

I am so disappointed in myself about my relationship with God!

Three personal interviews address this problem that every true believer must (or will) overcome one day in order to live fully with God!

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First interview

You want to be a true Christian, but you are disappointed because you are trying in vain to improve yourself in order to become one.

– I am so disappointed! There is no point in trying again. Every time I try, it doesn't work. Really, I have to give up!

What is it that really isn't working? What do you want to give up?

- I'm trying to become a Christian! I know I'm very bad and that God can't accept me as I am. That's why I try to live as well as I can. Sometimes it seems to work for a while. Then I think I'm doing pretty well. But then everything goes wrong and I sin again anyway. And then I feel just as bad and miserable as before! I think it's very difficult, yes, even impossible to become a Christian.

Seen in this light, you are absolutely right: it is really very difficult to become a Christian **in this way**. It is so difficult that you will never succeed, never!

That's also why there's another way to come to God. I'll gladly explain it to you. But first, I want to give you something to consider to encourage you.

Do you know **why** you are so troubled, why you feel so unhappy, and why you have this overwhelming desire to become a Christian? It is because the Spirit of God is working in your heart (*)! Without the Holy Spirit's influence, these thoughts would never come to mind.

(*) The heart is the deepest part of oneself, in secret, where only God sees, and not the threshold of human emotions and feelings.

Let this be an encouragement to you, mainly because “*He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 1:6). When God begins a work, he also completes it.

- *I am willing to believe you, but what should I do now?*

To this question, I give you the answer that the Lord Jesus gave to those who asked him the same question: “*What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*” (John 6:28). His answer was: “*This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*” (John 6:29). Their question was what they should do, and He answered that they should do nothing, but **believe!**

The same question was asked of the Philippian jailer: "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" Paul and Silas gave the same answer: "*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved*" (Acts 16:30-31).

That is also the answer I want to give to your question: let God save you, not in the way you imagine, but in **His way**! Get down on your knees right now — in fact, it is He who is seeking you in order to bring you to Him! — and simply tell Him that you need Him to save you, that you no longer want to try to save yourself by your own efforts, that you are aware that your nature is so evil that you renounce it entirely and surrender yourself to Him.

He understands this. He waits for you to understand it too. Help is available to you, a Saviour! Listen to what the Lord Jesus says: "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28).

You need God's beloved Son. Only He has the power to save you! That is why He came to earth. He went to the cross to take away your sins by bearing the punishment Himself.

He has accomplished this work; you no longer need to do anything. It is **finished!** God has accepted the work of Christ the Lord on the cross. He demonstrated this by raising the Jesus from the dead. Now forgiveness, reconciliation and peace with God are offered to you freely—on the basis of the cross of Jesus Christ alone. Will you accept this "gift" offered to you by the Saviour from His pierced hands?

This is what will bring you peace with God. Only in this way can you become a Christian. *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5:1). God offers you eternal life and His Holy Spirit, who gives you the strength to please Him. You will never find cause for disappointment in the Lord Jesus and His cross!

Second interview

You are now a true Christian, but you are disappointed because you are trying to be like the Lord Jesus, but you are not succeeding.

- You have explained it clearly to me, and I am convinced that you are right. I understand that I cannot save myself, that I cannot earn heaven through good works. That is why I believed in the Lord Jesus. I put my trust in Him and told Him that I wanted to rely on Him alone. He accepted me. I now know with certainty that I am a child of God by virtue of the work accomplished by the Lord Jesus.*

I am particularly happy about this! God has indeed completed the work He began in you. For this, you can truly thank Him every day! I do so myself. He gave His only Son to accomplish the work of reconciliation on the cross; Christ suffered for sin; and God worked conversion in us. Therefore, all glory belongs to Him alone!

- Yes, but I am still so often disappointed! I am now a Christian by the grace of God, but I would so much like to be more like Christ. And I notice that the more I try, the less I resemble Him.*

I try to overcome my mistakes and not to sin anymore, but as soon as I think I have succeeded to some extent, everything goes completely wrong. Sometimes things turn out so badly that I wonder if I am really a true Christian. I begin to doubt — at least according to my understanding — because I discover that I am still just as bad as ever. I have not improved at all!

Why can't I be like the Lord Jesus, so noble and so good? I am sure it is not for lack of effort, because I am really doing everything I can!

So you are still, or once again, disappointed, but in a different way! Let's examine together whether we can discover the reason for this, and then, of course, see if there is a solution. My first question is this: What is it that disappoints you so much?

