

# ***A STUDY OF BIBLICAL HOLINESS***

*Dennis McBride - 1993*

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*Part 1*  
**HOLINESS: THE DIVINE IMPERATIVE**  
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**INTRODUCTION:**

1. I suspect that this valley has yet to see what God can do through a body of believers fully yielded to Him.
2. If we desire to be a church that is effective, effusive, and infectious for Christ, we must be a people of holiness.

We can devise all kinds of games, gimmicks, and gadgets to attract people, but God wants us to be wholly like him and holy like Him.

3. Do you ever wonder why we so often limp along spiritually, licking our wounds and longing for victory? Why we so often stagnate or settle for mediocrity in the things of Christ?

Perhaps it's because we've lost our PASSION FOR HOLINESS. And it's that passion I want to call us to.

4. Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter comments,

“No subject which ever engages the thought of Christian believers can be more sacredly commanding than that of our personal holiness, by which I mean an inwrought holiness of heart and life. Beyond contradiction, this is our ‘priority-number-one’ concern. Admittedly, one would not infer so from the general appearance of things just now, but it is so, if the New Testament is true.

“Although this deeper work of the Holy Spirit in the consecrated believer seems little expounded in the average church today, with the unhappy consequence that comparatively few Christians seem to know much about it in experience, it still remains true that this call to holiness is the first call of the New Testament to all Christians. For the moment, let just one text of Scripture represent the many to us: Ephesians 1:4, staggering in its mystery and immensity:

“He [God] hath chosen us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (*Christian Holiness Restudied and Restated*, p. 13).

5. Reasons for the decline in holiness preaching and living:

- a. Undermining of biblical authority

We'll never aspire to a holy standard of living without an authoritative base.

- b. The standard seems too high

Some people, even some preachers, are intimidated to speak of it, lest they be viewed as hypocrites. Granted, it is convicting to preach such a high standard of holiness, but it is God's standard and we must proclaim nothing less.

c. Absence of role models

We need truly godly leaders to emulate holiness and to hold us accountable. Ungodly or complacent spiritual leaders confuse the issue.

d. Our current self-centered/man-centered theology

Many professing Christians are so focused on what they think God should *give* them that they've apparently lost sight of what He wants to *make* them. They've exchanged what they can *become* for what they can *get*. Like the prophet Isaiah, they need a fresh vision of God's holiness (Isaiah 6). We all do!

e. Theological tradition

Currently there is a much debate over the "Lordship Salvation" issue (i.e., does salvation require yielding to Christ's lordship, or must we simply receive Him as our Savior?). Many people have so separated justification from sanctification that they believe it is possible to be a true believer and *never* manifest the fruit of repentance. However, Scripture has much to say to the contrary, as we will see from James and other passages.

f. Misunderstanding and confusion about the doctrine of holiness

Over the decades several contradictory and confusing holiness theories have been introduced, including "eradication," "counteraction," and "identification," which we will explore later in this study.

6. Despite the current decline in holiness preaching and living, the Bible teaches the priority of true holiness in no uncertain terms. In fact, there are 653 verses in the New American Standard text that speak of holiness (listed under "holy, holiness, holier, holies, sanctify, sanctification, sanctified, sanctifies, sanctifier, sanctifying").

7. Theologian W. E. Sangster summarizes:

"All through the Word of God exhortations to holiness appear. They are not sporadic, occasional, or tempered by doubt concerning God's ability to do this thing in us. Underlying them all is the confidence that God can do something more with our sins than forgive them."

8. Some examples of holiness passages:

**Lev. 21:44-45** - "I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy. . . . For I am the Lord, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; thus you shall be holy for I am holy."

**Luke 1:72-75** - “Remember [God’s] holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.”

**2 Cor. 7:1** - “Having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

**Heb. 12:14** - “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”

**1 Pet. 1:13-16** - “Gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am Holy.’”

**2 Pet. 3:10-11** - “The day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.”

9. Some key question we will address in this study are:

- What is the Christian’s relationship to sin?
- What does God do with our sins?
- What is the extent of the Spirit’s work within each believer regarding holy living?
- Can we expect full deliverance from both the “root” (inbred sin principle) and the “fruit” (outward acts of sin) in this life, or must we wait for our glorified bodies?

10. Let’s begin by defining holiness.

## **I. THE DEFINITION OF HOLINESS**

### **A. ITS GREEK ROOT**

*Hagiasmos* = “to Make Holy” or “to Sanctify”

### **B. ITS TWOFOLD TRANSLATION**

Hagiasmos is translated “holiness” and “Sanctification.”

### C. ITS TWOFOLD CONNOTATION

1. *Objectively, hagiasmos means to be set apart (also known as positional holiness).*
  - a. In a negative sense it means to be set apart *from* sin.
  - b. In a positive sense it means to be set apart *unto* God.
2. *Subjectively, hagiasmos means to be cleansed inwardly (also known as practical holiness).*
  - a. In a negative sense it means to be purged *from* sin.
  - b. In a positive sense it means to be refined, regenerated, renewed in mind and soul.

