

The Justifying Death of Christ Opens for me the Sanctifying Life of Christ: The Sword of the Spirit Explained in Psalm 119

Ephesians 6:17 & Psalm 119

We are looking at the final piece of our spiritual armor from Ephesians 6:17, which is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. This final element of spiritual warfare is our vital link to living out our new life in Christ.

Living Out our New Life in Christ

Christians go through life living in two worlds:

- the past work of Christ for me (His justifying death on the cross), and
- the present work of Christ in me (the sanctifying life of Christ in me).

That two-part existence is summarized by Paul in the Galatians 2:20 passage that we all know, in these words:

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV) I have been crucified with Christ; 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 for me.

Paul is defining and explaining the two parts of our one life in Christ.

Two Parts of One Life

Note the first element: I have been crucified with Christ, which is the justifying death of Christ on the cross where He gave Himself for me as it says at the end of the verse.

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV) **I have been crucified with Christ**; 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 for me.**

Christ crucified, giving Himself for me is the justifying death of Christ.

That is the foundation of all we believe.

Before Christ I was spiritually destitute, dead in sin, and unable to know God.

My only hope was through faith in Christ my substitute who took all my sins on Himself, and died in my place.

That is salvation.

That is the justifying death of Christ.

That is also the doorway to what Christ began and continues to do in my life every moment since. The justifying death on the cross of Jesus opens for me the life-long sanctifying life of Christ lived out in me.

Look at the rest of Galatians 2:20:

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV) I have been crucified with Christ; **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 for me.

Christ's justifying, one-time death on the cross starts a life-long sanctifying, life-changing walk of faith that changes me a bit more each day to look more like Jesus, act more like Jesus, respond more like Jesus, and live life more and more in step with Christ.

That is the Christian life designed by God for each of us His sons and daughters.

The letters to the individuals and churches of the New Testament era are built around these two realities.

We were saved and given positional truths that are to be acted upon by faith-prompted, obedient choices

Positional Truth & Practical Choices

All of the New Testament Epistles are built around these twin truths.

We call them variously:

Position & Practice. That is the division we find in so many of Paul's letters.

Justifying Death & Sanctifying Life. That is the Galatians 2:20 life.

Grow in grace (what God did) & Grow in knowledge (our response). That is how Peter summarized these truths in his second letter.

Resolves & Prayers. That is what we see reflecting these truths in Psalm 119.

Everything God saved us to be has already been accomplished.

We only have to seek His power, and surrender each day to doing His will.

Now, as we turn back to psalm 119 we can see God's plan for us taught in the New Testament, illustrated in the Old Testament.

Seeing God's Plan Illustrated in the Old Testament

In the first eight verses of Psalm 119 we can see these truths in the background.

Psalm 119:1-8 (NKJV)

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, (we are a new creation, with no record of sin against us by faith in the justifying death of Christ) **Who walk in the law of**

the Lord! (we now have a daily choice to live out the sanctifying life of Christ)

²Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, (we have a new, soft heart that wants to obey God given to us by faith in the justifying death of Christ) **Who seek Him with the whole heart!** (we now get to make a choice each day to live out the sanctifying life of Christ)

³They also do no iniquity; (as 1 John says we who are born of God no longer live in an unbroken life direction of sin because we were liberated by faith in the justifying death of Christ) **They walk in His ways.** (now that we have been set free we by grace make choices to live the sanctifying life of Christ)

⁴You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently. (we at salvation had the law of God written on our hearts as we placed our faith in the justifying death of Christ) **⁵Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!** (the cry of a new heart given by Christ is that we want to make those choices to live the sanctifying life of Christ)

⁶Then I would not be ashamed, (we boldly come to the Throne of grace and mercy because we have our faith anchored in the justifying death of Christ) **When I look into all Your commandments.** (and as I read God's Word I do so wanting to respond and make choices to live the sanctifying life of Christ)

⁷I will praise You with uprightness of heart, (This is my new heart given to me at regeneration by Christ when I placed my faith in the justifying death of Christ) **When I learn Your righteous judgments.** (These are the series of new choices I make to live the sanctifying life of Christ)

⁸I will keep Your statutes; Oh, do not forsake me utterly! (I am kept from falling, and await be presented faultless before God's Presence in fullness of joy, because of simple, saving faith in the justifying death of Christ)

And all of this is tied to the Bible, God's Word. We see this through:

Seeing God's Plan for His Word in Our New Lives in Christ

The sanctifying life of Christ comes to us through the Word of God.

