

Did the Apostle Paul have a Sin Problem?

Message by: Leroy Surface



Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

Ephesians 3:8

It seems to me to be such a foolish question, but on every hand we hear about Paul's "*sin problem*" when teaching the "*glorious liberty*" from sin that Christ has given through His death on the cross. "*Even the great apostle Paul said he did the things he hated, and could not do the things he loved...*," they say. It is a subject that this ministry cannot ignore because as long as this error abounds among the believers, untold millions of modern day "*Christians*" will continue in sin, believing it to be the "*normal*" existence of believers, and never knowing there is a wonderful deliverance provided in the death of the Son of God for all who will believe. It was the apostle Paul who said in Romans 1:16, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth....*" It is the correct concept of "*salvation*" that we must first discover if we are to understand the truth of the gospel of Christ.

“The Grace”

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of *the grace* that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

I Peter 1:10-11

According to the words of Peter in this text, the holy prophets of the Old Testament were “*seeing*” our “*salvation*” when they prophesied of “*the grace that should come unto you.*” It was such an incredible thing they were seeing that Peter said they “*inquired and searched diligently...searching what, or what manner of time....*” In visions from God the prophets were seeing something that had never existed since Adam disobeyed God. It was such that it inspired Isaiah to write “*...since the beginning of the world...*” Note that he did not say “*Since the beginning of the heavens and earth....*” The “*world* (‘this present evil world;’ Galatians 1:4)” began when sin entered through the disobedience of Adam (Romans 5:12). “*Since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him*” (Isaiah 64:4). Isaiah received many visions from God in which he saw bits and pieces of a glory such as had never been seen in this world until the appearing of Christ. These were like pieces of a puzzle, which, coming together caused the prophets of God to inquire of God, “*what is this...when shall this be?*” They longed to see this glory come in their day as they prophesied of Israel, saying, “*Thy people also shall be all righteous...*” (Isaiah 60:21), and of Jerusalem, saying, “*And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD...*” (Isaiah 62:12). Such was the hope and present expectancy of the prophets that God had to reveal to them as Peter explained in I Peter 1:12, “*...that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*” How sad the prophets must have been to know that this glory would not come in their day, but with what joy and rejoicing did the apostles preach “*the unsearchable riches of Christ*” to every race of people in every nation. How sad preachers and their congregations today must be who believe “*...that not unto us, but unto those who live after the second coming of Christ is this ‘glory’ prepared,*” because they do not understand that Christ has come to “*take away the sin of the world.*” He has given Himself for us, “*...that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*” (Titus 2:14). Jesus suffered the cross in order that our old man of sin would die with Him. He has risen from the dead in order that we would be “*born again*” in His

life. He has ascended to the throne of heaven, where He invites all who will receive Him to “*sit with Him in heavenly places*” and “*share His glory.*” He has sent the Holy Ghost to work in us, to fill us day by day until we are “*filled with (into) all the fullness of God*” (Ephesians 3:19). “*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him* (on His cross), *that we may be also glorified together*” (Romans 8:16-17).

According to the words of Peter in our text, the Old Testament prophets, who prophesied of “*the grace that should come unto you...*,” saw grace revealed in two ways; “*The sufferings of Christ,*” and “*The glory that followed.*” David saw the sufferings of Christ which he recorded in the twenty second Psalm, beginning with the exact words that Jesus uttered from the cross, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*” (Psalms 22:1). In the visions of Isaiah, he saw a young man grow up “*as a tender plant*” and “*as a root out of dry ground*” who “*had no form or comeliness, and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him*” (Isaiah 53:2). Isaiah continues speaking of this man as though he were insignificant, saying, “*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not*” (Isaiah 53:3). It is most likely that Isaiah wrote the fifty third chapter after receiving numerous visions from the Lord in which he saw small pieces that began to come together like a puzzle, yet even Isaiah could not fully comprehend the magnitude of what he saw. In Isaiah 53:4, he continues speaking about the young man of his visions, saying, “*Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*” It was as though Isaiah was present in the crowd that witnessed the crucifixion of Christ. Not knowing who the man of sorrows was, Isaiah “*esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*” Jesus died as a common criminal on a Roman cross, and so it seemed he was in the visions of Isaiah until he saw the aftermath. It was only then that Isaiah could write, “*Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows....*” What followed in the visions of Isaiah must have been a glorious surprise to the prophet which he recorded in these words that have become the “*golden*

text” of the Old Testament; “*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*” (Isaiah 53:5-6). In only twelve verses, Isaiah records his visions of the youth, ministry, rejection, condemnation, sufferings, redeeming death, burial, and resurrection of the Son of God, the new creation and the eternal reign of Christ from the throne of God.