## II. THE SOURCE OF HOLINESS

### A. MAN IS NOT THE SOURCE OF HOLINESS

1. *We cannot generate holiness on the human level.*
2. *Trusting in righteousness apart from Christ is where religious unbelievers go wrong.*
  - a. They say in effect, “I’m going to please God on my own, by doing religious things and thereby generating my own righteousness.
  - b. Of them Paul says (as he also said of unsaved Jewish people):  
  
“Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end [the goal] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (*Rom. 10:1-4*).
3. *Trusting in righteousness apart from Christ is where many believers go wrong.*
  - a. They say in effect, “Now that I’m a Christian, I can please God by my own efforts. I don’t have to rely on the Holy Spirit.” They mistakenly think that spiritual goals can be achieved by fleshly means.
  - b. Of them Paul says (as he also said of the spiritually faltering Galatians):  
  
“You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law,

or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (*Gal. 3:1-3*).

## **B. GOD ALONE IS THE SOURCE OF HOLINESS**

Our holiness has its source in the absolute holiness of the triune God.

### **1. God the Father**

*1 Pet. 1:14-16* - "As obedient children do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be Holy, for I am Holy.'"

### **2. God the Son**

*1 Cor. 1:30-31* - "By His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.'"

### **3. God the Holy Spirit**

- a. He is the Holy Spirit (*Hagios Pneumatos*)
- b. He is utterly and completely set apart for God's service.
- c. Additionally, He is utterly holy in character.
- d. He indwells every believer, sets them apart for God's service, sets them apart from sin unto righteousness, and produces in them holiness of character.

*1 Pet. 1:9-11* - "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; [He has separated, sanctified you for His own purposes]--for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul."

## **III. THE THREE Ps OF HOLINESS**

Scripture presents three distinct aspects of Christian holiness: **Positional**, **Practical**, and **Perfected**.

### **A. POSITIONAL HOLINESS**

1. ***The explanation of positional holiness***

Positional holiness results from our position or standing in Christ. Because we belong to Him, God sees us as perfectly holy.

2. ***The basis of positional holiness***

Believers are positionally holy because Christ's righteousness has been imputed to them. Imputation is a theological (and biblical) term borrowed from accounting. It means that Christ's holiness is credited to our account, and our sin is credited to His.

- a. Positional holiness isn't based on our inward holiness of heart.
- b. It results from our identity with Christ from the moment of our salvation.

**2 Cor. 5:21** - "He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Christ exchanged His righteousness for our sin!

- c. In other words, our positional holiness is a person: Christ.

**1 Cor. 1:30** - "By His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."

3. ***Other examples of positional holiness***

- a. The Old Testament Day of Atonement

On the Day of Atonement, one goat was sacrificed; one was released (the scapegoat, upon which Israel's sins were confessed). That act brought cleansing to Israel "before the Lord" (i.e., in God's sight).

**Lev. 16:30** - "It is on this Day that Atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you shall be clean from all your sins before the Lord."

- b. All believers

**Heb. 10:10-14** - "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."

Christ's perfect offering has already perfected (in the positional sense) those who are in the process of being made holy (sanctified).

**1 Cor. 1:1-2** - "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord is a sanctified saint!

c. The Corinthian believers

**1 Cor. 1:1-2** - "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul assured the Corinthians that they were sanctified saints, but please notice that in 1 Cor. 3:1-3 and 16 Paul confronts their sin and spiritual immaturity:

"I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?. . . Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"

How do we reconcile sinful believers with sanctified, Spirit-indwelt saints? It's the difference between positional and practical sanctification. They were holy in position (because they belonged to Christ), but not yet in practice.

#### 4. *The timing of positional holiness*

a. Positional holiness occurs at the moment of salvation. Therefore, believers are spoken of in the past tense as "having been made righteous" or "having been sanctified" (past tense).

1) Scripture parallels sanctification and salvation.

**Acts 26:15-18** - Paul's commission from Christ was "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in [Christ]."

- 2) Paul equates *washing* with *sanctification* and *justification* - three salvation terms in one context.

**1 Cor. 6:9-11** - “Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

“And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.”

- b. Scripture also uses the present tense to describe believers as already being holy.

**1 Pet. 2:9-10** - “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a Holy nation, a people for God’s own possession; that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

## **B. PRACTICAL HOLINESS**

Positional holiness is the result of what Christ did for us on the cross; practical holiness is the result of what the Holy Spirit does within us.

As our minds grasp the overwhelming truth that we are already sanctified in the sight of God, our hearts should rejoice in, and long for, that sweet communion with God that results from a practical, inward holiness of heart. We should long to be more like Him!

### **1. Practical holiness is initiated by God**

- a. God takes the initiative:

**1 Thess. 3:12-13** - “May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”

**1 Thess. 5:23** - “May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- b. God grants the resources in Christ:

**Phil. 2:13** - “It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

**2 Pet. 1:2-4** - “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”

c. God does the transforming work:

**Rom. 12:2** - “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

**2 Cor. 3:18** - We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed [passive tense] into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

**Eph. 3:14-19** - Paul prayed, “For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened [passive tense] with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.”

Is that really possible? Yes! Paul continues:

“Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (vv. 20-21).

## 2. ***Practical holiness is to be pursued by every believer***

a. **Phil. 2:13** - “It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

However, verse 12 gives the balance: “Work out your own salvation.”

b. **2 Pet. 1:2-4** - We have all things pertaining to life and godliness.