- *About myself, because I am not succeeding in becoming more like the Lord Jesus. Of course, it is not He who is the cause, but me!*

With that answer, I think you're looking at things the wrong way round; it's as if you were trying to hammer a nail in by hitting the tip! — and that's a very important point. In no way can we ever be disappointed in the Lord Jesus, because He is perfect, but we can be disappointed in ourselves.

First, I advise you to read chapter 7 of the Epistle to the Romans (*) very carefully. In this chapter, Paul puts himself in the shoes of someone who is struggling with the same problem as you. This devoted servant of Christ, who followed his Master so closely, writes about his own “self”: *“I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing”* (Romans 7:18).

(*) *“1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. 8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. 9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. **13** Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. **14** For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. **15** For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. **16** If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. **17** Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. **18** For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. **19** For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. **20** Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. **21** I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. **22** For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: **23** 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. **24** O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? **25** I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7).

What do you think: was his "self" (that is, his flesh) worse than your own "self"?

No, certainly not. Paul was much better than me.

Well, no, not at all! He said that there was "no good" in him! "No good" means absolutely **nothing good**, not even a tiny bit of good. But was he disappointed not to find any good in himself? He wasn't (or wasn't anymore), because he **no longer expected** to find

anything good in himself. But it seems that you do expect it — that's why you're disappointed.

If you touch a nettle, are you surprised that it stings? You don't expect anything else, do you? If you cut it and throw it on the ground to render it harmless, does it still sting? The hairs that cause the burning sensation are part of its nature. So too is the nature of our "self" to be vain, selfish, greedy, and stubborn. We inherited this nature from Adam and Eve. They received it when they sinned against God by doing their own will. That happened six thousand years ago, but we all inherit this sinful nature. The Scriptures call it "the flesh."

“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). And: *“The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth”* (Genesis 8:21). A sad observation, isn't it? But then, what is the point of looking for something good in ourselves? And also: why should we be disappointed if nothing but evil comes out of us?

- *Yes, but not everyone is like that! There are Christians who are very generous, very humble, full of love, and I would like to be like that too. Above all, I would like to be like the Lord Jesus, because He has done so much for me and I love Him!*

I think your way of thinking is wrong. In God's eyes, the flesh can never be humble, full of gentleness and love! God says so, and do you believe it? "*There is none righteous, no, not even one... there is none who does good, no, not one*" (Romans 3:10 & 12). The flesh can only produce evil. "*The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*" (Romans 8:7).

I know that even many non-believers lead exemplary lives from a human point of view. In this respect, we can tip our hats to them. Many Christians could follow their example. But the question is: how does God Himself see this? If, for example, an unbeliever shows compassion towards the poor and is generous, why does he do so? Is it out of obedience to God, or is it because it is his own will? It is obviously his own will. As good as this may be in the eyes of men, in the eyes of God it is the person's own will. The Bible says, "*Those who are in the flesh cannot please God*" (Romans 8:8). This is how God views things — and we must accept it.

In exactly the same way, the "self" ("my ego") the flesh of unbelievers, cannot produce anything that pleases God, nor can the "old self" (*) of the believer, because it is fundamentally the same flesh!

- (*) That is, the "self" before the new birth. For as soon as someone is born again, the Bible says of him, "*Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*" (Galatians 2:20).

The flesh is simply totally depraved and powerless to do anything good in God's eyes. Are you willing to accept and believe this because God says so in the Bible?

- *This does indeed go very far, but I can do nothing else but acknowledge that this is so. The thought that we should view the "good works" of unbelievers in this way had never occurred to me before, but it is the truth.*

However, I am a Christian now. Isn't it true that I must still follow the Lord Jesus? Hasn't He called me to do so? And I want to do it willingly, but I can't!

I understand you perfectly, you know! In the past, I too was terribly disappointed in myself. But as soon as I understood what God says about me, I accepted it. Now I no longer expect anything good from myself. I hope that you too will learn this lesson. Until you do, you will probably not be able to understand how to be humble, how to manifest the same disposition as the Lord Jesus.

God wants nothing to do with our own "self" (our "ego"), with our flesh, precisely because it is incorrigibly evil. He can do nothing with it. That is why He condemned it and put it to death on the cross of Christ. He banished it once and for all. "*Knowing this, that our old man (*) is crucified with him*" (Romans 6:6). This applies to everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus.

