

# Major Bible Themes

BY

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## CHAPTER XXIX

### SALVATION FROM THE POWER OF SIN

Since salvation from the power of sin is God's gracious provision for those whom He has already saved from the guilt and penalty of sin, this doctrine, in its application, is limited to Christians. Though saved and safe in Christ, Christians still have the disposition to sin, and do sin. To these facts both the Scriptures and human experience give abundant proof. Based upon the fact that Christians sin, the New Testament proceeds to explain the divinely provided way of deliverance.

Having supposed that a Christian would neither sin nor be disposed to sin, many young believers are confused and alarmed -- even doubting their own salvation -- when they discover the reigning power of sin in their lives. Well may they be alarmed at sin, for it outrages the holiness of God; but in place of doubt as to salvation or yielding to the practise of sin they should learn God's gracious provisions whereby there is deliverance.

#### I. AN EXACT REVELATION FROM GOD

As it is in the preaching of the Gospel, so it is in the presentation of the doctrine of divine deliverance, the need of accuracy of statement is as imperative as the value of a soul. The state

demands extended preparation and examination before men are permitted to prescribe for the ills of the body. How much more serious it is to prescribe for the ills of the soul; yet how carelessly and inaccurately these eternal issues are often presented! Next to the way of salvation there is no more important theme to be mastered by the human mind than the divine plan whereby a Christian may live to the glory of God. Ignorance and error may result in a spiritual malpractice with its blasting effects reaching on into eternity.

## **II. FROM WHAT SOURCE IN A CHRISTIAN DOES SIN PROCEED?**

Having received the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4) while still retaining the old nature, every child of God possesses two natures; one is incapable of sinning, and the other is incapable of holiness. The old nature, sometimes called "sin" (meaning the source of sin), and "old man," is a part of the flesh; for, in Scriptural usage, the term flesh, when used in a moral sense, refers to the spirit and soul, as well as the body -- especially of the unregenerate man. Therefore, the Apostle Paul states: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). On the other hand, when considering the imparted divine nature, the Apostle John writes: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [practise] sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9). This Scripture teaches that every Christian, being born of God, does not practise sin. Reference is made in the text to the divine Seed which is in him, which Seed cannot sin. However, it should be observed that it is this same Epistle which warns every child of God against professing that he has no sin nature (1:8), or that he has not sinned (1:10).

These two sources of action in the believer are again considered in Galatians 5:17, where both the Holy Spirit and the flesh are seen constantly to be active and in unceasing conflict: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." The Apostle is not writing here of the carnal Christian, but of the most spiritual, even of the one who is not fulfilling the lust of the flesh (5:16). In such a one this conflict exists, and though he is delivered from the lust of the flesh, it is because he is walking in dependence upon the Spirit.

## **III. THE CHRISTIAN'S WAY OF VICTORY**

Various teachings are abroad which purport to secure deliverance for the Christian from the power of sin:

1. It is claimed that the Christian will be compelled to live to the glory of God if he observes sufficient rules. This law-principle is doomed to fail because it depends upon the very flesh from which deliverance is sought (Rom. 6:14).

2. It is widely claimed that the Christian may seek and secure the eradication of the old nature, being thus permanently free from the power of sin. There are objections to this theory:

- (a.) There is no Scripture upon which the theory of eradication may be based.

- (b.) The old nature is a part of the flesh and will naturally be dealt with as God deals with the flesh. The flesh is one of the Christian's mighty foes -- the world, the flesh, and the devil. God

does not eradicate the world, or the flesh, or the devil; but He provides victory over these by His Spirit (1 John 5:4; 4:4; Gal. 5:16). In like manner, He provides victory over the old nature by the Spirit (Rom. 6:14; 8:2).

(c.) No actual human experience confirms the theory of eradication, and were that theory true, parents of this class would give birth to unfallen children.