However, verses 5 -7 give the balance: *We* supply diligence, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

- c. **Rom. 12:2** - “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

However, verse 1 gives the balance: “Present yourselves as living sacrifices [continually].”

**In Rom. 6:11ff** Paul adds, “Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. There fore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

“For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. . . . For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.”

- d. **2 Cor. 3:18** - “We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

However, we must behold the glory of the Lord. How do we do that? What is the mirror into which we look? It is God’s Word. We must expose ourselves to the Word! (James uses a similar word picture in James 1:25).

- e. **Eph. 3:14-19** - The Holy Spirit within you can do more than you ask or think.

However, chapter 4 verse 1 adds: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.”

- f. One theologian explained the balance this way:

“It is . . . the duty of the sanctified to cultivate the Christian graces they receive from God. This is a necessary part of their dedication to holy character. These exhortations do not diminish in any way the doctrine that these graces have their origin in God; nor does the truth that they are God’s gift cancel the need for a man so to co-operate that these graces will have full expression in his life” (*The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, pp. 160-61).

### 3. ***Practical holiness is a matter of the heart***

- a. It is not found merely by conforming to an external code of conduct.
- b. It is not moral virtue.

- c. It is not religious traditions.
- d. It is not restraining sin for fear of its consequences.
- e. It is not restraining sin to avoid a guilty conscience.
- f. It is the fruit of loving Christ and His Word.

#### 4. *A Spiritual Checklist*

If you are being sanctified you will:

- a. See spiritual progress in your life.
- b. Sense the Holy Spirit working in your life.
- c. Have a strong antipathy toward sin.
- d. Seek to serve God out of love.
- e. Demonstrate a spiritually disciplined life.
- f. Love God's Word.
- g. Associate with holy people.

### C. **PERFECTED HOLINESS**

#### 1. *The explanation*

Perfected Holiness has to do with our final state. When we are finally glorified and in the presence of Christ, we will be perfectly holy.

#### 2. *The examples*

- a. **1 John 3:2** - "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."
- b. **Phil. 3:20-21** - "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

**Part 2**  
**IS HOLINESS SINLESS PERFECTION?**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. My observation is that many Christians encounter frustration and discouragement in trying to live for Christ because they confuse positional, practical, and perfected holiness. For example, if you believe you can be perfectly sinless in this life, you will struggle with every sinful impulse or act.
2. My reason for presenting this portion of our study is not to attack or belittle what others teach about holiness, but to encourage you to understand, pursue, and experience true holiness unhindered by theological confusion.
3. Unfortunately, in getting to the truth of the matter, it will be necessary to address some errors.
4. Remember, to question one's theory of holiness is not necessarily to question his motive, sincerity, or Christian example. Many gifted and gracious people have taught holiness theories with which I disagree. In the final analysis, we all are finite creatures attempting to understand the infinite mind of God as revealed in His Word. Our task is to be as accurate as possible.

**I. THE ROOTS OF PERFECTIONISM**

**A. PERFECTIONISM'S SUPPOSED BIBLICAL ROOTS**

We might wonder why anyone would impose a standard of perfection on themselves? Because Scripture *seems* to teach it.

1. **Matt. 5:48** - Jesus said, "You are to be *perfect*, as your heavenly Father is *perfect*."
2. **2 Cor. 7:1** - "Having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of God."
3. **Phil. 3:15** - "Let us therefore, *as many as are perfect*, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you."
4. **Col. 4:12** - "Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, *that you may stand perfect* and fully assured in all the will of God."
5. **Heb. 12:22-23** - "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to *the spirits of righteous men made perfect*."
6. **1 Pet. 1:15** - "Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, '*You shall be holy, for I am holy.*'"

7. **1 Pet. 5:10** - “And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, *will Himself perfect*, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”
8. **Rom. 6:5-7** - “If we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that *our old self was crucified with Him*, that our *body of sin might be done away with*, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is *freed from sin*.” (NASB).  
  
**King James Version** = “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin *might be destroyed*, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”
9. **Gal. 2:20** - “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.”
10. **1 John 3:9** - “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and *he cannot sin*, because he is born of God.”

## B. **PERFECTIONISM’S HISTORICAL ROOTS**

### 1. **The primary motives**

Many men and women of the past, desiring to understand, live, and teach biblical holiness, developed various theories to explain how one becomes holy.

### 2. **The primary man**

Prominent among early holiness teachers was **John Wesley**, an English pastor and teacher whom God used in marvelous ways. From him sprang *The Methodist Holiness Movement* of the 1700s.

## II. **THE ROUTES OF PERFECTIONISM**

In its development over the decades, perfectionism has taken two primary routes: the Eradication Theory, and the Counteraction/Identification Theory.

### A. **THE ERADICATION THEORY OF HOLINESS**

#### 1. **The passages**

Support for this theory leans heavily on two key passages:

- a. **Rom. 6:6** - “Knowing this, that our *old man* is crucified with him, that the *body of sin might be destroyed*, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin” (KJV).

Eradicationism equates the “old man” and the “body of sin” with an “old sin nature.”

- b. **Gal. 2:20** - “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.”