Isaiah also saw the “*glory that would follow*” in the sixtieth chapter. “*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising*” (Isaiah 60:1-3). While this is a prophecy of the glorified Jesus, it is also a prophecy of the “*glorified church*” beginning on the Day of Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost that continued in that generation until the “*world*” had been “*turned upside down,*” and, as John described in Revelation 7:9, “*...a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,*” also trusted in Christ.

The “*sufferings of Christ*” and the “*glory that follows*” cannot be separated; the “*glory of God*” will always follow the “*sufferings of Christ.*” Those “*Christians*” who continually struggle with sin within have never “*suffered with (in union with) Him.*” Instead, they are like the Jews Paul spoke of in Romans 10:3-4: “*For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (the death of the cross, which can only be received through trusting in Christ who died for us). For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*”

This Grace

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into *this grace* wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of god.

Romans 5:1-2

Peter said the prophets prophesied of “*the grace that should come unto you.*” In this text, Paul speaks of “*this grace wherein we stand....*” “*The grace*” the prophets prophesied of could not come until the Messiah came into the world. Christ has come; He has suffered the “*death of the cross,*” and “*the grace*” the prophets prophesied of has come to us. It is given for man in the sufferings of Christ, and it is manifest in the glory that follows. Everything the prophets prophesied concerning the sufferings of Christ was fulfilled in detail at Calvary. Christ came, He suffered at the hands of sinners, He died the horrible “*death of the cross,*” He was buried and He was raised again from the dead. It is in His sufferings and death that Jesus dealt with the sin problem. Through His death He “*destroyed he that had the power of death* (Hebrews 2:14).” In His crucifixion “*our old man* (Romans 6:6)” was nailed to the cross with Him. He “*spoiled principalities and powers,*” and “*blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us* (Deuteronomy 31:26; the Law of Moses), *taking it out of the way, nailing it to His cross*” (Colossians 1:14-15). The “*Sin problem*” was dealt with once for all at the cross. The “*cross of Christ*” is a place of death. It is not a “*self inflicted death;*” no one, at any time has “*crucified themselves.*” Paul says, “*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*” He had nothing to glory in but the cross of Christ, because he did not crucify himself, yet, he was obviously “*crucified.*” It was seen in his “*...doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, and patience*” (II Timothy 3:10). These, among many other things, were the evidence of his crucifixion with Christ. They were some of the “*marks*” he spoke of in his final words to the Galatians, “*...I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*”

In Galatians 2:20, Paul said, “*I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me.*” I present to you that Saul of Tarsus was “*crucified with Christ*” on that Damascus road the first day that Jesus appeared to him. The “*old ‘Jesus hating, Christian killing’ man died*” before Saul could say, “*Lord, what would you have me to do?*” If the “*old Saul*” did not die that day, then when did he die? At what point did he die? Is it possible that Saul of Tarsus was saved “*without the cross to crucify,*” or “*the blood of Christ to sanctify?*” Did Saul of Tarsus,

laying helpless and blind in the dust after seeing the glory of God and hearing the voice of Jesus; did he “*come up another way*” and not “*through the door?*” The sin nature has never once survived the cross. It was not the “*sins*” we committed that Jesus bore to the cross; it was our “*Sin Nature;*” and it was nailed to the cross with Christ. The man who “*gets saved,*” and still has his sin did not “*get saved,*” because “*salvation*” is “*from sin.*” The angel Gabriel told Joseph the future husband of Mary, “*...that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:20-21). There is never so much as a hint in the scriptures that Jesus came to “*save His people from hell.*” According to the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:41, “*everlasting fire*” is “*prepared for the devil and his angels,*” but many men and women will be judged by Christ in that day and cast into that horrible place. It is a place for sinners and rebels as well as for devils and demons. The “*wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23), but Jesus came, suffered, and died, to “*save us from our sin.*” There is no other salvation.

