**That Last Splinter**

**Splinters**

The first summer we were here, the summer of 2012, I began working in my yard. The front area between the driveway and the sidewalk had decorative bark that had been there for a while. I’m sure at one time it was beautiful; but, it had started to mold and clump together. So, I pulled it out and replaced it with new bark – the pretty red stuff.

The first time I spread it I didn’t use gloves. I don’t like working with gloves on because it makes me feel clumsy as I work. So, I worked for a couple of hours spreading this bark with bare hands. When I was finished, I went to wash my hands, they were a bit red from the bark and I noticed I had dozens of tiny splinters all through my hands.

It was not terribly painful, but it felt like many little needle pokes in the nerve ending rich skin of my hands. It didn’t help that my hands are not really that tough – a steering wheel, a computer and a pen don’t make too many calluses.

So I started working the splinters out – you know the routine, rubbing alcohol and a small needle. I got most of them out and was pretty pleased with myself, figuring the rest of them would just work their way out over time.

Most did, but there was this one stubborn splinter on the inside of my thumb that seem to work its way deeper. Pretty soon a little cyst formed around it and it started getting painful. It looked red and angry and it tickled the nerve endings in rather uncomfortable ways. Then it started getting infected.

Now, you may wonder why I didn’t just get out the rubbing alcohol and small needle to take care of it. I didn’t feel like I had time. And when I did have some time, I didn’t want to mess with it – so it went on for a while until I finally had to take it to my doctor. He got out the rubbing alcohol and a little scalpel! With nothing to deaden the pain, he started digging for the splinter.

When he finished, he bandaged it up – and do you know what happened then? No, I didn’t faint – but my finger started getting better. Before too many days it was healed up and as good as new.

Do you know the infection from one unattended splinter can actually be debilitating or fatal? We don’t often let it get that far, but one little splinter, left to its own devices, can cause discomfort, pain, and could bring about a life-threatening infection.

Some splinters are worse than others. The boy’s dorm at Campion Academy is on the upper floors above the cafeteria. Coming down from the boy’s dorm lobby is a beautiful wooden banister. It was finished in natural wood, very shiny and slick.
Many of the guys would just jump on it and slide down to the landing and then again down to the bottom.

The first year we were there a senior village student was visiting friends in the dorm. When study hall was over he jumped on the bannister and about three-fourths of the way down he picked up a splinter that actually stopped him right there on the bannister.

They had to saw off a chunk of that beautiful wood and take it and him to the ER where it was surgically removed. Some splinters demand immediate attention!

Now, I’m not telling you this to scare you into never sliding down a bannister or into getting all your splinters taken care of promptly. Y’all are smarter than me and wouldn’t let it go on nearly as far as I did. But we are often more careless with our spiritual lives.

**Sin – Is it Really that Serious?**

We may think something is only a little sin – not really that important. We lull ourselves into thinking everything is okay because we “sin” less that many other people do – so God must be pleased with us.

Surely He will overlook something as insignificant as that! God made an interesting reference to splinters in the book of Numbers:

“But if you fail to drive out the people who live in the land, those who remain will be like splinters in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will harass you in the land where you live. And I will do to you what I had planned to do to them.” (Numbers 33:55-56, NLT)

Ouch! Thankfully I have never had a splinter in my eye – but I can imagine how that would feel. What God is telling us is this: A failure to follow His instructions (His laws) will have serious consequences. It will destroy our peace and can lead to our destruction.

God wasn’t threatening them as much as He was warning them. If they didn’t get rid of the temptations associated with the people living there, in the end they would become just like them, suffering the same consequences.

James, the brother of Jesus said:

> For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God’s laws. (James 2:10, NLT)

And Jesus, in talking about the commandments said this:

> “I did not come to abolish the Law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. So if you ignore the least
commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven ...” (Matthew 5:17-19, NLT)

According to Jesus even the smallest detail of God’s law is important? And then Jesus makes this startling statement:

“But I warn you – unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!” (Matthew 5:20, NLT)

Unlike today, the Pharisees of Jesus time were held in high regard. It was an honor to be a part of this group. They were considered the most righteous people in the community. This statement said to the people of Jesus’ day that if the Pharisees’ righteousness was inadequate, what chance did they have?

Jesus then went on to explain that sin was more of an attitude than an action. He said hating someone is as bad as murdering them and our lustful thoughts are sin just as much as sexual relationships outside of marriage.

He concluded by saying sin is so destructive that it is better to physically lose an eye or even your strongest hand than to experience the ultimate consequences of sin! (Matthew 5:21-48, NLT) Those are strong words.

What is Sin, Really?

