

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

B0543 – October 30, 2005 – Major Bible Themes
Chapter 28 – Salvation From The Power Of Sin

Last week we began our study of Soteriology, the study of salvation. Logically we began with the result of initial salvation, freedom from the penalty of sin. There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). We also looked at the present salvation and future salvation of the believer clearly denoted by the Greek tenses of “saved” used in the NT. This week we are going to focus on the present aspect of our salvation, deliverance from the power of sin.

- I. Deliverance From Power Of Sin For Believer’s Only**
- II. Believers Can And Still Do Sin**
- III. God’s Prescribed Means Of Being Delivered From Sin**
 - A. Three Avenues Of Sin**
 - B. What To Do Once Sin Has Been Committed**
- IV. The Believer’s Two Natures And The Problem Of Sin**
- V. Law As A “Rule Of Life” Set Aside And Grace Established**
- VI. How To Attain Victory**

I. DELIVERANCE FROM POWER OF SIN FOR BELIEVER’S ONLY

Necessarily, freedom from the power of sin is limited to genuine believers. All that will therefore be said presupposes that the individual has believed in Christ and been set free from the penalty of sin. Therefore, all that is said is said exclusively to genuine believers. No application of this teaching can be made by those who wish to reform their lives. The application is to those who have already been regenerated by the Spirit of God.

II. BELIEVERS CAN AND STILL DO SIN

Though saved and secure in Christ, Christians still can and do sin. Both Scripture and experience verifies this undeniable fact. Because Christians still can and do sin Arminian's have developed the doctrine of loss of salvation. Charles Stanley was an Arminian for about ten years and he persuasively taught this doctrine (he no longer is). He said there were two basic ways Arminian's argue that a person can lose their salvation.

1. Through apostasy quoting Heb 6:4-6, the parable of the four soils, and “falling from grace” (Gal 5:4)
2. The illogic of a holy God allowing sinful behavior in a Christian’s life without punishment. They say, “eternal security is just a license to sin”.¹

Though Christians can and do sin the way God deals with them is not by taking away salvation, but rather by divine discipline. The discipline is meant to demonstrate the love of God (for what father does not discipline his own child whom he loves, Heb 12:5ff), to stimulate the wayward believer to confess sin (1 John 1:9), or to repent (2 Pt 3:9).

III. GOD’S PRESCRIBED MEANS OF BEING DELIVERED FROM SIN

A. THREE AVENUES OF SIN

Although Christians can and still do sin God has provided a means by which the believer can enjoy deliverance and that means is dependence upon the indwelling Spirit. When a new Christian sins he often doubts his salvation and wonders if he had the right kind of faith. What the new Christian is experiencing is not actually loss of salvation but loss of assurance of salvation. His guilt is actually evidence that fellowship has been broken. Yet one’s relationship with God, once established, remains unbroken. The new Christian should not think he has lost his salvation but rather should do a study of God’s gracious provision whereby there is deliverance. Deliverance from what you may ask? Deliverance from:

1. the world system
2. the flesh
3. the devil

Two of these are external influences, namely, the “world system” which is anti-God (1 John 2:15-17) and the “devil”, the ruler of the world system (cf John 12:31; 16:11; 2 Cor 4:4; 1 John 5:19). To be delivered from the world system and its ruler the devil one must pray as Christ taught us, “do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt 6:13), a prayer that will, incidentally, be answered in the Millennial Kingdom when

the devil is locked away for the full 1,000 years. Yet this prayer does not cover all avenues that result in sin, there is also the “flesh” from which sin can and does originate. When used in a moral sense the “flesh” refers to the sin nature which all believers still have (Rom 7:15ff). Thus, another mechanism has been given which covers all three avenues of sin. To be delivered from the “world”, the “flesh”, and the “devil” the believer must learn to depend on the Spirit. This dependence is described two ways in the Bible:

1. “walk by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16)
2. “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18)

The believer must learn not to walk by the flesh nor be controlled by himself. Rather, he must learn to rely on the strength of the Almighty God (Eph 3:20-21). “For greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). The believer’s responsibility then, is to yield, to give way to the Spirit’s control. This ability the believer does have since he has been made alive to God (Rom 6:11-13).

B. WHAT TO DO ONCE SIN HAS BEEN COMMITTED

What if sin has already been committed by the Christian? First, sin is wickedness and outrages the holiness of God. It cannot go overlooked, it must be dealt with. In this respect there are three aspects of forgiveness:

1. salvation-forgiveness (Col 2:13-14)
2. vertical fellowship-forgiveness (1 John 1:9)
3. horizontal fellowship-forgiveness (Matt 18:15)

Much confusion has resulted from not making these distinctions. Since this is the sin of the Christian then we are not interested now in salvation-forgiveness but the vertical fellowship-forgiveness. Even though all sin was forgiven, past, present and future by Christ on the cross and applied to the believer at the moment of belief God has sovereignly decided to deal with the Christian’s sin on the basis of “confession” (1 John 1:9).