Notice the wording of Peter in I Peter 1:10 and compare it to the words of Paul in Romans 5:2. “*The Grace*” that the prophets prophesied of is “*This Grace*” in which we stand. Notice also that Peter revealed that “*grace*” is manifest both in “*the sufferings of Christ*” and in “*the glory that followed.*” We know the “*sufferings*” refer to Jesus’ death at Calvary, but we also know that our full salvation includes “*the glory that follows.*” In the fulfillment of the vision of the prophets there were fifty days between the “*sufferings of Christ (Passover)*” and “*the glory that followed (Pentecost).*” In real time that is no reason for there to be any such time span between the “*sufferings*” and the “*glory.*” It is necessary, however, that the “*sufferings with Christ*” be complete, whether it be but a “*moment*” or a “*lifetime,*” before the “*glory will follow.*” In Romans 6:6 Paul gives an absolute statement in the words, “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified.*” If a believer is to retain what Christ has done for Him through His death, he must continually “*trust in Christ*” that “*our old man is crucified with Him.*” It must be established as a matter of fact in the faith of the believer, hence, “*I am crucified with Christ...* (Galatians 2:20),” and “*I am, in fact, dead unto Sin, but alive unto God through (in) Jesus*

Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11). It is by grace that it is so, but *it is so* “to everyone that believeth.”

Cornelius

In Acts 11:13-17, after the conversion of Cornelius and his household, Peter gave the account to the Jews at Jerusalem who had challenged him for preaching to the Gentiles. We begin the account with the instructions the angel of God gave to Cornelius; “*Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.*” Cornelius, was a Roman Centurion who was devout, loved God, who fasted and prayed, and gave much alms, but he was also lost. He may have been a Jewish proselyte, but he knew nothing of Jesus or salvation. His total spiritual ignorance was discovered when he fell on his face and worshiped Peter upon his arrival. After a brief introduction, Peter began speaking some very basic truth when, as Acts 10:44 records, “*...the Holy Ghost fell upon all them which heard the word.*”

Did God give the Holy Ghost to sinners? Of course not! In the brief moment before the Holy Ghost fell upon them, everything Christ accomplished on the cross to free them from sin was accomplished in them. They were “*baptized into Jesus’ death*” (not by water; Romans 6:3), “*crucified with Him*” (Romans 6:6), and “*sanctified with His blood*” (Hebrews 13:12). This is a fact and not my speculation, and can be proven by the words of Peter in Acts 15:8-9; “**And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.**” Notice there are six things in this verse that tells what God did in the conversion of Cornelius.

1. “God...knoweth the hearts.” No one has to tell God what is in man. He has no need to watch us for days or weeks to discover whether we are pure, because He “*knows the hearts.*” If the heart is not pure, He will not send the Holy Ghost, for it is not given to sinners. Jesus was speaking of the Holy Ghost when He said, “*...whom the world cannot receive*” (John 14:17).

2. “God...bare them witness.” Even though the apostles themselves had not been willing to believe the Gentiles could be

saved, “*God*” who “*knoweth the hearts*” became the “*witness*” that their hearts were sanctified and fit vessels for the Holy Ghost to fill.

3. “God...giving them the Holy Ghost.” The fact that God “*gave them the Holy Ghost*” is the reason Peter came to the conclusion in Acts 11:17, “*Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?*” This was the “*witness*” of God to Peter concerning the salvation of Gentiles. When the Holy Ghost came upon Jesus in Matthew 3:17, there came a “*voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” Peter heard no audible voice, but he knew the “*witness of God*” that says, “*I am well pleased.*”

4. “God...giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us.” Perhaps most of the churches, including many which are called “*Full Gospel*,” or “*Pentecostal*,” have come to believe that a believer “*receives the Holy Ghost*” at the moment of faith in Christ. This is an error that has locked the modern church out of “*the glory of God*” that is prepared for the believer. Peter saw that God gave the Holy Ghost to the Gentiles “*even as He did unto us.*” The actual record of what God did that day at the house of Cornelius is given in Acts 10:44-46; “*While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.*” The record indicates this as the way they knew the Holy Ghost was given in place after place; “*...they heard them speak with tongues....*”

5. “God...put no difference between us and them.” This is amazing! Peter and the other apostles, plus the total membership of the church at Jerusalem were Jews. Cornelius and his entire household were Gentiles, and Peter recognizes that “*God put no difference between us and them.*” Why do we see differences today? In Christ, there is no difference, where “*...there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28). Does this prove there are sinners in Christ? Absolutely not, as we will see in the sixth thing God did in that moment of time.

