

## SPIRITUAL VICTORY (12)

**QUESTION #3** – What actually happened to me when I believed on Jesus Christ?

To grow in one's spiritual life it is critical to have some understanding as to what actually did happen the moment you trusted Jesus Christ. **But perhaps even more critical than this is to realize what didn't happen the moment you trusted Jesus Christ.**

**Reality #1** - The Spirit of God convicted us, saved us, and forever indwells us.

I believe a critical key to our spiritual victory is to recognize what actually happened the moment we believed. Although, I doubt most of us truly realized what was happening. What actually happened was this - the Spirit of God convicted us of our need to believe on Jesus Christ (**John 16:7-11**) and in full authorization of God the Father and in complete harmony with His elective decrees, He permitted that same Spirit to bring us to Jesus Christ by faith. **In other words, we were saved totally and completely by God's Grace.** He did the convicting and He did the saving, just as Hannah said "The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up" (**I Samuel 2:6**).

Now the part we actually played in all of this was to acknowledge the truth about ourselves - we were condemned sinners who deserved God's wrath. We are by nature children of wrath and what God's Spirit did was to convict us so that we saw ourselves for what we were. As this conviction was taking place, faith in Jesus Christ began to dawn on our soul and the Spirit of God brought us to the place where all we could do was rely on Him. All we could do was to trust Him, because we knew we could not trust in ourselves. At that very moment He caused us to be born again (**John 3:3, 5-8**), and the Spirit of God came into our lives to permanently indwell us. When this occurred, it actually left us realizing we were "unworthy of eternal life" (**Acts 13:46**). In fact, many have literally wept, realizing the horrific level of their sin.

This indwelling of the Spirit is vital and critical to what a Christian actually is and to the potential of pleasing God. Without the indwelling Spirit, we cannot please God (**Rom. 8:8-9**). So the possibility of us pleasing God is completely dependent upon the indwelling Holy Spirit. As Dr. Chafer observed: "The realization of the Spirit's presence, power, and guidance constitutes a wholly new method of daily living ..." (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 6, p. 123).

The challenges to the believer (we will discuss later) to be led by the Spirit or to walk by the Spirit becomes a totally new concept for supernatural spiritual victory. The Spirit of God is in position to enable every believer to move to a spirituality that will glorify God. As Dr. G. Campbell Morgan said, "The indwelling God is the secret of holiness" (*The Westminster Pulpit*, Vol. 3, p. 307).

Now because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, when it comes to spiritual victory in one's life there are two possibilities - 1) Depend on your own self or ability for victory; 2) Depend on the Spirit of God to give victory. These are two opposing principles (**Gal. 5:17**) and, as Chafer said, "Any attempt to combine two opposing principles will end in failure" (Vol. 6, p. 167)

## SPIRITUAL VICTORY (13)

**Reality #2** - Our old self is still in us and still desires to sin against God.

I have met many believers who are looking for some “lightening bolt” sign that they are truly saved. One time after a baptism service, I heard one believer ask another if, when they came up out of the water, they felt anything special. The real problem with this feeling oriented Christianity is that what you will soon learn is you feel like doing what is wrong, not what is right. **Faith in Jesus Christ means you have peace with God, but also have war with yourself.** The moment you have eternal life, the war begins and you become a soldier-saint.

The great misunderstanding of theology is not that unsaved people have a fallen nature alienated from God, for most will admit this. **The great misunderstanding is that the believer still has the fallen nature which is alienated from God still in him.**

If a believer tries to convince himself that he does not have this nature, not only does he believe something contrary to God’s Word, but he will experience one failure after another because he will never learn to rely on the only part of him that can produce victory, the Spirit of God. **The key question here is this - Does a believer have the power, in and of himself, to contend with his own sin nature and come out victorious?** Dr. Chafer called this the “vital question” of spiritual victory (*Ibid.*, p. 185).

One key passage of Scripture which specifically answers this question is **Gal. 5:16-17**. In this text, it is clearly stated that victory in one’s spiritual life will never be attained by the individual, but by the Holy Spirit, because **what the Holy Spirit wants and what our flesh wants are total opposites**. In a situation in which there is a conflict between the new Spirit indwelt nature and the old normal nature, the believer will soon discover that, in spite of his holy aspirations, he is totally and utterly defeated and ends up, as Paul did, by saying “I am a wretched man.”

What Paul means by the noun “flesh” here is the degenerate nature of a fallen, sinful person, which is prone to sin. This is God’s classification of our nature. Once we have been brought to faith in His Son, the Spirit takes up residency in us so that we are classified as a new creation, a new person. However, that old fallen degenerate sinful nature is still with us and spiritual victory will never be achieved by depending on it. **This realization is evidence of real spiritual maturity, of real humility and of real honesty and this is a very important part of real spiritual victory.**

**When we believed on Jesus Christ we gained the Holy Spirit, but we did not lose our old self.** The new dynamic was God’s Spirit now indwells us. But our old self also is still here in us and victory will never be found by relying on us but only will be found by relying on God. As Paul says in Galatians, the key to victory over the flesh is “by means of” the Spirit, not by means of us.