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

“Confession” of sin is not the formation of a new relationship between God and a person but the restoration of fellowship which is broken when a person who is already a believer commits sin.

Ignorance of the three avenues of sin and the restoration of fellowship after the Christian sins leads to tragic spiritual failure for the Christian. Thus, there is a great need for understanding in this area, else believers will not learn how to be victorious and thereby glorify God.

IV. THE BELIEVER'S TWO NATURES AND THE PROBLEM OF SIN

When a person believes in Christ as Savior he is regenerated by God the Spirit (John 1:12-13; Tit 3:5).

John 1:12-13 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Regeneration may be defined as the re-creation of the human spirit (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17) or as Christ's life created in the believer (Gal 2:20; 4:19; Col 1:27; 1 Jn 4:12) or as the impartation of eternal life. Regeneration is a work of God the Spirit, is irreversible, and makes one a child of God (John 1:12). The Bible gives four pictures of regeneration.

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| 1. Creation | 2 Cor 5:17 |
| 2. Birth | John 3:1-15 |
| 3. Washing | Tit 3:5 |
| 4. Resurrection | Eph 3:5-6 |

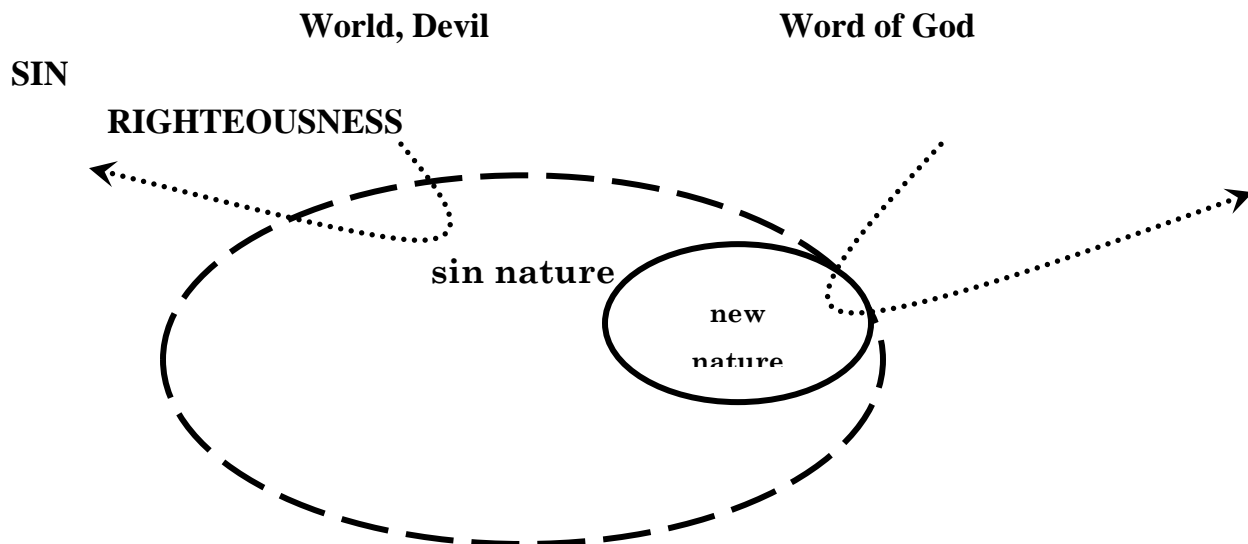
I think the easiest picture to grasp is the creation of Christ's sinless life in the believer's human spirit. The human spirit was dead to the things of God but now it has been made alive (Eph 2:5). The regenerate aspect of the Christians total being is referred to at least four different ways in scripture.

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Paul called it the "inner man" | Rom. 7:22; 2 Co. 4:16; Eph. 3:16 |
| 2. Peter called it the "imperishable seed" | 1 Pt 1:23 |
| 3. Peter called it the "divine nature" | 2 Pt 1:4 |
| 4. John called it the "born of God" self | 1 John 2:29; 3:9 |

Yet this does not mean that the believer has only one nature (one-naturism). While positionally the believer has only one nature, experientially he has two natures; an old nature and a new nature (Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22, 24) or better translated "old man" and "new man". This dichotomy of natures is only temporary for the physical life of the believer and does not infer that he has two personalities or two wills.