6. “God...purifying their hearts by faith.” This is most important to understand. The heart of everyone in that place was “*purified by faith*” **before** the Holy Ghost fell upon them. Some would look at Cornelius’ fasting, praying, and giving alms, and say “*his heart is pure.*” Some would use the fact that he saw visions and received a visitation from angels as proof that his heart was pure. In fact, Cornelius was lost. He was a sinner who needed to be saved. He knew something of God, but knew nothing of Jesus. He fasted and prayed, seeking to know God, who sent his angel to instruct him to “*Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.*” This man Cornelius was so ready to believe and receive that the words had scarcely left Peter’s mouth when “*...the Holy Ghost fell upon all them that heard his word.*” What were those “*wonderful words of life*” to Cornelius? Peter simply related what the Lord had commanded him; “*... (Jesus) commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins*” (Acts 10:42-43). “*Whosoever believeth in Him...*” was enough for Cornelius. He believed what Peter said, and in the same instant that he “*trusted in Christ,*” God “*purified his heart.*” Certainly, in that same instant, his “*old man was crucified,*” because it is “*through faith*” that we are justified. Amazingly, the apostle Peter, a leader among other apostles, saw in the salvation of the Gentiles a great truth which he shared with the Jews in Acts 15:11; “*...that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we (the Jews) shall be saved, even as they (the Gentiles).*”

Made Free

Saul of Tarsus received the Holy Ghost three days after his conversion to Christ. As was the case with Cornelius, God purified his heart in the same moment in which he first “*trusted in Christ.*” Jesus spoke of the heart of man in Mark 7:20-23; “*...that which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come*

from within, and defile the man.” The Sin Nature resides in the heart of man. We understand that He was not speaking of the physical “*organ*” of the body, the “*blood pump*,” but of what Peter called “*the hidden man of the heart*” (I Peter 3:4). The heart that is polluted with a sin nature is filled with all manner of sin, but if God has purified the heart, it is pure from all sin. Adultery cannot come out of a pure heart; neither can any of the other things that Jesus said defile the man from within. It must be understood, salvation is not a “*stronger will power*.” The answer to the sin problem is never “*try harder*.” The answer is expressed by Paul in Romans 6:18, “*being then made free from sin...*” and in Romans 6:22, “*but now being made free from sin*.” Put your trust totally in Him who died for you; He will “*make you free*” (John 8:36).

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall MAKE YOU FREE. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be MADE FREE? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall MAKE YOU FREE, ye shall be free indeed.

John 8:32-36

Most Christians do not understand what Jesus meant when He spoke of being “*made free*.” In fact, most believers misquote Jesus as saying “*...the truth shall set you free...*,” and their experience reveals that they do not understand the difference. Let me explain. Jesus said, “*Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (slave) of sin*.” Someone could “*set*” a slave free, but his “*master*” could always bring him back into slavery, as long as he is a slave. Many prisoners are “*set free*” from prison, but most of them soon return because they are still “*slaves*” to whatever it was that sent them to prison in the first place. When Jesus said “*...ye shall be made free...*,” the word he used for “*made*” corresponded to the Greek word “*eleutheroo*,” which means “*to liberate*.” Looking a little deeper into the word “*eleutheroo*,” we find that it is derived from the Greek word “*eleutheros*,” which means, “*unrestrained (to go at pleasure), that is, (as a citizen) not a slave, (whether freeborn or manumitted)*.” Jesus did not “*set*” us free only to be “*...taken captive by the devil at his will*” (II Timothy 2:26). Jesus has “*made*

us free:” we are “*born again*” the sons of God. We are “*citizens*” of heaven, and thus **cannot be slaves** to sin. The slave we were no longer exists, because he was the one “*nailed to the cross with Christ,*” and a new-born son of God was “*quicken*ed” by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is not a struggle to *be* free; it is only a struggle when we *try*.

Why is the Holy Ghost Given?