## 2. *The position*

- a. To John Wesley, sanctification meant the complete removal (eradication) of the old sin nature sometime after salvation.
- b. To eradicate is to uproot, remove, eliminate, or destroy something. Therefore, the eradication theory maintains that at the “Second Blessing” (or sanctification, which he believed came sometime after salvation), the old sin nature is entirely removed by the Holy Spirit, and the sanctified believer is left with only a new holy nature (thereby making him sinlessly perfect).
- c. This theory makes a strict distinction between salvation and sanctification. Salvation is the imparting of a new holy nature that coexists with an old sin nature. Sanctification is the removal of the old sin nature.
- d. The theory in the words of John Wesley himself

“[At sanctification] inward sin is then totally destroyed; the root of pride, self-will, anger, love of the world, is then taken out of the heart. . . . The carnal mind, and the heart bent to backsliding, are entirely [rooted out; abolished]” (*Sermons, Vol. I, p. 124*).

“‘I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’ - Words that manifestly describe a deliverance from inward as well as outward sin. . . . ‘I live not’ (my evil nature, the body of sin, is destroyed)” (*Sermons, Vol. 2, p. 19*).

- e. In the words of Dr. Harry Ironside (who rejected eradication), the theory is that:

“Justification . . . [is] a work of grace by which sinners are made righteous and freed from their sinful habits when they come to Christ.

“But in the merely justified soul there remains a corrupt principle, an evil tree, or ‘a root of bitterness,’ which continually prompts to sin. If the believer obeys this impulse and willfully sins, he ceases to be justified [loses his or her salvation]; therefore the desirability of its removal, that the likelihood of back-sliding may be greatly lessened.

“The *eradication* of this sinful root is *sanctification*. It is therefore the cleansing of the nature from all inbred sin by the blood of Christ (applied through faith when a full consecration is made), and the refining fire of the Holy Spirit, who burns out all dross when all is laid upon the altar of sacrifice.

“This, and this only, is true sanctification--a distinct *second work of grace* [‘Second Blessing’] subsequent to justification, and without which that justification is very likely to be lost!” (*Holiness: the False and the True*, p. 42, emphasis added).

- f. In the words of Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter (who rejects eradication)

“The teaching is, that in ‘entire sanctification,’ which comes by way of the ‘second blessing,’ there is complete eradication of ‘inbred sin,’ of the sinful ‘old man’ or ‘old nature’ or ‘the flesh,’ or the ‘carnal nature’ which still lingers in the believer after conversion” (*Holiness: Restudied and Restated*, p. 46).

- g. In the words of W. MacDonald (cited in Baxter)

“In regeneration sin does not reign; in sanctification it does not exist. In regeneration sin is suspended; in sanctification it is destroyed. In regeneration irregular desires are subdued; in sanctification they are removed” (emphasis added).

### 3. *The problem*

- a. Experience is never to be the final determiner of God’s truth, however, if a theory or position is biblical, it will be evidenced in the lives of God’s people. Is that true of the Eradication Theory?
- b. **Dr. Baxter comments** - “Writing to Miss Jane Hilton in 1769, he [John Wesley] lamented, ‘Although many taste of that heavenly gift, deliverance from inbred sin, yet so few, so exceeding few, retain it one year; hardly one in ten; nay, one in thirty’” (pp. 53-54).

**NOTE:** If inbred sin is totally removed (as the theory purports), why couldn’t believers of his day “retain” deliverance from inbred sin? If something is truly destroyed, it is gone forever!

- c. Writing about those who were once supposedly sanctified (in the eradicationist sense), Wesley said, “We have seen some of the strongest of them, after a time, moved from their steadfastness. Sometimes suddenly, but oftener by slow degrees, they have yielded to temptation; and pride or anger, or foolish desires, have again sprung up in their hearts. Nay,

sometimes they have utterly lost the life of God, and sin hath regained dominion over them” (*Sermons, Vol. 2, p. 247*).

**NOTE:** The “destroyed” sin principle has now crept up to cause some of them even to lose their salvation!? What kind of destruction is it that comes back to life to destroy the believer?

- d. In writing to his brother Charles, John Wesley said, “I am at my wit’s end with regard to . . . Christian perfection. Shall we go on asserting perfection against all the world? Or shall we quietly let it drop?” (*John Wesley’s Works, Vol. 12, pp. 135-36*).
- e. I believe that John Wesley’s Eradication Theory of perfectionism is refuted by Scripture and in Christian experience.

## **B. THE COUNTERACTION/IDENTIFICATION THEORY OF HOLINESS**

1. ***Like the Eradication Theory, this theory also maintains that the believer can be sinlessly perfect in this life.***
2. ***However, this theory rejects the idea that the sin nature is eradicated, and concedes that sinful propensities can remain in the heart of every believer.***
3. ***It, too, maintains that within the believer there are two distinct natures: an old sin nature and a new holy nature.*** At the Second Blessing, the old sin nature, rather than being eradicated, is counteracted by the new holy nature.
4. ***That coexistence of natures is sometimes illustrated by the analogy of a black dog and a white dog.*** The black dog represents the old sin nature; the white dog represents the new holy nature.  
  
Which dog dominates? Whichever one you say “sick ‘em” to!
5. ***How does the new nature gain victory over the old nature?*** The believer must continually identify with Christ on the cross and reckon himself to be dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:11).
6. ***The theory teaches that Romans 6:6 isn’t a reality for all believers.*** Only those who place themselves on the cross with Christ through an act of consecration sometime after conversion, and who continually “reckon” themselves dead to sin and alive to Christ are recipients of its promises.