(*) "The old man" is the personality possessed by the natural man, whose power is the flesh. This is in contrast to the "new man", who is the personality of the born-again man, whose power is the Holy Spirit.

- *As you explain it, it is clear to me. Of course, I desire to accept what the Bible says. I also experience that, in reality, it is true that I cannot live by myself without sin and pleasing God. I simply cannot do it by my own strength.*

However, I am still stuck on this question: How can I live as God wants me to? How can I show love, humility and gentleness, which is only normal for someone who wants to follow the Lord Jesus?

The answer is not very difficult: you cannot do it on your own, but well through the Lord Jesus!

I refer you to Galatians 2:20. It says: "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*". If you apply the first part to yourself, namely that you are crucified with Christ, then what follows also applies to you, namely that Christ lives in you.

Is this not a powerful encouragement? Not 'me', but Christ! You therefore have a new life, Christ, and it is no longer the works

produced by yourself, the works of your flesh, that must be seen, but it is the Lord Jesus who becomes visible in you. His love, his humility, his gentleness, his faithfulness, his patience, his goodness, everything he showed in his life on earth, all of this is then seen in us. *“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that **the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body**”* (2 Corinthians 4:10). This is how we will become like him.

At our conversion, we got rid of our old self — which means we got rid of ourselves, our "old man." And we put on the new man — which means we put on Christ! (*) We walk in "*newness of life*" (Romans 6:4).

(*) *“That **ye put off** concerning the former conversation **the old man**, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that **ye put on the new man**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Ephesians 4:22-24).

*“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have **put off the old man** with his deeds; And have **put on the new man**, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him”* (Colossians 3:8-10).

When God leads someone to repentance (*), those who believe in the Lord Jesus, having received eternal life, begin a new life. It is not a "restart" but a "new beginning". God does not try to improve our "self", because the flesh is incorrigibly evil. He begins something entirely new. *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

(*) Repentance consists of applying to ourselves, our own "self" ("ego"), the same judgement that God applies. It is expressed through confession. It is the sine qua non result of the new birth!

- *Yes, but how does it work? I simply notice that it doesn't work for me. That's why I'm still so disappointed!*

I understand that it seems difficult to you, but that is because you are trying to do it with your own strength. It does not work that way.

Do you know what the solution is? It's very simple: stop trying to be like the Lord Jesus, and focus on Him instead!

This is clear from this passage: *"But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image"* (2 Corinthians 3:18). So, if you fix your eyes on the Lord Jesus, the effect of becoming like Him will happen by itself.

In Exodus 34 (*), Moses stayed with the Lord on the mountain for forty days and forty nights. When he came down and returned to the people, his skin was radiant (verses 28-35). He had begun to resemble the Lord because he had been with Him. Moses did not have to make any effort to achieve this; he did not even know that his face was shining. This reflection was simply the result of having been with the Lord and seeing His glory.

(*) *"1 And Jehovah said to Moses, Hew for thyself two tables of stone like the first; and I will write upon the tables the words*

that were upon the first tables, which thou hast broken. **2** And be ready for the morning, and go up in the morning to mount Sinai, and stand there before me on the top of the mountain. **3** And let no man go up with thee, neither shall any man be seen on all the mountain; neither shall sheep and oxen feed in front of that mountain. **4** And he hewed two tables of stone like the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to mount Sinai, as Jehovah had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. **5** And Jehovah came down in the cloud, and stood beside him there, and proclaimed the name of Jehovah. **6** And Jehovah passed by before his face, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah GOD merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth, **7** keeping mercy unto thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but by no means clearing the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. **8** And Moses made haste, and bowed his head to the earth and worshipped, **9** and said, If indeed I have found grace in thine eyes, Lord, let the Lord, I pray thee, go in our midst; for it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for an inheritance! ...

... **28** -- And he was there with Jehovah forty days and forty nights; he ate no bread, and drank no water. -- And he wrote on the tables the words of the covenant, the ten words. **29** And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai -- and the two tables of testimony were in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mountain -- that Moses knew not that the skin of his face shone through his talking with him. **30** And Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come near him. **31** And Moses called to them; and they turned to him, -- Aaron and all the principal men of the assembly; and Moses talked with them. **32** And afterwards, all the children of Israel came near; and he gave them in commandment all that Jehovah had spoken with him on mount Sinai. **33** And Moses ended speaking with

them; and he had put on his face a veil. 34 And when Moses went in before Jehovah to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and he came out, and spoke to the children of Israel what he was commanded. 35 And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone; and Moses put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.”
(Exodus 34).