The Holy Ghost is not given to help us overcome sin and Satan. We have “*overcome*” by the “*blood of the Lamb*” (Revelation 12:11). The Holy Ghost is not given to give us “*power over sin.*” Our victory over sin is given to us by God through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:56-57). It is a “*victory*” that was forever won through the death of the Son of God. Paul said it this way in Hebrews 2:14-15; “*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*”

Why then was the Holy Ghost given, if not to help us against sin and Satan? Paul explains it very well when speaking to the Gentile saints at Ephesus;

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:13-14

These believers at Ephesus had “*trusted in Christ*” **after** they heard the “*word of truth, the gospel of salvation.*” Also, “*after they believed*” they were “*sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise,*” which means they were “*baptized with the Holy Ghost*” just as the hundred and twenty Jews had been on the Day of Pentecost. It is the fourteenth verse that explains what the Holy Ghost is, and why it was given. We will examine the verse carefully. He speaks of “*...that holy Spirit of promise, which is the **earnest** of our inheritance....*” The word “*earnest*” was translated from the Greek word “*arrhabon,*” which is defined by Strong’s Concordance as “*a*

pledge.” It is something of great value that is given as a guarantee of that which is promised to come. The Holy Ghost is not “*our inheritance;*” in fact, He is not even a part of our inheritance. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of God, who “*swore by Himself*” when He gave a covenant of blessing to Abraham and his “*seed.*” When God “*swore by Himself*” He made Himself the guarantor of the promise to Abraham. He gave Himself in His Son (II Corinthians 5:19) as the guarantor (surety) of a better covenant (Hebrews 7:22), which is the covenant of blessing He gave to Abraham and his “*seed*” four hundred and thirty years before the Law of Moses was added (Galatians 3:16-17). It is a covenant that was confirmed by the blood of the Son of God, and it is our “*inheritance*” that was purchased by that same blood. Now, God has given Himself to us in the Holy Ghost as the “*guarantor*” of the full inheritance that is ours through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:29).

“...the earnest of our inheritance *until* (into) the redemption of the purchased possession....” There is one word in this phrase in which the translators erred. Due to their error, a wonderful truth of God has been concealed from untold millions of Christians for hundreds of years. Only recently did I recognize the truth hidden in this text. It is in the erroneous use of the word “*until,*” which seems to indicate that we “*receive the Holy Ghost*” to help us in this present life “*until*” we either die or Jesus comes, and we receive the inheritance. The error the translators made is undeniable, and probably on purpose, because they could not possibly comprehend the power of the truth that Paul was giving to us. The translators erroneously translated the word “*until*” from the Greek word “*eis,*” which means “*to,*” or as in this case, “*into.*” The word “*eis*” is used **sixteen hundred and ninety three** times in the New Testament, and is translated only **one** time as “*until.*” The correct understanding of this text is that the Holy Ghost is the guarantor that God has given us to bring us “*into the redemption of the purchased possession.*” The word “*redemption*” in this verse as in most other places means “*ransom in full.*” The words “*purchased possession*” are translated from the Greek word “*peripoiesis,*” which means “*acquisition.*” The “*acquisition*” speaks of the full inheritance which belongs to the children of God which is reserved for us “*in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*” It is the work of the Holy Ghost, not to bring the inheritance down to us, but to work in the children

of God just as He worked in Christ, to “*raise us up together, and make us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*” It is from this “*heavenly place*” which is “*far above principalities, powers, might, and dominion* (Ephesians 1:21)” that the work of ministry begins. It is also in this “*heavenly place*” that we are “*blessed with all spiritual blessings...*” (Ephesians 1:3), which is our “*inheritance*” in Christ Jesus.

The Invitation

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II Thessalonians 2:13-14

God has chosen us to salvation “*through sanctification of the (spirit)...*” It is the opinion of this writer that the word “*Spirit*” should have been “*spirit*” with a small letter “*s*” which would indicate our “*spirit*” rather than the “*Holy Spirit.*” Entire sanctification, which is by the blood of Jesus, includes the “*spirit, soul, and body*” of man (I Thessalonians 5:23). The Holy Ghost is not given to sanctify us. Jesus is both our saviour and our sanctifier, and He sanctifies us “*with His own blood*” (Hebrews 13:12). We are saved *through* sanctification of our spirit and belief of the truth. Paul continues in the next verse to say, “*Wherein He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Such a “*calling*” is mind boggling to say the least. Jesus did not call us to struggle in sin. Instead, He said, “*I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28). Everyone He calls, He invites, through the gospel, to sit with Him and share His glory. He does not stand at the cross saying “*come to repentance.*” He sits on the throne of heaven, saying “*Come unto me.*” Come *through* repentance; come *through* faith; come *through* the death of the cross; come *through* resurrection with Him; come *through* the baptism with the Holy Ghost, and do not be satisfied to linger along the way, but come unto Him, to sit with Him. Repentance and faith causes us to stand before God. The cross slays our old man of sin; His blood sanctifies us wholly, and He sends the Holy Ghost to work in us, renewing us day by day, filling us into all fullness, and lifting us into the

heavenly places to sit with Him and share His glory. Paul said this same thing very simply in Romans 8:16-17; *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him (crucified with Christ), that we may be also glorified together.”* The only qualification for being *“glorified together”* with Christ, is that we come through the death of the cross, being *“crucified in union with Him.”* The next verse confirms that no amount of suffering in this present life would be worthy payment for the glory He reveals in us by the Holy Ghost.

