

Sanctified Through the Spirit

by Greg Hill

One of the hardest challenges we face as believers in Christ Jesus, I believe, is learning to walk in the Spirit. At the moment we put our faith in Jesus Christ, we were justified (declared righteous before God) moving in status from (-1 to +1) or just as if we had perfectly obeyed. We were clothed in Christ's righteousness and given a new nature. **Note: Let us define what we mean by "nature". After reading Renald Showers book, "The New Nature", chapter 1, it seems better fit to refer to nature, as our new and old disposition. Why? Well I have come to understand that nature can be described in two ways. The broad definition is associated with a combination of attributes of a person or thing in contrast with all persons or things. So, let us also not confuse the word "nature" with "person", as a rock has a nature, but it is not a person. The narrow definition of nature focuses on one aspect of the inherent disposition. In relation to Paul in Romans we would understand it to be "sin", for it affects every other aspect of the nature. Now when you think about Adam before the fall, he didn't have an old nature, he only had an innocent human nature. But, after the fall he received something new to him, a new disposition added to his list of nature attributes, it's what Paul would call the old disposition, "sin". Defining disposition, in the context we are speaking of, may be as simple as saying?? Haven't figured it out yet, but I will:). So, this helps make sense of how the old and new dispositions were added to human nature and why we struggle as Christians with these dispositions. What does this mean? In lay men term, it means we got a sin disposition added to our human nature at conception, and a new disposition added to our human nature at our rebirth in Christ, one not canceling the other, we have both.**

But, being "declared" righteous before God at the moment you put your faith in Christ, does not mean you will experience perfect obedience or a sinless life NOW! This perfect obedience and sinlessness will only be obtained when we/you get your resurrection body (when we are glorified). Just like babies need time and food to grow into the physical life, so a new believer needs time and "food" to grow spiritually. Jesus said, "man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." This is the process of growth called sanctification, and it is a lifelong process of relying/depending on God's grace.

Is there anyone that is able to be perfectly obedient to the Word of God and live a sin free life? Only one, Jesus Christ! Jesus was, "tempted in all things yet without sin." Heb 4:15 Jesus is the only one who can say "I sanctify Myself." Jn 17:19. Even Christ, being without sin, and the manifestation of God, still had to learn obedience to the will of the One who sent Him. "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." Heb 5:8 Christ's said His "food was to do the will of Him (God) who sent Me and to accomplish His work." Jn 4:34 We, as followers of Christ, are called to imitate Christ and to grow in our obedience to the Father. The problem that we face as his followers is that even though we have a new nature, we also have our old sin nature. Personal sin comes out of our sin nature. 1 Jn.1:8

says, " if we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word in not in us." "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please." Gal 5:17

How do we grow in our sanctification, if our two natures are waging war? In Romans 7 we see a great example of the two natures at war. Paul, already a believer in this passage **Note: C.L. Mitton and a few others, question if Paul is a believer in Romans 7? Well it's seems that just a basic understanding of the text easily clarifies this. Starting out in Rom 7 vs.4 we see Paul including himself with his brothers and sisters having died to the law through the body of Christ. Now what unregenerate person wants to make that claim and then further more is able to bear fruit for God? None, nada. Vs. 5 what unregenerate person distinguishes himself with the flesh that bears the fruit of death? None I know of. Vs. 6 Paul goes on saying he has died to "what once bound us", meaning no longer does, and that he/we may serve the Spirit. Any unregenerate person claiming this? I think not. Let's move on down to vs 14-25. In vs 14 we see Paul claiming he is of flesh, do unregenerate people know or even think about this stuff? Vs. 15 do unregenerate people hate sin? Vs. 16 again Paul refuting doing that very thing he does not want to do "sin". Vs.17 do unregenerate people think about their inner self being sinful? No. To end this, it seems clear that Paul is crying out for deliverance from the power of sin, not the penalty, meaning we are dealing with sanctification here, not justification. So, Paul, already a believer wants to do good, and is trying to fight his sin nature, but he keeps failing. "For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want." Rom 7:19 Paul uses the word "I" at least 32 times in chapter 7, showing us that he was attempting to conquer his sin nature in his own strength. **Note: Interesting side note I thought was that in Rom.6:1-7:13 Paul uses the word sin 25 times and 24 of those times referring to the sinful disposition.(The one time in Rom.6:15 it's used as a personal sin that carries out the sin disposition.) it coincides with the concept of our sin disposition dominating our nature when left to our own strength. A slave acts as his master directs him to act. Then in Rom 7:7-8 we see coveting which in James 1:14-15 coveting or lust leading to sin which leads to? Death!! Anytime we let the sin disposition reign in our life, we are out of fellowship with God. Paul finally cries out, "Wretched man that I am, who will save me from this body of death?" Rom. 7:24 We find the answer to Paul's question in Rom.7:25 " Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus our Lord." Just like Paul, when we try to conquer our sin nature in our own strength, we will fail every time! Paul, in vs.24 finally realized that he was trying to sanctify himself out of his own strength, vs.25 and the only way he would prevail against his old sin nature is through Jesus Christ. **Note: Paul likes to use the Master/slave analogy when referring to the sinful disposition. It's a great way for man to understand the dominance this has over the unregenerate life. The master "sin" spoken of in Rom.6 has full authority over the slave "unbeliever" at this point. Vs.6, 14,16- 20, 22. But we also see that in ch6:1-13 that when one becomes a Christian he is identified with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Clear example Rom.6:6-7 " knowing this that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; vs 7. for he who has died is freed from sin". This always makes me think, as a believer, who will I be a slave to? A slave to "sin"? What is sin related to in the scriptures? Death! Or, will I be a slave to Life? Rom.6:11,13,******

(6:16-23 slave to righteousness, what did we have to look forward to before we were declared righteous or regenerate? DEATH!). If though I am a slave to Life, and I think I can be because I am under grace, where have I just placed myself? Back under the dictatorship of SIN which results in DEATH! Isn't it interesting that even though the old disposition no longer has the right to exercise power over you, the old master "sin" is in constant battle to enslave us to death. Our responsibility, therefore, is to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ. According to Rom. 6:11-13 " Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." And we are to continually present ourselves as instruments of righteousness to God. That we remain a slave to life, rather than under the effects of "sin", which is the opposite of life, it's DEATH.