(d.) Likewise, when this theory is accepted, there remains no place for, and no meaning to, the ministry of the indwelling Spirit. On the contrary, the most spiritual Christians are warned concerning the necessity of walking by the Spirit, reckoning, yielding, not letting sin reign, putting off, mortifying, and abiding.

3. Again, sometimes the Christian supposes that, apart from the Spirit and simply because he is saved, he can live to the glory of God. In Romans 7:15 to 8:4 the Apostle records his own experience with this theory. He states that he knew what was good, but he did not know how to perform what he knew (7:18). He therefore concluded (1) that at his best he was always defeated because of an ever-present law of sin in his members warring against his mind (7:23); (2) such an estate is wretched (7:24); (3) though saved, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made him free, and not his own works (8:2); (4) the whole will of God is fulfilled in the believer, but never fulfilled by the believer (8:4).

In Romans 7:25 it is stated that deliverance from the power of sin is through -- not by -- Jesus Christ our Lord. Since a problem related to the holiness of God is involved, deliverance can only be through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit could not take control of an unjudged fallen nature; but it is stated in Romans 6:1-10 that the believer's fallen nature has been judged by co-crucifixion, co-death, and co-burial with Christ, making it morally possible for the indwelling Holy Spirit to give victory. Under these provisions, the believer may walk in the power of a new life principle which is by dependence upon the Spirit alone, and should reckon himself to be dead indeed unto sin (6:4, 11). Thus it is that deliverance is by the Spirit through Christ.

#### **IV. VICTORY BY THE SPIRIT**

"If by means of the Spirit ye are walking, ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16, lit.). Salvation from the power of sin, like salvation from the penalty of sin, is of God, and depends, on the human side, upon an attitude of faith; as salvation from the penalty of sin depends on an act of faith. The justified one shall live by faith -- faith which depends on the power of another -- and the justified one will never know a time in this life when he will need to depend less on the Spirit.

#### **V. THREE REASONS FOR A LIFE OF DEPENDENCE ON THE INDWELLING SPIRIT**

1. Under the teachings of grace, a believer faces an impossible heavenly standard of life; being a citizen of Heaven (Phil. 3:20), a member of the Body of Christ (Eph. 5:30), and of the household and family of God (Eph. 2:19; 3:15), the child of God is called upon to act in accordance with his heavenly position. Since this is a superhuman manner of life (John 13:34; Eph. 4:30; 2 Cor. 10:5; Eph. 5:20; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Thess. 5:16, 17; Eph. 4:1-3), he must depend on the indwelling Spirit (Rom. 8:4).

2. The Christian faces Satan -- the world-ruling foe. Because of this, he must be "strong in the Lord" (Eph. 6:10-12; 1 John 4:4; Jude 1:9).

3. And, as has been seen, the Christian possesses the old nature which he is powerless to control.

## QUESTIONS

1. Why is salvation from the power of sin limited in its application to those who are already saved from the penalty of sin?

2. a. Is the doctrine concerning God's provided cure for the Christian's sin a separate and distinct teaching of the Scriptures?

b. How important is accuracy in all the doctrines of salvation?

3. a. Does the child of God possess two natures?

b. From what source in the believer does sin proceed?

4. If there is a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, is it limited to carnal Christians?

5. Name three unscriptural theories of getting victory over sin which are proposed by men.

6. Why does the law method fail?

7. Name four reasons why the eradication method fails.

8. Why cannot the saved person by his own new life and apart from the Spirit live to the glory of God?

9. What was the Apostle Paul's experience at this point?

10. Name four important conclusions stated in Romans 7:15 to 8:4.

11. Since deliverance from the power of sin is by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:2), what is meant by the statement that this deliverance is through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7:25)?

12. a. Distinguish between an act of faith and an attitude of faith.

b. Will the need to depend wholly on the Spirit be growing less as the believer grows in grace and the knowledge of Christ?

13. What is the position of the believer through grace and how does this impose a high and holy manner of life which is humanly impossible?

14. Name the three super-human demands which are laid on every Christian.