Did the Apostle Paul Have a SIN Problem?

With such a *“high calling”* given to us, why do we yet quibble over sin, when Jesus died to make us free? Why do so many think that the *“great apostle Paul”* had a sin problem, therefore it is not so bad if *“even I, as great as I am,”* also have a sin problem. Such a belief is rooted in pride. It is the old man’s thinking that if I can pull others down to my level, I will not appear so bad. Not everyone will be convinced just because I say so, but the apostle Paul *did not have a secret sin problem.* I know because it would be impossible for it to be so. What *“secrets”* he had as Saul of Tarsus, the Pharisee I do not know, except to know that he became condemned in his own heart as a sinner when he heard the testimony of Stephen and consented to his death. He was not saved, but his outward lifestyle until that time according to the *“righteousness that is in the law”* was *“blameless”* (Philippians 3:6). Of course, Saul of Tarsus, even as a devout Jew, was *“...by nature a child of wrath, even as others”* (Ephesians 2:3). We know that evil nature died when Saul of Tarsus first trusted in Christ on the road to Damascus. Three days later he was baptized with the Holy Ghost, which will not co-habit with sin, and a new period began in Saul’s life. He was now *“Saul of Tarsus,”* a *“Christian.”* He began preaching to the Jews in Damascus that Jesus is the Messiah, and had to flee for his life to Jerusalem, where he met Peter and the apostles for the first time. He preached Christ to the Grecians, and had to flee a second time, this time to Tarsus. The next thing on God’s agenda for Saul is revealed in Galatians 1:15-16; *“...it pleased God...to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen....”* This is when He

received the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, during a time in which he was alone, for he said *“I conferred not with flesh and blood.”* This began a **three year** period, in which he was a teacher in Antioch for well over a year before returning to Jerusalem a second time. He had received the revelation of the gospel and was teaching it at Antioch where the people first became known as *“Christians.”* His reason for returning to Jerusalem where he spent only fifteen days was to carry *“relief”* to the Jerusalem saints who were suffering under a great drought at the time. Returning to Antioch, a second period of **fourteen years** began when the Holy Ghost spoke to the elders of the church, *“Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost....”* This was the beginning of Saul’s ministry as an Apostle, at which time he became known for the first time as *“Paul, the apostle.”* After fourteen years of ministry as an apostle, after establishing churches in many cities and nations, Paul made his third visit to Jerusalem, this time to challenge the message of those who taught *“Except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved.”* It was only then, over seventeen years after his salvation, and over fourteen years after his revelation of the gospel (see II Corinthians 12:2-4), that the apostle Paul *“received the right hands of fellowship (Galatians 2:9)”* from Peter and the other apostles. This man was not a sinner. He was instead a *“pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him (Christ) to life everlasting”* (I Timothy 1:16).

I recall a horrible time in my own life. Thirty five years ago I became a slave to sin after having preached the gospel for a dozen years. During those early years of ministry I had seen great healings and miracles, and hundreds of souls saved. Our ministry was on the radio in several states where I also evangelized under a large gospel tent. Several missionaries went out from our church into Mexico (some continuing over forty years later). We had a rescue mission on Congress Avenue in Houston Texas with services every night. The people of the old *“Streams from Calvary”* church were very active, ministering continually in drug rehabs, rest homes, and street services. For several years, our church on Jensen Dr in Houston was the church to be in if you wanted to work for God. I did not know it