Colonel Milton Agnew of The Salvation Army laments, “Oh, that the believer might at that time discover the deliverance that is possible by crucifying the old man - the old I! If all Christians are potentially crucified with Christ on the Cross, they are there in fact only when they place themselves there.”

“How many thousands of Christians have never faced the fact of the necessity of being crucified with Christ! They remain self-centered, shallow, defeated Christians” (*More Than Conquerors*, pp. 74-75, emphasis added).

### **III. THE RESULTS OF PERFECTIONISM**

#### **A. CONFUSION**

About what it means to be holy.

#### **B. CAUTION**

Some pastors are reluctant to teach holiness at all due to the confusion that has grown up around it.

#### **C. CONCERN**

That we aren't, or can never be, truly holy. *Dr. Harry Ironside* relates his wrenching experience as a young Salvation Army officer struggling with the implications of Eradication Holiness:

“I was between eighteen and nineteen years of age when I began to entertain serious doubts as to my actually having attained so high a standard of Christian living as I has professed, and as the [Salvation] Army and other Holiness movements advocated as the only real Christianity. . . .

“Nearly eighteen months of an almost constant struggle followed. In vain I searched my heart to see if I had made a full surrender, and tried to give up every known thing that seemed in any sense evil or doubtful. Sometimes, for a month at a time, or even longer, I could persuade myself that at last I had indeed again received the blessing. But invariably a few weeks would bring before me once more that which proved that it was in my particular case all a delusion.

“What made my distress more poignant was the knowledge that I was not the only sufferer. . . . And now I began to see what a string of derelicts this holiness teaching left in its train. I could count scores of persons who had gone into utter infidelity because of it. They always gave the same reason: ‘I tried it all. I found it a failure. So I concluded the Bible teaching was all a delusion, and religion was a mere matter of the emotions.’

“Finally, I could bear it no longer, so I asked to be relieved from all active service, and at my own request was sent to the Beulah Home of Rest, near Oakland. . . . At last I found myself becoming cold and cynical. Doubts as to everything assailed me like a legion of demons, and I became almost afraid to let my mind swell on these things. . . . I did not dare to confess to myself that I was literally an agnostic; yet for a month at least I could only answer, “I do not know” to every question based on divine revelation.

“This was the legitimate result of the teaching I has been under. I reasoned that the Bible promised entire relief from indwelling sin to all who were wholly surrendered to the will

of God. That I had thus surrendered seemed to me certain. Why then had I not been fully delivered from the carnal mind? It seemed to me that I had met every condition, and that God, on His part, had failed to perform what He had promised. I know it is wretched to write all this: but I see no other way to help others who are in the same state that I was in for that awful moth.

“Deliverance came at last in a most unexpected way. A young lady Lieutenant . . . was brought to the Home . . . supposedly dying of consumption. . . . I was much in her company, observed her closely, and finally came to the conclusion that she was the only truly sanctified person in that place.

“Imagine my surprise when . . . she, with a companion, came to me one evening and begged me to read to her; remarking, ‘I hear you are always occupied with the things of the Lord, and I need you help.’ I the one to help her! I was dumfounded, knowing so well the plague of my own heart, and being so fully assured of her perfection in holiness. . . . It struck me as weird and fantastic, rather than as a solemn farce--all this comparing ourselves with ourselves, only to be deluded every time. . . .

“In God’s providence a pamphlet caught my attention which my mother had given to me some years before, but which I had dreaded to read lest it might upset me; so afraid had I been of anything that did not bear the Army or Holiness stamp. . . . I read page after page. . . . In it the lost condition of all men by nature was emphasized. Redemption in Christ through His death was explained. Then there was much as to the believer’s two natures, and his eternal security, which to me seemed both ridiculous and absurd. . . . I was startled after going over the first half of the book when Lieutenant J- exclaimed, ‘O Captain, do you think that can possibly be true? If I could only believe that, I could die in peace!’

“Astonished beyond measure, I asked, ‘What! do you mean to say you could not die in peace as you are? You are justified and sanctified; you have an experience I have sought in vain for years; and are you troubled about dying?’ ‘I am miserable,’ she replied, ‘and you mustn’t say I am sanctified. I cannot get it. I have struggled for years, but I have not reached it yet. This is why I wanted to speak with you, for I felt so sure you had it and could help me!’

“We looked at each other in amazement; and as the pathos and yet ludicrousness of it all burst upon us, I laughed deliriously, while she wept hysterically. Then I remember exclaiming, ‘Whatever is the matter with us all? No one on earth denies himself more for Christ’s sake than we. We suffer, and starve, and wear ourselves out in the endeavor to do the will of God; yet after all we have no lasting peace. We are happy at times; we enjoy our meetings; but we are never certain as to what the end will be.’

“‘Do you think,’ she asked, ‘that it is because we depend upon our own efforts too much? Can it be that we trust Christ to save us, but we think we have to keep saved by our own faithfulness?’

“‘But,’ I broke in, ‘to think anything else would open the door to all kinds of sin!’

