

I. INTRODUCTION

Thus far into our journey of the spiritual life we have learned the following: (1) **The Spiritual Life is impossible; it requires a miracle** (in Rom 12-16 alone there are 48 commands), (2) **Christ's death on the Cross freed us from the shackles of sin, Rom 6** (which means that nothing makes us sin), (3) **Though we have a new life in Christ, which enables us to obey God, we still have a sin nature that remains in our flesh, Rom 7** (which means we'll continue to sin; but it's our choice), (4) **God performs a resurrection miracle with our dead bodies of sin through the Cross, Rom 8** (the Holy Spirit resurrects us and gives us new life capable of obeying God).

Human history also reveals God's work in reestablishing the fellowship He had with man prior to the Fall. He finally accomplishes this when He sends His Son to die on the Cross. Christ's death makes the spiritual life possible. Thus, God's original intent for mankind will be fulfilled: man will be in *complete* harmony with God and himself and he will once again have *complete* dominion over the earth.

Human history also reveals that God is true to His Word, especially when one looks at the lives of past believers like Abraham and David. Because God was faithful to them, He will be faithful to us and fulfill His promise that we can succeed in the spiritual life.

II. WHO WE WERE (and still are) & WHO WE ARE NOW IN CHRIST

A. *Who We Were (and still are), i.e., Our Tendency to Sin*

To live the spiritual life successfully, the first thing believers must realize is who they were (and still are), i.e., their tendency to sin. Scripture clearly reveals man's tendency toward sin. Man refuses to retain knowledge of God and instead opts for a false view of God and the world around him. Once he dispenses with God, man is free to sin in the vilest way and he does, Romans 1:18-32.

1. *The Fall: Genesis 2-3*

Man's history attests to his sinfulness. In the Garden, man (having perfect environment) chooses death over life. He had a choice to eat from every tree in the Garden including the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:22), but he chose death.

2. *Cain's Murder of His Brother Abel: Genesis 4*

Cain Kills his brother even after God reaches out to him.

3. *Man Before the Flood: Genesis 6*

In Noah's day, God wipes out the entire human race (except 8 people) because they are thoroughly corrupt, 6:5 (cf. 8:21).

4. *Man After the Flood: Genesis 9*

Man's sinfulness continues after the Flood: Ham sins against his father Noah and God makes it a point to mention that Ham is the father of Canaan, from whom come all the wicked Canaanite nations.

5. *Tower of Babel: Genesis 11*

When man unifies, he seeks to glorify himself, Gen 11:4.

6. *Even Believers Sin: David and the Apostle Peter*

Some might think that only unbelievers are this wicked, but the sin nature is alive and well in believers too, e.g., David when he committed adultery and murder.

One must remember that God used David as the standard for the kings that followed him, 2 Chronicles 17:3; 28:1; 29:2; 34:2. But in 2 Samuel 11 David sins horribly against God, he takes another man's wife and murders her husband. Both of these sins were capital offenses in the Mosaic Law, Deut. 22:22; 19:11-12.

Maybe the problem is that OT believers didn't have the access to God that NT believers have. NT believers have the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit and a new resurrection life that frees them from the power of sin. Would a NT believer fair better against his sin nature, especially an apostle like Peter? No!

Peter's hypocritical behavior in eating with Gentiles and not eating with them when Jews were around (Gal 2:11-14), gave the impression that the Mosaic Law was also necessary to become spiritually mature. It is the very thing Paul is chastising the Galatians for. It is especially offensive to God because God told Peter directly that the Mosaic Law didn't apply this way, Acts 10.

B. *Who We Are Now in Christ, i.e., We Have the Ability to Overcome Our Sinful Tendencies*

The second thing believers must remember is who they are now in Christ. Yes we're sinful vile creatures, but for those who've accepted Christ's promise of eternal life, they now have a new life that enables them to overcome their sinful nature.

1. *The Cross Provides More Than Salvation from Hell*

The Cross doesn't just provide believers salvation from hell; it provides salvation from God's wrath against sin. Paul clearly states this in Romans 1 as he addresses mature believers in Rome. Using a quote from Habakkuk (2:4), Paul reveals that the Gospel is capable of saving believers from God's discipline against sin when they apply what the Gospel has already done for them by faith.

2. *The Cross Provides You the Ability to Live Righteously Before God*

The Gospel, i.e., the *good news* is that Christ's death on the Cross not only gave believers everlasting life (which saved them from hell), it also gave them the ability to live righteously before God, John 10:10. It provides everything believers need: **(1) Freedom from the shackles of sin, Rom 6, (2) The "inner man," which enables us to obey God, in spite of our sin nature that remains, Rom 7, and (3) a resurrection miracle: God resurrects our dead bodies of sin and enables them to live for Him, Rom 8.**

III. WHY IS IT VITAL FOR BELIEVERS TO KNOW THESE TWO THINGS?

A. *Why's it Important to **Know** that You Can Live Righteously Before God?*

Because it's good to know that God has enabled you to win the impossible race of the spiritual life. He's provided everything you need. All you need now is to run the race.

B. *Why's it Important to Know that You're Still a Sinner?*

Because if you don't realize that you're the problem when it comes to your sin, then sin will render you useless to God. As a believer, sin is not an option for you because God has freed you from its power, Romans 6.

IV. CONCLUSION

In order to succeed in the spiritual life, believers must realize both who they were—and still are—(i.e., their tendency toward sin) and who they are now in Christ (i.e., the power God has given them to live righteously before Him).