

Now Concerning Spiritual Things

an historical account of one man's walk with God

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AN END-TIME CHALLENGE TO EVERY BELIEVER

The apostle Paul was in the busy port city of Corinth when he wrote a letter we now know as the New Testament book of Romans. One of the sources I have checked places the time of his writing during the Spring of 56 A.D. while another reference places the date between 56 and 58 A.D., about thirty years after the crucifixion of our Lord. The letter was written to Gentile believers in Rome, Italy, then a city of "some 800,000 people; a motley host of many races, with a strong oriental element, among which the Jews were present as a marked influence, despised and sometimes dreaded, but always attracting curiosity."¹

Here is an excerpt of Paul's writing to the Roman believers:

"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do, but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells in me."²

More than once, I have heard this passage of scripture used from the pulpit and from the mouth of believers in what seems to be an apology or a "crutch" for sin in the lives of Christians. Or said another way, some appear to conclude from this scripture that sin in a believer's life is inevitable; therefore, one must learn to accept it, live with it and thank God for the cleansing blood of Jesus as it is applied to one's sins through

repentance and confession. After all, as such reasoning continues, didn't the Apostle also write, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God?"³ Certainly, the answer to this question is "Yes," but I believe that this conclusion is either immature or premature. A believer who thinks that sin must be a permanent fixture in his life *will never achieve the victory intended by the Lord Jesus.*

If one should isolate the previous scripture, with no other explanation, it might appear that the Apostle had left us on the horns of a dilemma, but such is not the case. He then continues and resolves the supposed "dilemma" with these words:

"I find then a law that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward [spirit] man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members [flesh]. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: ***He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according

¹Sourced from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ROMANS, EPISTLE TO THE.

²Romans 7:15-20.

³Romans 3:23.

to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”⁴

Here is another brief “commentary” on the same subject by the apostle Paul, taken from his letter to the Galatian Church.

“I say then: ‘Walk in the Spirit, *and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.* For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”⁵

In the previous quotations from the seventh and eighth chapters of Romans, and the fifth chapter of Galatians, Paul is making an argument for the total release from law, or a set of rules and regulations, and in this case, from the Law of Moses in particular. The reason is that law – any law – including the Law of Moses – does not change those who obey the law since outward rules never change anyone. True change must come from within for it is the heart of man that needs changing and law does not do that. Law defines sin and pronounces a sentence of “guilty” upon those who disobey but the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us [believers with the Holy Spirit] free from the law of sin and death. The reason is that when the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, touches the spirit of man, the lamp of the Lord,⁶ the Life and Light of the Lord is imparted to man. The Spirit of God is the member of the Godhead who introduces to the believer the Lord Jesus⁷ and it is His presence within that changes one’s heart. Then is when the kingdom is within you,⁸ as Jesus said, and then is when the desire to obey God originates from “within.” *And then is when man begins to change, as he is drawn or wooed by the love of Someone he knows. God’s love is His most powerful motivating force on earth.* And this change continues until the purging – the refining process of God in man – is complete. *As one remains faithful to God and continues to (1) grow in*

⁴Romans 7:21-25; 8:1-4, brackets, italics and bold print added.

⁵Galatians 5:16-18, italics added.

⁶See Proverbs 28:27.

⁷See John 14:21.

⁸See Luke 17:21.

knowledge of the Word and (2) mature as a believer, his desire to please God increases and sin is diminished. And that’s the way it works. ***Man always has a choice and therefore does not have to sin!*** When a maturing believer sins it is because he has not yet put to death with the Spirit (1) the lust of the flesh, (2) the lust of the eye and (3) the pride of life.⁹ All sin lies within one of these three classifications, Satan’s motivational tools, and is the result of the desire of one’s heart.

Jesus said it this way as recorded by Luke: “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross *daily*, and follow Me.”¹⁰ In the record of both Matthew and Mark the word “daily.” is omitted. Here the record is saying that there are two crosses in the Christian endeavor, one for Jesus and one for each believer and the purpose of each is death. Until we are able [willing] to die to self, we can neither be led by the Spirit nor live for Him. Although this is not easy, it nevertheless is a requirement. Then, of course, Dr. Luke adds one very important word to this verse of scripture, “daily.” The apostle Paul expressed the same thing this way, “I die daily.”¹¹ God’s instructions to Moses [paraphrased here] was similar: “Observe carefully *all of My commandments* [on a continuing basis] to receive a superabundance from Me.”

Now, let’s look at [hear] what the apostle John has written about the same subject:

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He [Christ] is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.¹² And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself [by the Spirit of God within], just as He is pure. Whoever commits sin also

⁹See 1 John 2:16.

¹⁰Luke 9:23.

¹¹See 1 Corinthians 15:31.

¹²For many, but not all, this “change” from our physical bodies to a body identical to that of Jesus will occur at the Rapture when the dead in Christ will be resurrected first followed by the believers on earth who will be “caught up” or translated to join Jesus with the resurrected ones “in the air” or “in the clouds” to be forever with the Lord thereafter. This is not the second coming for Jesus does not set foot on the earth at the Rapture. See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.

commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. ***Whoever abides in Him does not sin.*** Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. *He who sins is of the devil*, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. *Whoever has been born of God [born again] does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.*¹³

This should put to rest the idea that believers have to sin so let's take a look at some other scripture to give us better understanding of the sin principle.