“And so we talked till, wearied out, she arose to go, but asked if she and others might return the next evening to read and talk of these things we had gone over--a permission which was readily granted.

“For both Lieutenant J- and myself that evening’s reading and exchange of confidences proved the beginning of our deliverance” (*Holiness: the False and the True*, pp. 23-31).

#### **IV. THE RESPONSE TO PERFECTIONISM**

##### **A. PERFECTIONISM OFFERS AN IMPERFECT PERFECTION**

1. *Perfectionists redefine sin to accommodate their view.*
  - a. According to most perfectionists, sin is any voluntary transgression of a known law.
  - b. But that definition doesn’t account for:
    - *Psalm 19:12-13* - “Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of *hidden faults*. Also keep back Thy servant from *presumptuous sins*.”
    - *Luke 23:34* - “Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; *for they do not know what they are doing*.’”
    - *Tim. 1:13* - Paul said of himself, “I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, *because I acted ignorantly in unbelief*.”
2. *Even the staunchest perfectionist doesn’t claim the same perfection as Christ possessed. Therefore they offer a relative, qualified perfection.”*

But that is precisely the point. We are to “be holy as **God** is holy!”

##### **B. PERFECTIONISM OFFERS AN INCOMPLETE SALVATION**

1. *It separates justification from sanctification, making sanctification a second work of grace.*

*But Scripture keeps them together:*

- *1 Cor. 1:30* - Christ is said to have been made “our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” He is all-in-all.
- *1 Cor. 6:11* - “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.”

2. *Progressive sanctification continues throughout our lives, but we aren't to look for some second work of grace by which we receive sanctification.*
3. *The Christian life is continual renewal and growth* (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10; 2 Pet. 3:18).

#### **C. PERFECTIONISM VIOLATES 1 JOHN 1:8**

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

#### **D. PERFECTIONISM MISUNDERSTANDS REGENERATION**

1. *The believer does not have two natures.*

*Dr. Baxter comments:* “A short time ago it was my privilege to give a series of addresses on Scriptural holiness at a ministers’ conference. In a discussion session one of the brethren raised the ‘two natures’ question very pertinently as follows: ‘We all agree that there is a duality in our moral nature; that there are in us both an upward reach and a downward pull; but does it much matter whether we call them two “natures” or not? Does it not amount to the same thing whether we call them two “natures” or two “dispositions” or two “sets of desires” or the “higher and lower” within us?’

“The answer is that *it matters very much*. For if there are two ‘*natures*’ in the believer, and the evil ‘*old nature*’ can neither be regenerated nor eradicated but (despite supposed crucifixion) must remain alive within us to our last day on earth (as is usually taught) then entire sanctification in this present life is impossible; there is a whole area which is *unsanctifiable*, and those Scripture texts which teach *entire* inward renewal cannot mean what they say. On the other hand, if the higher and lower in us are both alike inherent in the *one*, inherited, indivisible human nature which may be regenerated, interpenetrated, and *renewed*, then entire sanctification *is possible*” (*His Deeper Work In Us*, pp. 134-35--see pp. 133-248 for detailed treatment of the two nature theory).

2. *Salvation is not the addition of a new nature, but the infusion of our human nature with the Holy Spirit, who renews and transforms us.*

#### **E. PERFECTIONISM MISINTERPRETS KEY SCRIPTURES**

For Example:

1. **Romans 6:6**

This verse and its context has nothing to do with inbred sin. It is a statement of our POSITION in Christ (Positional Sanctification). It is JUDICIAL, not EXPERIENTIAL. The Holy Spirit isn't even mentioned in Romans 6. He comes in Chapter 8!

Note in verse 10 that *Christ died the same death we died*. Did Christ die to a sin principle? Of course not, for He was sinless. His death brought *judicial and positional benefits* to all who trust Him.

## 2. *Galatians 2:20*

- a. ***John Wesley said of this passage:*** “‘I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’ - Words that manifestly describe a deliverance from inward as well as outward sin . . . . ‘I live not’ (*my evil nature, the body of sin, is destroyed*).” (*Sermons, Vol. 2, p. 19*).
- b. To define the “I” of Gal. 2:20 as an evil nature or body of sin within the believer is *pure conjecture*.
- c. The context of verses 19-21 teach our *legal standing* before the law, *not* our inward condition of holiness.
- d. Note verse 19 - “Through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God.” How does a believer die to the law (the legal demands of death for sin)?
  - Verse 20 explains: “***I died in Christ!***” “Have been crucified” is in the past tense. It does not refer to a present experience. It is a past reality, not a present requirement (i.e. identification theory).
  - As far as the law is concerned, Christ lives in me, and it cannot condemn me because Christ already died for my sin.

## **F. *PERFECTIONISM MISUNDERSTANDS “PERFECT”***

### 1. *Seven different words are translated “perfect” in the English New Testament.*

- a. The most common is *teleios* (occurs 40 times).
- b. Its primary meaning is to be complete, fulfilled, or full-grown.
- c. The immediate context of a verse must decide whether *teleios* is being used in a relative or absolute sense.
- d. Greek scholar Archbishop Trench says, in his *Synonyms*: whenever Paul “employs the word in an ethical sense he does it continually with this image of full, completed growth, as contrasted with infancy and childhood.”
- e. We must be careful not to set the standard of holiness higher than the New Testament sets it.