at the time, but the “*beginning of the end*” of a great ministry began when I came under the influence of a nationally known preacher that taught the necessity of fasting for sanctification and crucifixion, sacrificial giving for self denial, and many other things that were contrary to the gospel of Christ. At first this ministry appeared to be the holiest I had ever seen, which was a great attraction for me at that time. During those years under this man’s influence, we did not wear neck ties or colored suits because they were “*worldly.*” After about three years I began to see the horrible spirit that was behind that ministry and withdrew, but the damage was already done in my church, my home, my marriage, and most importantly, in my soul. Sin revived in my heart, and I began to be troubled with things that I was confident that I would never do. During this time I began to despair of sanctification and crucifixion, because all my fasting and sacrificing had utterly failed to accomplish these. One night I received a vision from the Lord, through which He sought to intervene in my confusion. The vision took me back to the time in March, 1958 that I had been gloriously saved and baptized with the Holy Ghost. In that salvation I had seen Jesus on the cross, suffering and dying for me, and it was wonderful to me, that He had loved me, and gave himself for me. The vision then brought me to about a dozen years later, a time when I had ceased to look to the cross. In my despair, however, in the vision I looked again to the cross. This time I saw more than I had seen when I was first saved. In the vision, I still saw Jesus hanging on the cross, but superimposed over His body was my body; my hands nailed over His hands, and my feet nailed over His feet, I was “*crucified with Him.*” As I came out of the vision, I heard the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 6:6, “*...knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him....*” Immediately I came alive, preaching exactly what I had seen; “*crucified with Christ...body of sin destroyed...he that is dead is freed from sin.*” O what revival I began to have as many souls were delivered out of the same bondage of religion I was delivered from. Wonderful things were happening again after my second look to the cross. Then, unbelievably, after such wonderful intervention and deliverance, an older man of God whom I respected greatly came to me one day. He came with flatteries, but his purpose was to tell me, “*Brother Surface, you have missed it in one point. Your old man is not crucified, and he is not dead. You will have to fight with him every day that you live as long as you live.*

After all," he said, "*the great apostle Paul said he had to 'die daily.'*" This man had been the pastor of a much larger church than mine, and I thought he understood better than I did. I accepted what He said, and within two years I was backslidden and living in atrocious sin. I, who had preached salvation to hundreds of others, was a slave to sin, and could not help myself. The only difference I can think of between myself and many others who have since become slaves to sin is that I knew that if I died, I would go to hell. The entire scenario lasted almost four years, two of which I wept day and night in repentance, sleeping on a tear soaked pillow, yet finding no liberty from sin. I will never forget the night of March 2, 1980, after I had spent some time at the altar repenting. When I opened my Bible, it fell open to Micah 7:8-9 where I read these words; "*Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.*" As I read these words, I heard the Spirit speak to me, saying, "*The indignation is past; I will restore.*" I knew that I was forgiven; I had received a pardon from God. Oh, what joy was mine.

Several years passed as the ministry was being restored. By the mid-eighties I was on more radio stations than ever before, preaching with a great godly hatred of sin. I was again receiving visions from God as a "*watchman;*" visions of things to come that usually happened within weeks. I saw in visions from God the scandals that came to the two largest television ministries in the world at that time. I preached the things I saw, and wept like a baby when they came to pass. I identified with the fallen ministers because I had walked in their shoes. I came to a place in my ministry that I felt exactly like one of Job's friends that Elihu reproved in Job 32:3; "*...because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.*" I could not continue without an answer, but I was still blinded to the light I had once seen. I told the Lord in prayer one day in 1989, "*You have given me visions of sin scandals before they happened. If you can do this, surely you can reveal to me the answer they need to be free. If you can't give me the answer for the sin problem that is in the heart of man, then I will close my*

Bible and never preach again.” I came to the place that I could no longer condemn sinners without an answer. I know now that God Himself had crowded me to that place. Every door of ministry closed to me, and I thought that God was through with me, but in my personal prayer and study, I was drawn, first to the blood of Jesus for sanctification, and then to the cross for crucifixion. It was actually two years later, in 1991, that my “ears” were opened to “*hear...the blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel*” (Hebrews 12:24). For the first time I heard with my heart the words “*...how much more shall the blood of Christ...purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God.*” I lifted up my hands and rejoiced as the wonder of what I had heard from the scripture flooded me. “*Jesus, I thank you that you shed you blood to wash me inside.*” In a moment of time He washed my heart, and the filth and guilt of the memory of sins past that remained in my thoughts, imaginations, and dreams turned off like a man would turn a water faucet off. They ceased, and I have been free from that moment with the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

What Do You Believe?

It makes a difference what you believe. If you believe, for example, that the seventh chapter of Romans is the normal experience of a child of God, you will struggle for a lifetime with sin and never be free. If, on the other hand, you believe the words of Jesus in John 8:32, “*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” The “*truth*” that Jesus said “*will make you free*” is found in His word, which Paul called “*the gospel of Christ.*”