So what really is sin? The disciple John, who referred to himself as the one Jesus loved, penned these words:

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. (1 John 3:4, NIV)

So sin is living outside of the law, basing our principles of life on things outside of God’s principles. Jesus summed up the law in two principles based on one word – love. What asked about the greatest commandment He said:

“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40, NLT)

He said that the law equals love! And John said this:

God is Love. (1 John 4:8 & 16, NIV)
He actually said it twice – for emphasis! Now, there is a useful mathematical principle – and you thought you would never use this stuff again! It’s called the Transitive Property of Equality. Do you remember that one? If you ever took Geometry, you studied about it.

\[ \text{If } a = b \text{ and } b = c, \text{ then } a = c \]

You remember it now? Of course you do, I just told it too you! Now, to apply it. The Bible tells us that:

\[ \text{God} = \text{Love and Love} = \text{the Law, then God} = \text{the Law} \]

This means the law is really an expression of God. It is an expression of the foundational principles that determine His actions and reflect His character.

Looking at 1 John 3:4 again, where it says that sin is lawlessness – based on the Transitive Property of Equality we can accurately say sin is Godlessness. It is living our lives in part or entirely without God.

And based on what we have already seen in scripture, if there is any part of our lives we are living away from God that makes us a sinner. In reality there is no such thing as a little sin, because any part of our life we are holding back from God can cause our destruction.

We will eventually have to either say “yes Lord, You can have this part too” or we will say “no, I will not follow you in this – I know better than You in this case”.

Saying no to God is the same as rejecting Him. And, if we say no long enough, we will come to the place where we no longer even recognize his voice and will have turned our back on Him – and this has eternal consequences far greater that any physical splinter could ever have.

**Why is Sin so Disruptive?**

Why is this so important? How many of you own a car? I can see that most of us have experienced the joys and I would guess the pain of dealing with a car.

How many of your cars use gas as opposed to diesel? Recognizing that diesel engines generally get significantly better mileage than their gasoline counterparts, let’s say you decided to use diesel instead of gas – would you improve your mileage? Of course not, your gas engine is not made to run on diesel – it would not actually run at all?

When you have a car and follow the instructions for caring for it according to the owner’s manual, the car will generally run better for longer – not because you are being punished for disobeying the manual, but because that’s the way things work best.

The Bible is a sort of owner’s manual for life on this planet. Following it is the way we operate best – it’s the way we were designed to function. Choosing to not follow it – which is the same as saying we know better than God how our lives should function – will lead to things not working the way they are
supposed to (like putting diesel into a gas engine) and will cause frustration, pain, broken relationships – splinters in our life – and ultimately if not remedied, complete separation from God.

Psalms 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, and a passage that reminds us why we should love God’s law, says this:

Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.
(Psalms 119:165, NIV)

The only way to find peace in our lives, is to live the way we were designed to live – according to God’s instructions and laws. They are not a fence to limit our freedom but a barrier to keep us away from trouble! Perhaps you have seen this picture that circulated on Facebook a while back – it illustrates this verse:

Whoever keeps commandments keeps their life, but whoever shows contempt for their ways will die. (Proverbs 19:16, NIV)

The reason there is so much misery and pain in this world and in our lives is that we have tried to live outside of God’s laws and instructions and it affects our lives like splinters in our hands, our eyes, and other places. I ran across this in my Daily Walk Bible a while back.

A little sin will add to your trouble, subtract from your energy, and multiply your difficulties.
(The Daily Walk Bible, NLT, Comments, February 18)

Not because God is vindictive and wants to punish us, it is simply the consequence of living in a way other than the way we were designed – like putting diesel in a gas engine or getting destructive splinters.

What is the Solution to Sin?

The natural reaction to understanding this is: “I’d better get to work on this. I need to know God’s instructions so I can live by them!” Well, yes and no.

Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil. (Jeremiah 13:23, NIV)
This creates a monumental problem – even when we know what we should do and what we should avoid, we still don’t do what we should and we do what we should avoid. Sin has that strong a hold on us. We are not able to produce what is required – we are unable to remove these splinters on our own! Thank God for grace!

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23, NLT)

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (John 3:14-17, NKJV)

God knows our weakness. God knows we don’t have a chance without Him. The default setting for us as humans is destruction. But He offers us the gift of choice. We can change our destiny by believing in Him. He does not want us to perish, so Jesus came and died to give us another option. And as we enter into this relationship with Him, He will remake our lives.

“This is the covenant I will make with Israel ...” announces the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds. I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God. And they will be my people ... I will forgive their evil ways. I will not remember their sins anymore.” (Jeremiah 31:33-34, NIRV)

He will put His laws into our minds – helping us to understand and embrace them. He will write His laws on our hearts – giving us the desire and the strength to live by them. One of my favorite authors sums it up this way.

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us. (The Desire of Ages, page 668)

It always comes back to this. Our success in living according to God’s plan is dependent on our connection with Jesus. The more time we spend with Him, the more we will grow to love Him. And the more we love Him, the more we will want to honor and please Him. He will put His life into us so we will come to the place were obeying Him will become our natural reaction.