That is what Jesus left with us that last night before the Cross as He prayed for us in John 17.

John 17:17 (NKJV) Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

How God sanctifies us by His truth is so clearly illustrated here in Psalm 119. That is why our look at the sword of the Spirit would be incomplete without a visit to this longest chapter of the Bible that explains the incredible partnership of the justifying death of Christ opening to me the sanctifying life of Christ using His Word to transform my life.

Remember how Ezra describes in Psalm 119 an inspired list of the eight life-changing facets of God's Word as the sword the Spirit uses in our lives?

The Sanctifying Life of Christ is Unleashed by His Word

There is no portion of Scripture that more deeply, more richly, or more completely explains the sanctifying power of God's Word than this amazing chapter of Psalm 119.

Psalm 119:1-9 (NKJV)

Blessed *are* the undefiled in **the way**, (the sanctifying path God wants us to follow)

Who walk in the **law of the Lord!** (the sanctifying teachings of Divine teacher)

² Blessed *are* those who keep His **testimonies**, (God's witness about truth)

Who seek Him with the whole heart! ³ They also do no iniquity; They walk in **His ways**. (the sanctifying path God wants us to follow)

⁴ You have commanded *us* To keep Your **precepts** diligently. (God's sanctifying directions for our lives)

⁵ Oh, that my ways were directed To keep Your **statutes!** (God's sanctifying plans for our lives)

⁶ Then I would not be ashamed, When I look into all Your **commandments**. (God's sanctifying absolutes for life)

⁷ I will praise You with uprightness of heart, When I learn Your righteous **judgments**. (God's sanctifying decisions, written in stone)

⁸ I will keep Your **statutes**; (God's sanctifying plans for our lives) Oh, do not forsake me utterly!

⁹ How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your **word** (God's sanctifying voice He wants us to hear).

God Begins a New Life That He Keeps Working On

Remember what Paul said in the letter to the Philippians?

Note the wording of Phil. 1:6 (NKJV):

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV) being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ;

God who began a good work (that is justification), and He will also keep working

inside of us to the end (that is sanctification). That is the message of God's Word so clearly in the New Testament Epistles. Today we want to see the sword of the Spirit explained in Psalm 119.

The Sword of the Spirit Explained in Psalm 119

Ezra's testifies how God was at work in his life in two areas:

God gave him his new heart's habits (the "I haves") and

God empowers his daily sanctification hopes (the "I wills").

Or to put it differently, Psalm 119 records Ezra's new heart's responses with the new heart God gave him. As Ezra and all Old Testament saints looked forward to the Cross through the Old Testament sacrifices, God gave them each a new heart that was cleansed and responsive to God's will through His Spirit.

In Psalm 119 we can see the power of the justifying death of Christ and Christ's sanctifying resolves illustrated in what God did inside Ezra's life! Like Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10, the Old Testament record illustrates the New Testament truths.

Ezra's Life Was Filled with the Desires of a New Heart

First, Ezra shares in Psalm 119 a list of his Habits or the RESPONSES of the new heart God has given us in salvation. Because of the justifying work of Christ on the cross Ezra was a new person. God changed him inside. He wanted new things.

1. **He wanted the Lord.** Psalm 119:10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.
2. **He wanted the Word.** Psalm 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
(Have you ever had a treasure so precious, or a possession so fragile, or a favorite cereal, drink, cookie, etc. that you wanted so badly -- that you hid it away so that no one else could take it from you?)
3. **He loved God's ways.** Psalm 119:14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.
4. **He obeyed the Word.** Psalm 119:22 Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.

He talked about God. Psalm 119:26 I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.

He followed the pathway of God. Psalm 119:30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.

(Did you know your pathway either gets clearer and better, or darker and harder -- ever day we follow that pathway? Proverbs 4:18-19 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. 19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.)

He was stuck to the Word. Psalm 119:31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.

He was excited about God! Psalm 119:35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

He feared disappointing God. Psalm 119:39 Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.