The Psalmist wrote, "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven"¹⁴ and "For You [God] have magnified Your word above all Your name."¹⁵ Let these words sink in. God's word (scripture) will not change – never – throughout the broad expanse of time called eternity. That's good news because it means forever we can depend on what He says [His word] which governs our eternal destiny. Then the fact that His word is magnified [is above or greater than] above His name *is further assurance*. That means (1) God cannot change His word – "the rules of the game of life" – in midstream which would defame His Name, (2) His Name is to be revered, honored and given glory above every other name *because of His word, not vice versa*, (3) *The honor of His name* is dependent upon the absolute unchanging nature of His word and (4) if that was not the case there would be no honor to His name! That is why it is so important to know His word. One studies the word of God in order to know God. That is the only way to grow up into mature believers. Therefore His word, which is paramount, will not change and will be our judge and jury when the time comes for the final accounting. This should forever put to rest the concept that somehow the Old Testament was for another time – is outmoded – or "out of date." The Old and New Testaments are one

composite book of instruction for life. When the New Testament was being written, *the only scripture in existence was the Old Testament. When men were writing the New Testament and referred to scripture, it was always Old Testament scripture for there was none other. There was no such thing as scripture outside of the Old Testament at that time.* Without the Old Testament there would be no New Testament! Therefore the Old and New Testaments are one composite book authored by the Holy Spirit to give man Life.

Next, consider a way to diminish the propensity to sin. Here is the introduction to an awesome list of promises God made to Israel [thence to you and me] prior to their crossing the Jordan river into Canaan.

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully ***all his commandments*** which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth."¹⁶

Notice that God said "to observe carefully all His commandments" in order to receive His blessings. That doesn't mean that one should carefully observe all His commandments when you feel like it, or when you have had three good days in a row or when freeway traffic moves without a hitch or there is total harmony in your household and at work. It means *we should observe all His commandments all the time*. And herein lies the blessing of the fullness of the Holy Spirit whose job it is to convict us of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.¹⁷ You therefore do not need to be concerned about inadvertently missing the mark because His [the Holy Spirit's] job is to see that you don't. He operates within us 24/7/365(6) as a censor, always with the full support of and governed by the word of God. It takes time and maturity to arrive at zero tolerance for sin but scripture affirms that this *must be our objective*. This is not intended as a warning but as a blessing. *Every commandment of God is designed to bless you with life*

¹³1 John 3:2-9, brackets, bold print and italics added.

¹⁴Psalm 119:89.

¹⁵Psalm 138:2 (b).

¹⁶Deuteronomy 28:1, bold print added.

¹⁷See John 16:8.

whereas every sin starts the process of death.¹⁸ Once that is “seen” or perceived by the mind through the Spirit, the desire to be sinless will overcome the desire to sin. Then is when the blessings of God are released in one’s life.

Now hear the rest of God’s awesome promises from Deuteronomy 28:2-13, when we carefully observe all His commandments and serve Him. These promises follow the *previous introduction* (page 3, column 2) to the 28th chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, which I have summarized as follows:

(1) Blessings shall come upon you and *overtake* you [in other words you can’t escape His blessings! Think about that for a moment! Try that one on for size!], (2) you will be blessed in the city and in the country [wherever you are!] (3) your children, your business, your job, your income will be blessed, (4) your food source and all of your travels will be blessed [a security measure for all travel!], (5) Those who oppose you will be defeated before your face [by God], (6) your financial resources (net worth) and everything your hand finds to do will be blessed, (7) The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, (8) because everyone shall see that the presence of God is with you, they (everyone) will fear [reverence] you, (9) The Lord will see that you have a surplus of prosperity through your children and your property, (10) The Lord will open to you *His good treasure* to give you rain in season [an abundance], and will bless all the work of your hands; you shall lend but now borrow, and (11) you shall be in the forefront, a leader, not a tag-along; above not below.¹⁹

If you are on the marginal edge of total obedience – total covenant commitment – go back and reread these eleven awesome promises of God. They are enough to cause your thoughts to soar with faith and expectancy. God’s love is truly awesome!

¹⁸The wages of sin is death (see Romans 6:23(a). The sin nature in man began with Adam, who, through his sin, introduced *death* to a world which previously knew neither sin nor death. Satan, through his enticement to sin, comes to steal, kill and destroy [you] (see John 10:18) whereas Jesus came that we might have an abundant life (see John 10:10(b), for He said “I am the way, the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father but by Me (see John 14:6).

¹⁹See Deuteronomy 28: 2-14 for the source of this eleven-item summary of blessings.

Here are four additional admonitions in scripture to lay hold of these awesome promises of God:

(1) “Who [Christ] will also confirm you to the end that you may be *blameless* in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”²⁰ (2) “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, *without spot and blameless.*”²¹ (3) “But he who keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk, *just as He [Jesus] walked.*”²² (4) “And they [Zacharias & Elizabeth] were both *righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*”²³

Notice in these four scriptures that we are admonished to (1) be blameless, (2) be without spot and blameless, (3) walk just as Jesus walked and (4) walk in righteousness, blameless before God keeping all the commandments. While I’m not there yet, I challenge you, even as I challenge myself, to realize that these admonitions to righteousness are attainable or they would not be in the Canon of scripture. Join me and accept the challenge. Two things are essential for such a walk with God: (1) thorough *revelational* knowledge of God’s word and (2) a hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness that will not be denied. That’s His desire for you and me, for Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”²⁴

It is a law of God that if we will hunger and thirst for righteousness, He will fill us – no exceptions. That law is just as certain as the law of gravity. He didn’t say that it would be easy, but He did show us the Pattern for attainment. The rewards are certain and awesome.

²⁰1 Corinthians 1:8, brackets and italics added.

²¹2 Peter 3:13, 14, italics added.

²²1 John 2:5, 6, italics and and brackets added.

²³Luke 1:6. Bracketed explanation and italics added.

²⁴Matthew 5:6.