This is God's way of acting; this is how you can become like the Lord Jesus. If you struggle and make an effort, you are preoccupied with yourself—and that does not lead to any blessed results. On the other hand, if you truly direct your thoughts to Him and are filled with Him, then change happens automatically, as if by itself.

How can we run the race and achieve a good result? *“Let us also therefore ... run with endurance the race that lies before us, looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith”* (Hebrews 12:1-2). If you look back, left and right, or if you look at yourself, you will stumble. Do not think about yourself, but fix your eyes on your Saviour! Why did Stephen's face shine like that of an angel? (*) Because he *“looked up stedfastly into heaven”* and he *«"»saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God”* (Acts 7:55).

(*) *“Looking fixedly on him [= Stephen], saw his face as the face of an angel”* (Acts 6:15).

Let me also tell you that you have a powerful Helper for this: the Holy Spirit. He wants to give you the strength you need. He is not only with you, but He dwells in you! *“Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own?”* (1 Corinthians 6:19).

The Lord Jesus promised His disciples that after His ascension, He would send them the Holy Spirit to help them in all things (1*). This promise was fulfilled in Acts 2 (2*). This is how He “*clothed with power from on high*” (Luke 24:49).

(1*) *“I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him nor know him; but ye know him, for he abides with you, and shall be in you”* (John 14:16-17).

(2*) *“1 And when the day of Pentecost was now accomplishing, they were all together in one place. 2 And there came suddenly a sound out of heaven as of a violent impetuous blowing, and filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them parted tongues, as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with [the] Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth ...”* (Acts 2).

The Holy Spirit now dwells on earth. As soon as someone believes in the Lord Jesus and accepts the gospel of salvation, he is personally “*sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*” (Ephesians 1:13). The Spirit of God dwells in him, sustains him in all things, and will never leave him. So this applies to you too!

The Holy Spirit always fixes our attention on the Lord Jesus and creates in us the desire to be like Him. This desire you have is produced by the Holy Spirit — it proves that you are His property. He wants us to see the Lord Jesus in every page of God's Word and to make Him precious to us. (*)

(*) *“When the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father, he shall bear witness concerning me” (John 15:26).*

“When he is come, the Spirit of truth, ... He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you” (John 16:13-14).

Focus on the Lord Jesus. Do not think about yourself at all. Do not examine yourself to see if you are making enough progress in becoming like the Lord Jesus. Leave that in His hands.

You will learn all this as you go along. Do not lose heart. God loves you. You know that a small child does not walk as soon as it is born; we all had to learn.

Be patient. Stay close to the Lord Jesus. Read the Bible a lot; that is how you will see Him. Expect nothing from yourself, but be filled with the Lord Jesus. That is what will give you strength.

Third interview

You are a true Christian, but you are disappointed because you realise that you keep falling back into old habits.

- *I would like to thank you for everything you have explained to me. I realise that it is all true. I now truly understand and accept that my old nature is completely evil and utterly depraved. So I am no longer surprised that it cannot really **'produce anything good'**.*

I have also learned that my old nature, the flesh, has been judged and put to death by God on the cross of the Lord Jesus. I no longer try to improve myself and become like the Lord Jesus by my own strength. I know that I simply need to focus on Him and be filled with Him. Only then will I resemble Him, and He will become visible in me.

But what worries me is that my flesh is always ready to spring into action. It seems to me that I have no more power over it than when I was first converted.

I think I understand what you mean, because this is nothing new. Countless children of God have struggled with this. I believe your mistake is that you are trying to **control** your old sinful nature. This is something you are not capable of doing! No one can do that!

Not only can we not improve our old nature, but — and this goes much further — we cannot control it or restrain it either.

God pronounced His condemnation on the flesh, and He also executed that judgement when the Lord Jesus hung on the cross; and on this point, you have the privilege of simply saying, “Amen”. Christ, and He alone, put an end to the flesh by crucifying it. And now, the strength to overcome the flesh is found entirely and solely in Him.

Who is the One who says, “*I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness*” (Isaiah 41:10)? It is the Lord Jesus!

Do not be afraid, but trust Him. He comforts us: “*My grace suffices thee*” (2 Corinthians 12:9). And Paul, whom we have just heard say, “*I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell*” (Romans 7:18), exclaims with joy, “*I have strength for all things in him that gives me power*” (Philippians 4:13).

