

“My Besetting Sin Makes Me Doubt My Salvation”

I am almost 70 years old and undoubtedly nearing “the end of the road.” I came to faith in Jesus Christ over thirty years ago but have consistently been plagued by a “betting sin” that I seem not to be able to have consistent victory over. I fall, confess, repent, and have “victory” for awhile, and then fall again. This continual struggle has led me to sometimes doubt my salvation, and I am troubled that perhaps the Lord has grown weary of my shallow commitment and has given up on me. What can I do?? I have recently been diagnosed with prostate cancer and I am in terror of dying and finding myself in hell. Please help!

I am so glad you wrote! You are not alone. I think this secret fear plagues millions of Christ-followers. And I also think that the core of this fear is not knowing how huge is His love for us, and His deep understanding of our broken humanity (Ps. 103:14—“For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.”).

Our flesh, the part of us that operates independently from God and in our own strength, is hopelessly corrupted and unredeemable. But even though we can operate in the power of the Holy Spirit, in dependence on Christ, the same way that we can fly in an airplane that is dependent on the laws of aerodynamics to get and stay off the ground, eventually we return to our default position of fleshliness.

God knows this, and He understands it! And He loves us anyway. Consider the strong encouragement from Romans 8. The chapter opens with the astonishing statement that is a sure shame-killer: “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” NO condemnation! The Lord has not “grown weary of your shallow commitment,” brother. He understands your weakness and looks forward to the time when you are no longer fettered by the flesh that pulls you down like spiritual gravity.

But then consider the end of the chapter:

33 Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

The Lord Jesus died for you and, far from condemning you, intercedes for you this very day!

35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Nothing can separate us from Jesus’ love. Nothing has the power to keep Him from loving us, and nothing has the power to keep us from being loved!

36 Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY

LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.” 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

God has pronounced you a conquerer through Christ, and is working to transform you into who He says you are. Even on the days when it doesn't much feel like it. He is still at work!

38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. Nothing, nothing, nothing! Including our sin. Including our brokenness. Including our weak humanity.

And including besetting sins, which He allows us to struggle with so that we will turn to Him in dependence and trust. Recently I was blessed to attend a banquet for a ministry that helps people deal with unwanted same-sex attraction. The star of the evening was Jesus, who showed up in testimony after testimony of changed lives. Every person who spoke, uncoached except by the Holy Spirit, said in one way or another that they are now at the point where they can see that their struggle is a blessing because it forces them to depend on Christ with a desperation they never would have known otherwise. And that dependence on Christ has taken them to a place of intimacy with the Living Lord they didn't know was possible.

God is honored in our struggles, even when we slip and fall but continue to repent and get up again. It's all about teaching us to enter more deeply into relationship with Him, a relationship of love and friendship and affection and appreciation. I hope I have begun to reframe your struggle in a way that enables you to go to Him for help rather than hiding from the only One who has the power to help you stand against your flesh.

The Lord bless you and keep you today!

Sue Bohlin

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