A teen once demonstrated this heart attitude as his friends suggested that they go to a certain restaurant for a good time. "I'd rather go home, my parents don't approve of that place." "Afraid your father will hurt you?" one of the girls asked sarcastically.

"No," he replied, "I'm not afraid my father will hurt me, but I am afraid I might hurt him." He understood the principle that a true child of God, who has experienced the love of God, has no desire to sin against that love.

He longed after the Lord. Psalm 119:40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

So the heart of Christianity is that the justifying death of Christ opens for me the sanctifying life of Christ

God Wants to Unleash Our New Life in Christ

Ezra shows us all that God wants to do as we surrender more and more of our hearts, our minds, our focus, and our desires to Him.

1. Psalm 119:7 **I will praise** thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.
2. Psalm 119:8 **I will keep** thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.
3. Psalm 119:15 **I will meditate** in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.
4. Psalm 119:16 **I will delight** myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.
5. Psalm 119:32 **I will run** the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

Psalm 119:45 And **I will walk** at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.

Psalm 119:46 **I will speak** of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

Psalm 119:47 And **I will delight** myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

Psalm 119:48 My hands also **will I lift up** unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes. (Literally 'in my hands I will carry...' God's Word was close at hand).

Living Out our New Life in Christ

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Appendix:

Ezra's Life was Filled with Sanctifying Choices

Ezra wanted and allowed the Word to Transform His Life

He chooses to turn his life toward God.

Psalm 119:59 I thought about my ways, and turned my feet **to Your testimonies.**

Like a person who hears something, or sees something that stops them, and they turn to go in that direction. Ezra examines his life, looks at the Word and goes the way of the Lord.

He chooses to avoid evil in any form.

Psalm 119:101 **I have restrained** my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. What do you restrain yourself from?

He chooses to lean God's Way by obedience.

Psalm 119:112 **I have inclined** my heart to perform Your statutes Forever, to the very end. What do you lean towards?

He chooses to set his hopes in the Lord.

Psalm 119:114 You are my hiding place and my shield; **I hope in Your word.**
Just like Paul asked the Roman believers to do in Romans 15:13

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

What do you have your hopes set upon?

He chooses to cultivate spiritual appetites.

Psalm 119:131 **I opened my mouth** and panted, For **I longed for** Your commandments. What do you pant for?

He chooses to cultivate spiritual disciplines.

Psalm 119:147 **I rise** before the dawning of the morning, And cry for help; **I hope** in Your word.
Ezra disciplined his time to make room for God in his schedule.

He chooses to live a life of praise.

Psalm 119:164 Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous judgments.
How did Ezra do this on a consistent basis? By living by God's Word.

Remember God gave us a soul that only maintained by His Word.

We were designed to thirst for God, and drinks of Him in His Word; that longs for the waters of life and drinks them of God in His Word.

In the Scriptures we find an ever present oasis in the arid, sun baked, lifeless deserts of life.

We are satisfied only through finding and communing with God in His Word.

What was Ezra's plan to bring about lasting change in those he served? He started with his own life. He learned to point his heart frequently toward doing God's Will.

Ezra's Invited God into Every Part of His Life

Fifty-three times with 22 phrases, Ezra cries to the Lord.

The secret of Ezra's fruitful life was his choice to invite the Lord into every part of his life, and invite Him into every part of his day.

1. Teach me (10): 12; 26; 33; 64, 66; 68; 108; 124; 135, 171.
2. Remove from me (2): 22, 29
3. Revive me (9): 25, 37; 40; 88; 107; 149; 154; 156; 159.
4. Make me (3): 27; 35, 98
5. Strengthen me: 28;
6. Remove from me: 29,
7. Grant me: 29,
8. Give me (5): 34; 73; 125;144; 169.
9. Incline My: 36,
10. Turn away my (2): 37, 39
11. You are my: 57,
12. Comfort me: 82,
13. Help me (2): 86, 175.
14. Save me (2): 94; 146.
15. Uphold me (2): 116; 117.
16. Look upon me: 132,
17. Redeem me (2): 134; 154.
18. Hear me: 145.
19. Consider my: 153,
20. Deliver me (2): 153; 170.

21. Plead my: 154,
22. Let my (2): 169, 170,