“When we know Christ as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience.” (The Desire of Ages, page 668)
This the key. This is where we need to focus our attention. This is where we need to spend our time! This is the only thing that will enable us to live the way He designed us to live. My challenge today is that you spend some time every day with Jesus – reading His word, getting to know Him, and communicating with Him through prayer. As you do this, He will remove every last splinter in our life while protecting us from getting more! Embrace life as it was meant to be lived – embrace Jesus!
Scripture References

**Numbers 33:55-56 (NLT):** “But if you fail to drive out the people who live in the land, those who remain will be like splinters in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will harass you in the land where you live. And I will do to you what I had planned to do to them.” ([Numbers 33:55-56](https://www.bible.com/bible/111/num.33.55-56.nlt), NLT)

**Psalm 51:10-12 (NIV):** Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. ([Psalm 51:10-12](https://www.bible.com/bible/111/psa.51.10-12.niv), NIV)

**Psalm 119:9-11 (NLT):** How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word. I have tried hard to find you – don’t let me wander from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. ([Psalm 119:9-11](https://www.bible.com/bible/111/psa.119.9-11.nlt), NLT)

**Psalm 119:103-105 (NLT):** How sweet your words taste to me; they are sweeter than honey. Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life. Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. ([Psalm 119:103-105](https://www.bible.com/bible/111/psa.119.103-105.nlt), NLT)

**Psalm 119:165 (NIV):** Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble. ([Psalm 119:165](https://www.bible.com/bible/111/psa.119.165.niv), NIV)

**Jeremiah 13:23 (NIV):** Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil. ([Jeremiah 13:23](https://www.bible.com/bible/111/ jer.13.23.niv), NIV)

**Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NLT):** “The day is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife,” says the LORD.

“But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days,” says the LORD. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the LORD.’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already,” says the LORD. “And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.” ([Jeremiah 31:31-34](https://www.bible.com/bible/111/ jer.31.31-34.nlt), NLT)

**Ezekiel 36:25-27 (NLT):** “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.” ([Ezekiel 36:25-27](https://www.bible.com/bible/111/ezk.36.25-27.nlt), NLT)

**Matthew 5:17-48 (NLT):** Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. I tell you the
truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

20 “But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

21 “You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’ But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

22 “So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

23 “When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.

24 “You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. So if your eye—even your good eye—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

25 “And if your hand—even your stronger hand—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

26 “You have heard the law that says, ‘A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.’ But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery.

27 “You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.’ But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

28 “You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the
right cheek, offer the other cheek also. 40 If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. 41 If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.

43 “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. 44 But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! 45 In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. 46 If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. 47 If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. 48 But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:17-48, NLT)

Matthew 22:34-40 (NLT): But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again. 35 One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: 36 “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the Law of Moses?”

37 Jesus replied, “’You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:34-40, NLT)

Luke 18:9-14 (NLT): Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: 10 “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don’t cheat, I don’t sin, and I don’t commit adultery. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! 12 I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’

13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ 14 I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14, NLT)

John 3:14-17 (NKJV): And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:14-17, NKJV)
Perish (apollumi-622) – to lose or destroy fully, destroy, die, lose, mar, perish, it is translated (KJV) perish (33), lose (28), destroy (23), be lost (3), be destroyed (3), be marred (1), die (1)

John 10:27-29 (NKJV): My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. (John 10:27-29, NKJV)

John 15:1-22 (the Voice): I am the true vine, and My Father is the keeper of the vineyard. My Father examines every branch in Me and cuts away those who do not bear fruit. He leaves those bearing fruit and carefully prunes them so that they will bear more fruit; already you are clean because you have heard My voice. Abide in Me, and I will abide in you. A branch cannot bear fruit if it is disconnected from the vine, and neither will you if you are not connected to Me.

At a time when all of His disciples are feeling as if they are about to be uprooted, Jesus sketches a picture of this new life as a flourishing vineyard—a labyrinth of vines and strong branches steeped in rich soil, abundant grapes hanging from their vines ripening in the sun. Jesus sculpts a new garden of Eden in their imaginations—one that is bustling with fruit, sustenance, and satisfying aromas. This is the Kingdom life. It is all about connection, sustenance, and beauty. But within this promise of life is the warning that people must be in Christ or they will not experience these blessings.

Jesus: I have loved you as the Father has loved Me. Abide in My love. Follow My example in obeying the Father’s commandments and receiving His love. If you obey My commandments, you will stay in My love. I want you to know the delight I experience, to find ultimate satisfaction, which is why I am telling you all of this.

