

THE SINFUL NATURE -- THE HIDDEN ENEMY

1. This person is not a Christian. His heart is full of sin, and he is self-centered. He does whatever he wants to do. He is interested in pleasing himself and having a good time. God loves him, and wants to transform his life, and make him truly a child of God. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to convict him of his sins. The Holy Spirit works in his life until he repents and desires to be rid of his sins (**2 Timothy 3.16 and John 16.7-8** N.I.V).
2. The Holy Spirit has been working in this person's life. He wants to be free from sin and the habits that are ruining his life and his family. He prays and confesses his sins to God. "If we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise. ...He will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing" **1 John 1.9**. He realizes that he cannot save himself and cannot change his own life. Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins so that we may be forgiven. Salvation is a gift from God (**Ephesians 2.8**). It is because Jesus died on the cross that we can be forgiven (**Ephesians 1.6-7**). We must believe that Jesus died to take away our sin and to make us clean on the inside. "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin" **1 John 1.7**. When people confess their sins to God, he forgives their sins and cleanses their hearts. They become like new people with a new way of living. They do not want to do the things they used to do. Now they want to please God in all that they do. The Holy Spirit lives within them, teaches them, and strengthens them in their Christian life (**Romans 8.16 and 2 Corinthians 5.17**).
3. Here we see a person with a problem in his Christian life. The Holy Spirit is present in his life and wants to lead him in following God's way. But the old self-centered way of thinking is there as well. We call this the sinful nature. The sinful nature is still trying to get control of his life and so there is great conflict going on. The Holy Spirit and sinful nature (or self-centeredness) are fighting against each other. "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want" **Galatians 5.17** (NIV).
4. **1 Corinthians 3.1-3**. We want to live a holy life and do what is pleasing to God. However, the sinful nature keeps pulling us away from what the Holy Spirit wants and we end up doing things which we do not like. (1) Some people get angry quickly, shouting at people and quarreling. (2) Some people are jealous of others and desire to get the things or positions that other people have. (3) Some have no real joy in giving their money or time to God or serving him. (4) Other people have a problem with pride and want other people to notice them or praise them. (5) Some people do not say any thing bad about other people but they are angry in their hearts at other people. If these things exist in our lives we cannot grow and become strong Christians.
5. How do we get rid of the sinful nature? "Do not give into bodily passions, which are always at war against the soul" **1 Peter 2.11 b**. " Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires" **Galatians 5.24** (NIV). "Get rid of all bitterness passion and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort" **Ephesians 4.31**. "Be holy in all you do, just as God who has called you is holy" **1 Peter 1.16**. We need to be completely rid of the sinful nature.
The man in this picture is very ashamed of the sins in his life, such as jealousy, anger, and being afraid to stand up for Jesus. He has neglected Bible study and prayer and has an unforgiving spirit.
We must confess all of our sins, and be really sorry for the way we have lived. We must ask God to clean our hearts and fill us with his Holy Spirit. We must believe God can do this and we must be obedient to his words in the Bible.
6. **Matthew 5.6**. We must desire with all of our heart to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God wants to fill us, but he is waiting for us to ask. **Luke 11.13** says, "How much more, then, will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"
7. **Acts 5.32** says, "...the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to those who obey him." We must allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives and we must obey God's Word. We can no longer be self-centered and think only of pleasing ourselves. Christ and his desires for us must have first place (**John 14.21**). When we are completely yielded to Christ in every area of our lives, the Holy Spirit fills us. The sinful nature and all its desires have no place in us. What about your life? Who controls your life and actions; the sinful nature or the Holy Spirit?