Now, look with me at the next chapter, Romans 8. In this chapter instead of the word "I" we see the use of the word "Spirit" referring to the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit used at least 13 times. Verse 1 is showing that because we are in Christ and we are not required to live by the sin nature, but can live by the Spirit. **Note: Although the old "sinful" disposition no longer has the right to rule over us, it is in a constant battle with the new disposition. Every time we try to subject our self back to self effort sanctification, we will end up in utter defeat. Even as believers we still do not utilize the power, outside of the Holy Spirit, to experience freedom from its control. It should be clear by this point that as a regenerate person, we have the power to defeat the sinful disposition not by self effort, but by the Holy Spirit. A clear example can be seen in Rom.8:2 which states that we " have been set free", meaning at a past point. We can be free from the sinful dispositions stronghold if only we will rely on The Holy Spirit. This was Paul's problem in Romans 7:14-25. To live by the Spirit is to rely/depend upon Him to work through us. Rom. 8:13" For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Gal 5:16-18 "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please."**

Therefore, our goal or aim in sanctification should not be to "stop sinning". Jesus Christ Himself did not need to stop sinning and yet He was sanctified. Our goal in sanctification is to learn to walk by the Spirit. As we do we love God since we are obeying Him. 1 Jn.2:5 "but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected." This loving obedience is perfect since it is produced by the Holy Spirit through us. In order to know what obedience is required of us we have to know His word. To know His word we have to study His word. Rom 10:17"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." and James 1:22 "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." This doing of the word is not in self-effort but faithful dependence upon the Spirit who produces Christ's life in us. Gal 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and

the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." And when we stumble and fall we have a wonderful truth to lean on, 1 John 1:9, that "If we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." By allowing the Spirit to do the work in us, we will overcome and ultimately bring Glory to God. **Note: So, now that we understand the difference between the old disposition and the new, and that to fully utilize this new nature we have to completely rely upon it, and the power of the Holy Spirit, it seems the toughest question to answer is still, How do I rely on the Holy Spirit and not my own self effort? This attempt to pinpoint certain things one must do, is in no way exhaustive or the only way, yet I would like to think its a basic starting point that will increase, in time, your understanding. First, on the list would have to be Prayer. How can one expect anything if he does not ask? It's my understanding that for prayer to be successful, we must first employ 1 Jn. 1:9 " If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.", then we are cleansed from any sin, known or unknown, resulting in fellowship. Then, we must be in constant prayer to our Father for enlightenment of His Word. Col.1:9 "For this reason also... We have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all Spiritual wisdom and understanding." Only the regenerate person, who is in fellowship, can experience Truth if he is earnest in his prayer for understanding. Second, now that we are in fellowship, get ready, this ones crazy, but we must actually read from God's Word. We must actually read each word with a desire to understand, and not just to see how fast we can read it. If we say we Love Christ yet have never read His word, we my friend are liars and the Truth is not in us! Think about it, when you first met your wife, and overtime you came to Love her. How did it happen? Did you just stare at her and then say I Love you? I hope not, yet instead I hope you got to know her by speaking to her, understanding who she is and what she stands for. And, what happens over time with that Love? Well the love can either grow, as you get to know each other better, by speaking/studying her/his every move, or the opposite you don't speak, do you think your going to have a good relationship or experience love? The point is you can't truly love someone unless you know them. Rabbit trail. Third, apply the Truth that has been revealed to you. One of the things I try to pray for, not saying my prayer is the standard, is that when I learn something new from God's word, is that if its applicable to my life that I would immediately change and apply this Truth to my life. Examples. Fourth, repeat:). You see everything I've just said all has to do with our new disposition and the Holy Spirit working together. (Explain) that new disposition was given to us so it's not us doing something alongside H.S.. So, it all boils down to relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, He will enlighten you, if you ask, to the will of God, and through Him you will be able to do the will of God. By doing this, your are being obedient to God, which is truly loving Him. Now that we have talked about relying on the Spirit, what are some of the things we can expect when we rely upon the Holy Spirit? With this Spirit led life comes the love and assurance we as children of God need to so desperately. Romans 8:15-16 "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, Eph. 3:18-19 that he "may be able to comprehend with all the [a]saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ**

which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." When the mind is led by the Spirit, we will focus on what the Spirit desires. Rom.8:5 "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." So, then logically it follows that if we live a self centered fleshly life we cannot enjoy all that God desires for us, instead we will carry out the desires of the flesh. Gal.5:17, 19-21 "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, [b]factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Let us remember that walking by the Spirit, moment by moment, is a life long process. And when we walk the Spirit led life we can expect to live a life pleasing to God and experience life abundantly. Gal.5:16, 22-25 "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who [a]belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit".

If there is anyone here today that hasn't believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is thinking what must I do to be saved? Its simple "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." Acts 16:31 What is it that we believe? The Gospel that Paul stated in 1Cor15, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." If you want to understand more of what the Scriptures have to say about God and His redemptive plan for man through Jesus Christ's work on the cross, please come and talk with us after we close.

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand in the presence of his glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." Jude:24,25