This is the only way to obtain victory: “*Jehovah will fight for you, and ye shall be still*” (Exodus 14:14). Hold His victorious hand and see what He will do for you!

We are so precious to the Lord Jesus — in fact, He paid an extremely high price to have us! — that He Himself watches over us. For us, the Saviour endured the fire of God's judgement on sin. He laid down His life in death for us. He purchased us for Himself with His blood. Will He not then fight for us?

- I can understand what you have just explained to me in this way. But how can I experience in practice the fact that the Lord Jesus fights for me? Do I really have to do nothing? Isn't that a little too easy?

I understand what you mean; of course, it doesn't come naturally. That's why, in a sense, you have to do something. But the solution to your problem is, in principle, that you can't do **anything** on your own!

This may seem a little contradictory, but I will try to explain what I mean. Fortunately, you do not have the duty to restrain and control your old nature, but you have the privilege of being able to completely abandon the fight against this flesh! That is where the solution to your problem lies.

Suppose you feel tempted to get angry. Do not try to calm yourself down. It is pointless; you do not have the strength. If you feel greed rising up inside you, do not try (again) to improve yourself by fighting this feeling. If you notice that jealousy or some other evil desire is growing within you, do not start fighting against yourself:

you will lose that battle! Nowhere does the Bible call us to fight against the sinful nature within us.

- *But what should I do?*

Turn directly to the Lord Jesus. Cry out to Him wherever you are. When you think of Him and call upon Him, the enemy must yield. In this situation, the enemy is your old nature. This is because Christ is stronger than it! Surely you do not doubt that?

The moment you turn away from yourself, from your "ego", from your flesh, from your old depraved nature, and turn your eyes to the Lord Jesus, trusting in Him, victory is assured! Then it is not only your victory, but Christ's victory — this is how you participate.

All His love, all His grace and all His strength are at your disposal. You have nothing in yourself, but the secret of the strength to overcome is to ***remain in communion with Him!*** If our communion with Him is interrupted even for a moment, it means the immediate loss of strength — and then defeat is assured.

Do you still remember those old steam and diesel trains, those old locomotives with passenger and freight carriages attached to them? Why did those carriages move? Because they were pulled by the locomotive. A railway carriage had no engine and therefore could not propel itself. It was simply impossible to see a carriage moving without being attached to the locomotive. It is just as impossible

for you to expect victory over your own flesh when your communion with the Lord Jesus is broken.

- *When you put it that way, it becomes clear to me. So I cannot do anything myself, because I cannot have victory over my flesh. But what I must do, you tell me, is this: just look to the Lord Jesus and "cling" to Him. That's right, isn't it?*

Indeed, it is not up to us to fight against our flesh and overcome it. Fortunately, and we can thank God for that! We would be losers day after day. But we can be victorious because we are united with the Victor. But to do so, we must live with Him and cling to Him.

It is also unfortunately true that our old nature always tries to rear its head. As long as we are on earth, we carry our old nature within us — and it will never improve. As soon as the Lord Jesus comes to take us home and we are with Him, we will then be **perfect**, in the fullest sense of the word. It is then that we will finally be rid of our flesh.

So do not expect, while on earth, to have already "reached a level" where your flesh will never be active again. If you expect that, you will be disappointed again. There is something wrong with your expectation.

And when you notice that your flesh is beginning to stir, turn to the Lord Jesus. Call upon Him and pray to Him. Call Him by His name.

Sing aloud or softly within yourself a hymn to His glory. Open your Bible and read a passage from it, or quote aloud or in your mind a text from the Bible. Think of Him and what He accomplished at Calvary in His great love for you. As soon as you start paying attention to your old nature, quote a Bible verse aloud or in your mind. Think of Him and His great love for you, demonstrated at Calvary. As soon as you start paying attention to your old nature, even if it is to fight it, you have already given in to it. But when your gaze is fixed on the Lord Jesus and you are filled with Him, then victory is yours.

He Himself said, “*without me ye can do nothing*” (John 15:5). It is only in a living connection with Him that we find the strength to bear fruit for God.

That is why, as was the case for the people of Israel in the wilderness, it is just as necessary for us to eat the manna every day. The Lord Jesus declares to us: “*I am the bread of life*” (John 6:48). He then makes this clearer to his listeners by distinguishing between two things.