## SPIRITUAL VICTORY (14)

**QUESTION #4** – How important is **Romans 7:14-25** to our spiritual victory?

**Romans 7:14-25** is unequalled in presenting the truth about our spiritual struggle and potential victory. In **Romans 7** Paul recognizes the fact that he has no power over his own sin nature and actually chooses to obey it rather than God, but by the end of the chapter and on into **chapter 8**, he has learned where deliverance and victory are found. He goes from being a wretched man to being a rejoicing man. The great Apostle Paul, the apostle to the entire Gentile world, acknowledges the dominating power of his fallen nature and learns that victory does not come by its eradication, but by the Holy Spirit (**8:2**).

It is very wise to examine the context of **Romans 7**, which includes **Romans 6** and **Romans 8**, to see truth about our spirituality. The problem that the Holy Spirit has with every one of us is that something Holy cannot take up residency in something unholy. **Romans 6** is so important because **Romans 6** informs us that a judicial work of God the Father took place in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God has judicially identified us with His Son's work on Calvary and that opens the door for the Spirit to save us and then take up residency in us. God has actually pronounced a judicial judgment against our old self (**Rom. 6:6**) and has freed us from sin (**6:7**). This judgment satisfies God's demand of Holiness and now His Spirit can save and indwell.

Now once the Spirit indwells the believer the war begins. There is a new Spirit in us and there is the old self in us (**7:6**). **The Holy Spirit has a right to be in us because of God's calculation of us in Romans 6, but the Holy Spirit doesn't automatically have a victory in us because of our old self.**

In **Romans 7:14-24**, Paul honestly acknowledges eleven key facts, which, clearly show "his will and affections were bent to evil" (Wm. S. Plumer, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 354) and ultimately lead to victory:

- Fact #1** - I am of flesh and I am sold into the bondage to sin. **7:14**
- Fact #2** - I actually do just the opposite of what I would like to do when it comes to God. **7:15**
- Fact #3** - I actually do the very things I don't want to do. **7:16**
- Fact #4** - There is a sin nature that indwells me that causes me to do these things. **7:17**
- Fact #5** - There is nothing good that dwells in me, in my nature. **7:18**
- Fact #6** - I do not have the power to even do good, even if I want to do it. **7:18**
- Fact #7** - I actually practice what is evil even though I wish to do what is good. **7:19**
- Fact #8** - My sin nature continually does the things I don't even want to do. **7:20**
- Fact #9** - I have an evil presence in me that dominates my choices. **7:21**
- Fact #10** - I am in war with myself and a prisoner of sin. **7:22**
- Fact #11** - I am a sinfully wretched man. **7:23**

Now one does not need to be a great theologian to see here that Paul doesn't believe he can rely on himself for spiritual victory. It is also imperative that you and I acknowledge the same thing. Every believer must recognize and admit this truth about him if he is to ever hope for victory.

## SPIRITUAL VICTORY (15)

In fact, Paul plainly states he will not even choose spiritual victory even if he has a desire to do so. So the question arises, how does he get victory?

In **Romans 8:1-2** there are two critical keys:

- 1) Paul realizes the positional truth that even though he has this terrible sin problem, there is no condemnation because he is in Christ Jesus (**8:1**) (see also **Gal. 2:20; 5:24**).
- 2) Paul realizes that the key to practical victory and spiritual life does not lie with him but with the Holy Spirit (**Rom. 8:2**). The key to spiritual victory is a mind focused on the Holy Spirit not one focused on us or our choices (**Rom. 8:5-8**).

G. Campbell Morgan said, “If we will be quite honest about our failure in the Christian life, about the sins we committed yesterday even though we are children of God, about those hours in which we yielded to temptation and grieved the Holy Spirit, and smirched the spotless linen of our purity, and disgraced the name of our Lord, we all know that we failed because we did not fight under the orders of the king, but leaving our proper habitation of loyalty to Him, walked in the way of temptation, **and attempted in our own strength to overcome, and thus were defeated**” (*The Westminster Pulpit*, Vol. 3, pp. 297-298).

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said Paul gains spiritual victory through “the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ (**Romans 7:25**) and by the personal intervention of the Holy Spirit (**Romans 8:2**)” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 6, p. 188). Dr. Chafer said that every believer needs to be aware of four realities (*Ibid.*, p. 189).

- 1) Every Christian still has his old sin nature.
- 2) Every Christian is indwelt by the Spirit of God.
- 3) Christ died a death that judicially kills our old nature that permits the Holy Spirit to live in us.
- 4) Victory in our spiritual lives will not come by depending on us, but the Holy Spirit.