ground. This, too, is sin. The sex drive was created by God not only for procreation but also as a beautiful expression of mutual love between a husband and wife. But when we take this drive and make a pleasure toy out of it, love is no longer the focus and it becomes wrong. Do you see how the twisting of all these beautiful, God-given drives for selfish gain becomes a thing that wars against the Spirit? All these bodily appetites were given to us by God, but He never intended that any of them should rule over us. They are a necessary part of life, but He did not design for them to dominate our lives. Jesus said that if all we think about is what we're going to eat, drink, or wear, then there

is no difference between ourselves and pagans (see Matthew 6:31,32). A person who doesn't know God can do nothing other than pursue bodily drives, but we believers know that life is more than food and the body more than clothes. The desires of our flesh are proper and right in their place, but were never intended by God to rule over us. Yet in our fallen state, the bodily appetites do seek to rule our lives. This is where the struggle begins.

The Master's Battle Plan; At this point the question arises, So, then, what are we to do with the flesh? God has made a provision for the flesh. He calls it "the cross." Don't try to redeem the flesh or dress it up in spiritual trappings or reform it. It is not redeemable. It must be crucified. Paul stated, "Knowing this, that our old man [the old nature dominated by the flesh] is crucified with him, that the body of sin [our fallen nature that wants to rule] might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6). The biblical prescription for resolving the conflict between flesh and Spirit is not personal discipline or self-control. It is the power of the Holy Spirit. Our job is to recognize this as truth. If the desires of the flesh were not still a factor in our lives, we would have no need to reckon that the old nature died with Christ. Whenever we encounter an area of the flesh that still controls us, we need to honestly acknowledge that the battle of the flesh and the Spirit remains in us. We need then to bring the specific area of weakness to the cross and reckon it crucified. Yet that's only the first step! The biblical prescription for resolving the conflict between flesh and Spirit is not personal discipline or self-control. Power over the flesh comes only through a Spirit-controlled life. Although the conflict will be with us for as long as we live in these bodies, God provides us with the resources for spiritual victory. When we allow the Spirit of God to take over and work strongly in our lives, we can triumph over our fallen nature. Any endeavor at sanctification attempted on our own is by definition a fleshly effort. When Paul was brought to the point of desperation and cried out, "O wretched man that I am!" He did not ask, "How can I find a strategy to do better next time? How can I try harder so I get more satisfactory results?" Paul had already gone down that road to futility. He realized that the power to live a godly life did not reside in him. He saw he needed a Deliverer and thus he cried, "Who shall deliver me?" When Jesus awakens our spirit, He also gives us a new set of desires. We begin to long for intimate fellowship with God, a deeper knowledge and comprehension of His Word, and closer communion with others who are alive in Christ Jesus. We no longer desire to live after the flesh because we have come to realize that the end of such things is frustration and death. Living for the flesh always compelled us to reach out for something more, something just beyond our grasp, something that would finally bring a sense of lasting satisfaction. Yet the promised fulfillment always eluded us. As we live after the Spirit, however, we discover a peace the world can't understand. The endless struggle - the aching emptiness - is gone and we discover a wonderful sense of purpose and meaning. The flesh no longer has the allure it once did and the battle inside us is won.

Spiritual Mind Games; Whether we like it or not, whether we admit it or not, there is a kind of perverse law at work within us that whenever we would do good, evil is present within. Paul accurately describes the often bewildering conflict that is so much a part of our lives: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:15-17). Consider how we deal with one of the simplest, most direct commands in Scripture. Jesus said in John 13:34, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." John later tells us that if we say we love God and yet hate our brother, we are liars (1 John 4:20). If we can't love our neighbor whom we have seen, John wonders, how can we love God whom we have not seen? Enter our problem: Since the Bible so clearly forbids out-and-out hatred of a person, sometimes we try to soften the issue by saying, "Well, I don't hate him, I just hate the nasty things he does." But if we are honest, we must admit it is awfully hard to separate an individual from his actions. I, for one, have a difficult time making such a fine distinction. I find myself not only hating what a wicked man does, but him as well. If I hear that something unpleasant happened to him - like smashing up his new car in a traffic accident - I find myself inwardly rejoicing. I know the Bible says my attitude should be different, but it honestly isn't. Often times we end up playing mind games to convince ourselves that we are really obeying God and loving those who are unlovely. If we try hard enough, we can convince ourselves that we really do love and forgive. Yet the truth of our inward state becomes clear when that difficult person comes around, slaps us on the back, and with a loud voice announces to the entire room, "Gee, brother, I guess you didn't have time to use your deodorant this morning!" Our first reaction is to think, You idiot! Now everyone is turning around and staring at me. Why don't you just drop dead, creep! We really want to love this person, but our flesh won't allow us to! Like Paul, we find an ironic law at work within us. Whenever we want to do good, evil is present. We end up getting frustrated with ourselves, sick of our failures, and overwhelmed with discouragement. We feel a profound sense of spiritual defeat and along with Paul cry out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