2. ***The New Testament calls for progressive sanctification and Christian maturity, not sinless perfection.***

**For example:**

- ***Matt. 5:48*** - Jesus said, “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
- ***That is the summary of the whole Sermon on the Mount.*** It brings His hearers to the conclusion that, apart from faith in Christ Himself, they are ***utterly spiritually bankrupt!*** That was His purpose in contrasting the external, legalistic standard of the Jewish leaders with God’s internal, grace-imparted standard.
- Jesus drew these contrasts between externals and internals:
  - “You’ve heard it said” vs. “I say to you.”
  - Adultery in act vs. adultery in thought.
  - Hate enemies vs. love enemies.
  - Your righteousness must exceed that of religious leaders.

## **G. *PERFECTIONISM CONFUSES POSITIONAL, PRACTICAL, AND PERFECTED HOLINESS***

1. ***Note the point at which perfected holiness occurs:***
  - a. ***1 Thess. 3:12-13*** - “May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”
  - b. ***1 Thess. 5:23*** - “May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
2. ***Every Christian will know sinless perfection--when in the presence of Christ.*** That is *perfected* holiness, not *positional* or *practical* holiness.
3. ***For now we must cultivate practical holiness by committing ourselves to the disciplines of faith: Focus on Christ, His Word, and prayer.***

**Part 3**  
**HOLINESS AND OUR SIN NATURE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Recently I had the privilege of conducting a baby dedication. As I prayed for the child and her parents, I was reminded that as precious and joyous as children are, they must be carefully trained to do what is right. Righteousness isn't instinctive or automatic. From the moment of birth there is a principle at work in each human being that eventually will cause him or her to sin. Psychologists and sociologists often attribute such behavior to environment or external influences, but Scripture attributes it to our sinful human nature.

**I. THE PROBLEM OF SIN**

**A. THE NATURE OF SIN**

**1. Its definition**

- a. The most common New Testament word translated "sin" is *hamartia*. That's why the area of systematic theology dealing with the study of sin is called *Hamartiology*.
- b. Sin is missing the mark:  
  
*Hamartia* literally means "missing the mark; falling away from, or missing the right path."
- c. Dr. Henry Holloman of Talbot Theological Seminary defines sin as: "Any lack of conformity to the character of God." That's a good, comprehensive definition.

**2. Its characteristics**

- a. Sin is universal
  - **Rom. 3:9-11** - "We have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God.'"
  - **Rom. 3:23** - "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
- b. Sin is lawlessness  
  
**1 John 3:4** - "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." The divine law reflects God's character.

- c. Sin is falling short of God's glory (the radiant shining forth of His perfect character and holy attributes):

**Rom. 3:23** - "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

- d. Sin includes *commissions* (wrong that we do) and *omissions* (right that we fail to do).

- Commission - **1 John 3:4** - "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.
- Omission - **James 4:17** - "To one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin."
- **Rom. 3:23** includes both aspects
  - What we do: "All have sinned."
  - What we fail to do: "Fall short of the glory of God."

- e. Sin includes thoughts (attitudes) as well as actions:

In His "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5), Jesus equated anger with murder, and lust with adultery. Paul equated coveting with theft (Rom. 7:7).

**PARENTS:** Do you punish your children for actions only? If so, you're missing the heart of the matter. Guard their attitudes as well.

- f. Sin always involves selfishness

**2 Tim. 3:2-3** - "Men will be lovers of self . . . haters of God."

- g. Sin always involves unbelief

**1 John 3:23** - "This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another just as He commanded us."

- h. Sin always brings death (physical & spiritual)

- The soul that sins shall die.
- Physical death - Gen. 2:17 (Though physical death is not always immediate).
- Spiritual death - Eph. 2:1 - Formerly you were dead in transgressions and sins.

## **B. THE SIN NATURE**

### **1. We are sinners by nature**

- a. **Jer. 17:9** - “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”
- b. **Mark 7:21-23** - When Jesus was confronted about His disciples eating bread with “impure hands” (not ceremonially cleansed prior to eating, as was the custom of the Jews), He said, “From within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

### **2. How did we become sinners by nature?**

- a. We are born with a sin nature because Adam’s sin was imputed to us.

**Rom. 5:12, 18-19** - “Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. . . . So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”

- b. We call that condition *total depravity*, which renders unsaved people utterly incapable of living up to God’s righteous standard on their own, or commending themselves to Him in any way.

## **II. THE SOLUTION TO SIN**

### **A. WE NEED A CHANGE OF RELATIONSHIP**

#### **1. The principle**

Sinners are alienated from God and in need of reconciliation through faith in Christ.

#### **2. The passage**

**Rom. 5:6-11** - “While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His

blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

“And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

## **B. WE NEED A CHANGE OF IDENTITY**

### **1. The principle**

Believers are no longer identified with Adam and his sin, but with Christ and His righteousness.

### **2. The passage**

**Romans 5:12, 17-18** - “Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned . . . If by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

“So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men [who receive God’s grace through faith in Christ].”