My commandment to you is this: love others as I have loved you. There is no greater way to love than to give your life for your friends. You celebrate our friendship if you obey this command. I don’t call you servants any longer; servants don’t know what the master is doing, but I have told you everything the Father has said to Me. I call you friends. You did not choose Me. I chose you, and I orchestrated all of this so that you would be sent out and bear great and perpetual fruit. As you do this, anything you ask the Father in My name will be done. This is My command to you: love one another.
18 If you find that the world despises you, remember that before it despised you, it first despised Me. 19 If you were a product of the world order, then it would love you. But you are not a product of the world because I have taken you out of it, and it despises you for that very reason. 20 Don’t forget what I have spoken to you: “a servant is not greater than the master.” If I was mistreated, you should expect nothing less. If they accepted what I have spoken, they will also hear you.

21 Everything they do to you they will do on My account because they do not know the One who has sent Me. 22 If I had not spoken within their hearing, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for ignoring My voice. (John 15:1-22, the Voice)

Romans 3:10-20 (NLT): Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. 10 As the Scriptures say,

“No one is righteous – not even one. 11 No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. 12 All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one.” 13 “Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies.” “Snake venom drips from their lips.” 14 “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” 15 “They rush to commit murder. 16 Destruction and misery always follow them. 17 They don’t know where to find peace.” 18 “They have no fear of God at all.”

19 Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. 20 For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. (Romans 3:10-20, NLT)

Romans 3:23-24 (NLT): For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. 24 Yet God freely and graciously declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. (Romans 3:23-24, NLT)

Romans 6:20-23 (NLT): When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. 21 And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. 22 But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:20-23, NLT)

Romans 7:13 – 8:16 (TNIV): Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means!

Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it
is sin living in me. 18 I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful humanity to be a sin offering, And so he condemned sin in human flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind controlled by the sinful nature is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. 7 The sinful mind is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not controlled by the sinful nature but are in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship and by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. (Romans 7:13 – 8:16, NIV)
Philippians 1:3-6 (TNIV): I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:3-6, NIV)

1 Timothy 1:15-17 (The Voice): Here’s a statement worthy of trust: Jesus the Anointed, the Liberating King, came into the world to save sinners, and I am the worst of them all. But it is for this reason I was given mercy: by displaying His perfect patience in me, the very worst of all sinners, Jesus the Anointed could show that patience to all who would believe in Him and gain eternal life. May the King eternal, immortal, and invisible—the one and only God—now be honored and glorified forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:15-17, The Voice)

1 John 3:1-3 (NIV): See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:1-3, NIV)

1 John 3:4-10 (NIV): Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister. (1 John 3:4-10, NIV)

1 John 4:4-21 (NIV): You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood. Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to
love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

13 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 17 This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

19 We love because he first loved us. 20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. (1 John 4:4-21, NIV)

1 John 5:9-15 (NIV): We accept human testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. 10 Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. 11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. (1 John 5:9-15, NIV)

James 2:8-13 (NLT): Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 9 But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law.

10 For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God’s laws. 11 For the same God who said, “You must not commit adultery,” also said, “You must not murder.” So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law.

12 So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free. 13 There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you. (James 2:8-13, NLT)
E.G. White References

The Desire of Ages, pages 667-668: The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them, else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them. He has a use for them, and He is well pleased when they make the very highest demands upon Him, that they may glorify His name. They may expect large things if they have faith in His promises.

But to pray in Christ’s name means much. It means that we are to accept His character, manifest His spirit, and work His works. The Saviour’s promise is given on condition. “If ye love Me,” He says, “keep My commandments.” He saves men, not in sin, but from sin; and those who love Him will show their love by obedience.

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.

As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we will take hold of the Strong for strength. But we are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else. If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised. Whatever was given to Christ—the “all things” to supply the need of fallen men—was given to Him as the head and representative of humanity. And “whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” 1 John 3:22. (The Desire of Ages, pages 667-668)

Other References

The Daily Walk Bible, NLT, Comments, February 18: You’re doing some work when suddenly your hand slips, and you get a finger full of splinters. After a half hour of “surgery,” you think you’ve pulled them all out, only to discover later that you missed a few. At that point, the fact that you removed most of the splinters doesn’t help much. It is the few remaining ones that really matter.
God clearly directed Israel to completely rid the land of its pagan inhabitants when the time came for conquest. He warned that any Canaanites left behind would become like painful splinters and thorns to the Israelites (33:55-56). Disobeying God, Israel failed to rid the land of its pagan populace and was eventually corrupted by immorality and idolatry.

Are there any “splinters” in your spiritual life—secret sins . . . nagging habits . . . little things you know displease God? Carry a pair of tweezers with you today as a reminder that what you fail to remove now will only fester and cause more pain in the future.

A little sin will add to your trouble, subtract from your energy, and multiply your difficulties. (The Daily Walk Bible, NLT, Comments, February 18)