Before we go too deep into the subject, “What is a nature?”ⁱⁱ Ryrie defined nature in terms of “capacity”. He said the believer has two capacities, the capacity either to sin or to do righteousness. But Rom 7:14-25 indicates it is more than capacity. Thus, Walvoord defined nature in terms of a person’s characteristics which is thorough enough to exhaust the Greek word *anthropos*. He said, “the concept of a sin nature can probably be best summarized as a complex of human attributes that demonstrate a desire and predisposition to sin. At the same time, in one who has experienced Christian salvation, there is a new nature, which may be defined as a complex of attributes having a predisposition and inclination to righteousness”.ⁱⁱⁱ This fits well with the Greek text which speaks of our old man and new man, *anthropos* not *phusis* (nature as in Eph 2:2). As implied by the term “man” both the old and new man are composed of all that makes man...man. But this does not go so far as to create two distinct personalities or two wills.

Where does sin fit in this picture? All sin originates in (flesh) or operates through (world and devil) the old nature so we may call this the sin nature. All righteousness comes through the new nature so we may call it the righteous nature. Thus, as Chafer said, “...while still retaining the old nature, every child of God possesses two natures; one is incapable of sinning, and the other is incapable of holiness.”^{iv} From the passages listed above we come up with the following diagram:



1 John 3:6, 9 discuss in detail this born of God self and teach that no sin originates from it because it is Christ’s seed in us. If sin is attributed to the born of God self then sin is necessarily attributed to Christ!

1 John 3:6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

1 John 3:9 No one who is born of God sins, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

These verses, particularly 3:9 have been radically misunderstood by most expositors. It is commonly argued that a genuine Christian does not continue to sin or does not practice sin, by which is meant that if a person is a genuine Christian they will not habitually sin. This understanding however produces a direct contradiction with 1 John 1:8 and 5:16 which say that a Christian does habitually sin. Both verses use the same noun for sin in the same case and all three uses of sin are controlled by a present tense verb. There are some slick ways commentators have tried to get around this, such as arguing that in 1:8 John is speaking of the “sin nature” but these slick schemes won’t work. While the present tense can have an ongoing nuance, the addition of words like *practice* or *continue* require more than a Greek nuance. If John had wanted to communicate the idea of *continual* sin or *practices* sin then there were Greek words available for this (e.g. *diapantos* = continual). Ultimately, if we translate 3:9 as *practices* sin or *continues* to sin then we create more questions than we answer. Do not all Christians continue to sin until the day they die? Do not all Christians sin daily? Isn’t daily sin a continuation of doing it? How can anyone claim to not continue to sin? Does the Christian come to some point in his life when he stops sinning? So, the proposed translation that most commentators adopt solves nothing! The present tense can also be gnomic in which the stated case is true *all the time*^v. Thus, 1 John 3:6 is very clear, “No one who abides in Him sins”. The key here is abiding. When we abide we are remaining in touch with Christ so that our actions are propagated through the regenerate nature. When that takes place we cannot sin for “in Him is no sin” (verse 5). To say that the regenerate nature can sin a little bit is to lose John’s whole point! If Christ’s seed is in us and no sin is in Christ then to attribute even a little bit of sin to the regenerate nature is to say Christ is sinful. This is contrary to the whole of Christian theology!

So, there is an absolute dichotomy between the old and new nature. The old is incapable of holiness and the new is incapable of sinning. However, this does not divide the human personality (schizophrenic or bipolar) or will. Believer’s now have the opportunity and ability to choose to operate according to the Spirit or according to the flesh.

Galatians 5:16-17 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ 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.

The Holy Spirit and the flesh are continually set against one another. They are always in conflict in all Christians. The flesh has set its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. The command to follow for Christians is to “walk by the Spirit”. When we do walk by the Spirit we do not carry out the desires of the flesh. There is only one way of victory for the Christian; dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit. Every other attempt to operate against the flesh according to the Mosaic Law or law as principle results in failure.

V. LAW AS A “RULE OF LIFE” SET ASIDE AND GRACE ESTABLISHED

It is crucial for the Church saint to distinguish between law and grace as “rules of life”. There are seven such “rules of life” God describes throughout Scripture. WE know these as dispensations.

1. Innocence
2. Conscience
3. Human Government
4. Promise
- 5. Mosaic Law**
- 6. Grace**
7. Kingdom

Each dispensation is given not as a way of salvation but as a set of standards God gives men to live in harmony with Him. What is crucial at this juncture is to understand that the Mosaic Law as a “rule of life” was completely set aside by Christ at the cross.

Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

This means the 10 commandments are not binding for the Church. Further, all 613 laws, including the 10 commandments as outlined for the nation of Israel have been totally set aside. We do not have the liberty to pick and choose which of Israel’s laws we would like to follow or not like to follow today. That system has been completely fulfilled in Christ and put away. We should never place ourselves under that system of law. However, this does not mean that some of the absolute laws given to and for the Church are not the same as in the Mosaic Law. In fact, 9 of the 10 commandments are repeated for the Church and fully apply to every child of God. However, this is a whole new system or “rule of life” and not a bleeding over of parts of the Mosaic Law into the Church.

Presently, the church is under a “rule of life” known as grace. However, this does not mean there is no law whatsoever. Just as there was grace under law so there is law under grace. Paul spoke of the “law of Christ” on numerous occasions (1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2). What is meant when we say we are under “grace” is that during the present God has graciously provided a means of victory. Under the Mosaic Law no such provision was given. Victory was not possible. During the present age God’s gracious provision is the indwelling Spirit of God. Thus, some writers have termed the present dispensation “the Holy Spirit”. When we depend on the Spirit of God there is victory in the Christian life. When we do not there is always failure.

When God gave the Mosaic Law the individual Israelites were not given any enablement to carry it out yet they said, “all that you have commanded we will do” (Josh 1:8, 16)! The only thing they could rely on was their flesh which was sinful. The Mosaic Law demonstrated that even a perfect law that reflected the divine will could not produce perfection in humans operating alone in the flesh. Failure was to point them to the need for an external righteousness and a denial of self-righteousness. Because the standards of the Mosaic Law were unattainable in the energy of the flesh the Pharisees and scribes re-interpreted the law in such a way that they thought they could meet the standards. Jesus rejected this scribal and pharisaical righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount and gave the true interpretation of the Mosaic Law as a standard once more for the nation to meet (Matt 5:17-21). Since those standards were well beyond any person’s ability to fulfill His intent was to show the Israelites they needed “a righteousness from God” (Rom 1:17).

Neither the Mosaic Law nor any system of law set up by a believer can save or sanctify. The believer can set up a set of “do’s and don’ts” and possibly even maintain it for some time but such a list only sets up a basis for depending on the flesh. Victory is not attainable by the flesh, only by the Spirit. The flesh can do certain things that appear good before men but it can never attain the righteousness of God and it can never sanctify the believer. Sanctification is due solely to complete reliance on the Spirit. That believers have been given the Holy Spirit is due to God’s infinite grace.

VI. HOW TO ATTAIN VICTORY

What the believer “does under grace is not done to secure the favor of God, but it is done because he is already accepted in the Beloved. It is not undertaken in the energy of the flesh, but it is the outliving and manifestation of the power of the indwelling Spirit. It is a life which is lived on the principle of faith: “The just shall live by faith.”^{vi} Just as a person

is justified by faith and saved from the penalty of sin so a person is sanctified by faith and delivered from the power of sin. When we live by faith we are trusting in God's provision of the Holy Spirit and in His power to accomplish the resulting lifestyle. This dependence is required for three reasons.

1. The believer faces an impossible heavenly standard of life.
2. The believers major foe is Satan
3. The believer still possesses the flesh (sin nature)

In light of the heavenly standard, strong foe, and old sin nature the Christian must rely on one who is from heaven, more powerful than Satan, and able to defeat the sin nature. When we do we experience His victory through our regenerate nature and the product of the Spirit is none other than His fruit:

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

- I. Deliverance From Power Of Sin For Believer's Only**
- II. Believers Can And Still Do Sin**
- III. God's Prescribed Means Of Being Delivered From Sin**
 - A. Three Avenues Of Sin**
 - B. What To Do Once Sin Has Been Committed**
- IV. The Believer's Two Natures And The Problem Of Sin**

ⁱ See Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*, pp 298-299.

ⁱⁱ Charles Hodge defined "nature" as a substance and linked it closely to the hypostatic union. B.B. Warfield followed this same approach. Walvoord defined it differently but was certain that man's dual natures should be taught in conjunction with the hypostatic union.

ⁱⁱⁱ Stanley N. Gundry, *Five Views On Sanctification*, 206.

^{iv} L.S. Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, p 190.

^v Wallace properly sees this as a gnomic present but argues that it is eschatological, a general truth that is not yet realized by Christians. However, since the regenerate self is in view as 2:29 and 3:9 clearly state, and this regenerate nature is a part of the new heavens and new earth, needing no improvement, then this need not be eschatological. Besides, John is encouraging us to live holy lives in the *present* by way of motivating us with Christ's any-moment eschatological appearance (3:2).

^{vi} L.S. Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 193.

[Back To The Top](#)

Click [Here](#) to return to other lessons.

[Return to Fredericksburg Bible Church Web Site](#)