No Cause to Boast; Only when we admit that we are incapable of delivering ourselves from the law of sin and death can the doors be opened for the glorious power of God to work within us and do for us what we are incapable of doing for ourselves. As the power of God transforms us from the inside out, all we can do is give thanks and glory to God. We are unable to say to others, "I used to be involved with sin. But one day, I determined that Jesus didn't like it, so I mustered up my willpower and discipline and decided I just wouldn't do those things anymore." There is no room for boasting about what fine, self-controlled people we are. As the Scriptures declare, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14). Have you ever run into people who seemed more spiritual than they actually were? A dead giveaway of this kind of insincerity comes when someone speaks of a spiritual struggle. If a person admits having a battle with the flesh, these "spiritual" people immediately put a self-righteous, holier-than-thou expression on their faces. Without saying a word, they communicate that fighting with the flesh is some terrible abnormality for a believer. "Why, if you just prayed more, and spent more time in the Word, and were spiritually minded (like us), you wouldn't have any problem with your flesh." While such attitudes of superspiritual perfectionism are very common, they don't line up with the clear teaching of Scripture. I don't believe we will ever experience a time, while we live here on earth, when we won't have a problem with these fleshly bodies. I know through long experience that my own flesh can be just as troublesome as it ever was. When God reveals to me an area of the flesh He wants to change, for example, I always start out with the best of intentions. I see the ugliness of my sin and vow that I will never fall in that manner again. And so I come up with various disciplines and strategies to deal with the problem. I seek out all kinds of advice on how to practically deal with the situation. But sooner or later I watch all my best-laid plans fall apart.

I get so frustrated that I cry out, "God, help me!" And then amazingly enough, He does. His Spirit miraculously begins to transform my life. As I overflow with gratitude, I see how God's way of transformation is so wonderfully simple and yet much better than my own misguided efforts. I find myself shaking my head and saying, "When will I ever understand this simple concept of grace?" How could I ever imagine that, somewhere down the line, I could do something worthwhile and prove to God that I'm not a total wretch? Yet I do imagine it. God never intended that the flesh rule over us, and He has provided the resources and the power for us to experience victory. But as long as we are committed to trying to work out our own struggles, even our best efforts get in the way. Any attempt at godliness that arises from our own strength is a work of the flesh and is just as detestable in God's sight as the thing we are trying not to do. When our victory comes from God's intervention alone, outside of our own resources, the end result is glory and praise unto God.

A Trap to Avoid; In those moments when we feel close to the Lord, it is tempting to say, "This is so beautiful, I am never going to live after the flesh again, for that is so pointless and empty!" Unfortunately, however, tomorrow comes and we forget all about our good intentions. As we drag ourselves to bed at the end of a long and frustrating day, it suddenly dawns on us that despite our best efforts, we wandered away, did our own thing, and were controlled by the flesh. Much to our surprise, our flesh grabbed the reins once more and we found ourselves doing what we promised we would never do again. It is at that moment that we often make our biggest mistake. We begin blaming and condemning ourselves and vow that we are going to try harder next time. Do you see the problem? As soon as we make such promises, we have decided to invest confidence in our flesh. We are saying that our own efforts will make us spiritually strong and we have stepped back into the realm of the flesh. Like Peter, we are saying, "I will never deny you!" Many of us grow intensely frustrated when it seems we are continually fighting the same battles over and over. Yet this shouldn't surprise us. All of us go through a predictable set of steps in which we first must come to the end of our rope and realize that in our own strength we can't live in a way that pleases God. We cry out to God in desperation, and He works His gracious deliverance. I would like to think that there is some way in which I might not have to hit bottom so regularly; but unfortunately, I have yet to discover it.

From the Inside Out; In His grace, God has made it possible for us to enjoy consistent victory. Still, this side of heaven, the battle never ends. Each day presents the choice we each must make. Will we live for the desires of the flesh, or will we yield our lives to the transforming power of the Spirit of God? How glorious it is to come to the end of our resources and to see God change our lives by His grace! Our only boast as believers is in the finished work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. If it were not for the cross, we would all be hopelessly lost forever. But because of God's great love for us, we who were formerly lost have been saved and baptized into Christ. We can now have such a wonderful relationship with God that it is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us. The life we now live, we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Because of God's grace, each of us are now a new creation in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away; everything has become new. When we become children of God, the spiritual side of us comes alive. We suddenly realize that there is more to life than obeying the instincts of the flesh. We come to understand that the inner hunger which our flesh could never satisfy can be fulfilled in a loving relationship with God. The more we come to know God, the more we experience His peace and joy and discover that the level of satisfaction we encounter in the Spirit is limitlessly beyond the narrow spectrum of the flesh.

How beautiful it is when we let go of our own futile efforts and allow the Spirit to work! For His Victory comes from the inside out, not the outside in. And that's the kind of victory that lasts.

("Why Grace Changes Everything"; Chuck Smith; Chapter 8: "The Struggle Begins")