

Review: In our previous session, our main concern was to prepare Christians for the battle and struggle that is the pursuit of holiness. Holiness does not come easily; we must fight for it. We must also be prepared for the fact that we will experience setbacks. While we must not condone or take lightly our disobedience, neither should we be completely disillusioned by it. No Christian will be suddenly sinless, but no true Christian will quit fighting in the battle.

In tonight's session, we turn to God's provision of power for the battle and how to experience that power in the pursuit of holiness.

1. It is by the power of God at work in me that I progress in the pursuit of holiness.

The Bible teaches us that living in a manner that pleases God must be the result of his working within us. It is by his power that we are able to put off the sinful deeds of our former life and put on deeds of righteousness. It is the power of God which enables us to refuse to submit ourselves as slaves to sin and instead to submit to God and ourselves as instruments for righteousness. So there is a battle, but we have the power to overcome.

Let's start with a famous verse often hijacked by athletes, but let's read it in context.

Philippians 4:11 – 13.

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

What kind of things is Paul talking about when he says he can do "all things?"

Name the one he mentions. _____. This is one aspect of holiness. And how does he do it? "Through him who strengthens me."

Colossians 1:9-12.

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

The core of Paul's prayer is that the Colossians will live holy lives. That is what it means to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him and bearing fruit in every good work and knowing God better. Now what is Paul praying for to bring this holiness about? In verse 9, Paul mentions knowledge and wisdom and understanding imparted by the Spirit. So there is a knowledge component. But there is also a power component. That is specified in verse 11: "being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might." How then do you win the fight for holiness? Through God's power! And that is some power!

Ephesians 3:14-16.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being

What is Paul praying for? He is praying that God will strengthen the believers with power by the Holy Spirit according to the riches of his glory. That is some power! (cf. v. 20) And notice then in chapter 4:1 what grows out of this prayer for power. It is an exhortation to holy living. Note: "I therefore . . . urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called . . . humility, gentleness, patience, love, unity, peace . . . then that they change their walk from what it used to be when they were darkened and dominated by sin.

1 Thessalonians 4:7-8.

For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. 8 Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

2. The believer must live in dependence upon the Holy Spirit in order to be holy.

It is clear that the believer in Christ is a partaker of the power necessary to grow in holiness. So taking hold of this power will be essential in progressing in a life of holiness (practical sanctification).

Galatians 5:16.

But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Romans 8:13.

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

There are two options. Either live according to the flesh or live according to the Spirit. When you live according to the Spirit, you are putting the deeds of the flesh to death.

I really believe that some misunderstandings have tended to make this whole thing much more complicated than it is. Let's answer the million dollar question of "HOW?" How does a Christians depend upon the Holy Spirit in order to grow in holiness?

Here are the three keys:

1. Fill your tank. Saturate your heart and mind with the Holy-Spirit-inspired word of God.

Psalm 1 – his delight is in the law of the Lord. He meditates day and night. He is a tree firmly planted. He prospers.

2 Timothy 3:16 – All scripture is breathed out by God (God's breath is the Holy Spirit) and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Colossians 3:16 – Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly = Ephesians 5:18 "Be filled with the Spirit"

2. Pray. Look back at the verses we have cited and see that the work of the Spirit is what Paul prayed for in the saints. Ephesians 3:16; Colossians 1:9-11. Also,

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13.

may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, 13 so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness

1 Thessalonians 5:23.

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 11:13.

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

3. Obey. Walking by the Spirit does not involve the discovery and implementation of a mysterious formula which must precede doing what God tells you to do. You could not walk in the Spirit unless you are being led by the Spirit. And the ones who are being led by the Spirit are the sons of God. They have been born again by the Spirit. They have received the Spirit. They are temples of the Holy Spirit. Hence it is only by the Spirit that they can obey. So there is no secret. Listen to the Spirit by hearing what he has said in the word of God, the Bible. Pray for his strength to know, understand, and love God and his will. Pray for the strength of the Spirit to be at work in you. And simply, DO what he says. That is called obeying. To obey, you must resist the enemy's (flesh, world, devil) persuasions and submit yourself to God to obey him.

Ephesians 4:17-24. Put off the old self. Put on the new self.

Colossians 3:5-17. Put to death what is earthly. Put on what is godly.

James 4:7. Submit to God. Resist the devil.

2 Peter 1:5. Make every effort

2 Peter 3:14. Be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish

We are not to "stop trying and to start trusting." To stop trying is to stop trusting! We try because He is able and because we have the Spirit and his power.

I CAN do all things THROUGH CHRIST who strengthens me! (Philippians4:13)

Conclusion

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, "To realize [it is he who strengthens me] takes away from us that old sense of hopelessness which we have all known and felt because of the terrible power of sin. . . . How does it work? It works this way: I lose my sense of hopelessness because I can say to myself that not only am I no longer under the dominion of sin, but I am under the dominion of another power that nothing can frustrate. However weak I may be, it is the power of God that is working in me." (Quoted by Jerry Bridges in *The Pursuit of Holiness*; from *Romans: An exposition of Chapter 6*, page 144)

All scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.