1. “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves*” (John 6:53). In short: conversion. Whoever believes that the Lord Jesus died for him or her receives eternal life.
2. “*He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him*” (John 6:56). In summary: life after conversion. He who

feeds on the Lord Jesus as the One who went to the cross for him remains in a living relationship with Him.

He calls us to feed on Him every day, so that we may be busy with Him, as the Crucified One. This is why, Paul did not “*judge it well to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

When we feed on the Lord Jesus, who went to the cross for us, the thought penetrates more deeply into us that at Golgotha, He not only bore our sins, but He endured the judgement passed on our sinful nature. There God judged the flesh. Thus, as far as we are concerned, in His eyes it is a reality that, from the moment of our conversion, our old nature is crucified. As long as our thoughts are directed towards the Lord Jesus, Who died on the cross, we also realise this in our daily lives. “*They that are of the Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts*” (Galatians 5:24).

This is the only way that practical righteousness can characterise our lives and enable us to bear fruit for God. Remember every day that the Redeemer also went to the cross for you and suffered unspeakably there — and thank Him for it. It is in our connection with Christ that we find the strength to overcome.

- *I understand. It's actually very simple. And you already mentioned that the Holy Spirit dwells in me. He always wants to focus my attention on the Lord Jesus.*

But if I stumble anyway, if I don't put into practice what you've just explained to me, if my flesh still takes action and I sin, what should I do then?

Above all, remember that nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from the love of Christ, not even a fall into sin. Even if I commit the most heinous sin, He remains steadfastly faithful in His love for me and will never abandon me, and neither will God the Father. Trust in that love, enjoy it, and live in it. Try to respond to it with all your heart. He has done so much for us! Our love for Him compels us to obey Him with joy.

I would like to say to you: do not worry about this fault — because the Lord Jesus has already borne the punishment for this sin — but confess your sin to God immediately. Realise that it is a sin you have committed against Him; that is why repentance is necessary. You have saddened God and dishonoured Him. But, once again, never forget that the Lord Jesus already died for this sin.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God is faithful to Himself; if He has promised to forgive your sins if you confess them, He will do so. Is it not true that He cannot deny Himself? He is also just in forgiving your sins, because Christ has fully atoned for them. God cannot and will not leave a sin on you when His own Son has taken it away by offering Himself?

- It seems as if it's not such a big deal if I stumble!

I think you yourself have already understood that it is really serious when we sin, because for every sin, the Lord Jesus had to suffer on the cross at Golgotha! We never think about that enough.

He went to the cross for you and me!

However, anyone who accepts the Gospel and believes in Jesus Christ receives forgiveness for their sins (*). This means that when a person converts to God, they receive forgiveness at that very moment for all the sins they have committed, as well as for all the sins they will unfortunately commit after their conversion. They are entitled to this forgiveness. Therefore, it will never be taken away from them. For this, you can thank God the Father every day.

(*) *“Giving thanks to the Father ... who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love: in whom we have redemption, **the forgiveness of sins**” (Colossians 1:12-14).*

Therefore, if a child of God stumbles during his life, it is not that he needs to ask for forgiveness, but he must confess that sin so that his relationship with his Father and his Saviour can be restored. Indeed, this relationship has been disrupted, because every sin in our lives comes between us and the Father, as well as our Lord Jesus, and is an obstacle to communion. That is why we need to confess this sin. But we do so with the awareness that the Lord Jesus died for us and that we already have forgiveness for our sins.

You see, forgiven sins both humble us and give us courage. They humble us because they make us realise once again what we are on our own. And they encourage us because they cause us to turn our eyes to the Lord Jesus, who died for us on Golgotha. Enjoy the love of the Father and the Lord Jesus, and hide nothing from Him!

- *Thank you for explaining all this to me! I understand much better now.*

I did so willingly. I have asked myself the same questions in the past. I want it to be the same for you as it is for me, that we may be *“more than conquer through him that has loved us”* (Romans 8:37). We can be, but it requires constant vigilance. We still have flesh within us, and the enemy is always on the prowl. He tries to turn our eyes away from the Lord Jesus, and in this way rob us of the secret of our strength.

It is not without reason that the Lord Jesus gave this urgent advice: *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation”* (Mark 14:38).

Feed on the Word of God every day, for it tells us: *“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God”* (Ephesians 4:30); for we are dependent on Him. Without ceasing, He tries to fix our attention on Christ! Only if we live with Him can we bear fruit for God and rejoice in Him. If you are happy in God, the fruits of the Spirit will be abundant: *“love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control”* (Galatians 5:22-23).