## **C. WE NEED A CHANGE IN NATURE**

### **1. The principles**

- a. We need an internal renovation by the Holy Spirit to transform our sin nature to a regenerated nature.
- b. Believers share in the life of God by means of Christ, and the Holy Spirit living in them (Rom. 8:9; Gal. 2:20).
- c. That is not a two nature theory. It is one nature being transformed and empowered by the Holy Spirit for godly living.

### **2. The passages**

- a. **John 1:12-13** - “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God.”

- b. **2 Pet. 1:4** - “[God] has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”

#### **D. WE NEED A CHANGE OF LIFESTYLE**

##### **1. The principles**

- a. True believers cannot continue in habitual, unrepentant sin because the life of God resides within him.
- b. It is possible for believers to sin, but they *need not* (1 John 2:1).

##### **2. The passage**

- a. **1 John 3:6-9** - “No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”
- b. Commentator Donald Burdick paraphrases 1 John 3:6-10

“No one who has an intimate, saving relationship with Christ engages in sin as a constant habit of life; anyone who does so has not seen Him (with the eye of faith), nor has he come to know Him.

“Dear children, continue to resist those who would lead you away from the truth: the only one who is righteous like Christ is the one who habitually performs acts of righteousness. The one who is continually committing sin is a child of the devil, because the devil has been committing sin constantly ever since his fall. The reason Christ came was to undo every act for which the devil is responsible.

“No one born into the family of God constantly performs acts of sin. This is true because God’s new life principle forever dwells in the believer. It is impossible for him to live in sin because by new birth he has become God’s own child.

“This is how you can distinguish between God’s children and those of the devil: The person who does not habitually engage in acts of righteousness has never become a member of the family of God.”

- c. **NOTE:** True believers can never sin to the point of losing their salvation, because they cannot continue in sin.

**Part 4**  
**DEALING WITH THE SIN WITHIN**  
*Romans 7:21-8:14, 23*

**I. THE PROBLEM - 7:21-24**

I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

**II. THE PROMISE - 7:25a**

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

**III. THE PRINCIPLES - 7:25b-8:2, 23**

So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

**IV. THE PROVISION - 8:3-4a**

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us.

**V. THE PEOPLE - 8:4b-11**

(Paul contrasts two groups of people: ***believers*** & unbelievers)

**Who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.** For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, **but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.**

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but **the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace**, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

**However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.** But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. **And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But**

if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

## VI. THE POINT - 8:12-14

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

### Part 5 WALKING BY THE SPIRIT

## I. A BRIEF REVIEW

### A. A DIVINE IMPERATIVE

*We've seen that holiness is a divine imperative: "Be Ye Holy as I Am Holy." "You are to be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect."*

### B. A DIVINE IMPARTATION

*Holiness is divinely imparted; it cannot be generated on the human plain.*

### C. AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

*We have distinguished between:*

1. **Positional Holiness** - Which has to do with our identification (position) with Christ, whose holiness is imputed to us.
  - a. We saw from 1 John 1 that all believers are cleansed from all sin on a moment-by-moment basis because of Christ's shed blood.
  - b. But that isn't license to sin, because true believers, according to John, are those who continually confess their sin and are progressively becoming more and more like Christ Himself.
2. **Perfected Holiness** - Which has to do with our final state in heaven, with our perfected, glorified bodies and perfectly sinless character.

John said, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is [*perfected holiness*]. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure [*practical holiness*]" (1 John 3:2-3).

3. ***Practical Holiness*** - Which has to do with our present Christian life.
  - a. We asked if holiness is sinless perfection, and answered no.
  - b. We discussed the difference between acts of sin and the sin principle that prompts us to commit those acts.
  - c. We saw from Romans 7 that within each believer there exists, not two separate natures, but one nature that is being renewed and transformed into Christ's image (2 Cor. 3:18).
  - d. Within that one nature are holy aspirations and sinful propensities, because we are still in our unregenerate humanness, which Paul calls "the flesh."
  - e. We explored how to deal with "the sin within."
  - f. Now we come to ***Galatians 5:16-26*** to see what it means to "Walk by the Spirit," which is the ***key*** to practical holy living.

## **II. SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **A. FROM THEORETICAL TO PRACTICAL**

*Before we go to Galatians 5, I want to bring our study out of a theoretical realm and into a more practical realm.*

1. *Sometimes I observe Christians doing or saying things that prompt me to wonder if they have given serious thought to God's will for their lives.*
2. *Sometimes Christians seem to forget that God is just as concerned about holiness in the subtle areas of our lives as He is in the more obvious areas. If those subtle areas are neglected, they can blossom into habitual, life-dominating sins.*
3. *I've heard Christians justify the sins of fellow believers by saying, "Oh, that's just the way they are" or "That's just their personality. They'll never change." Example: "Of course he's hot-tempered, he's Irish!"*
4. *Sometimes when Christians are confronted about the more subtle sins, they become indignant, but holiness addresses those sins also.*

### **B. SOME SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS**

*Note the implications of these passages:*

1. ***2 Timothy 3:1-5***

“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, **disobedient to parents**, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, **malicious gossips**, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, **lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God**; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and **avoid such men as these.**”

2. *Galatians 5:19-21*

“The deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that **those who practices such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**”

- a. If those are characteristic of your life, you’re not a believer!
- b. That’s precisely what Scripture addresses in this matter of Christian holiness. We can’t continue to operate on a fleshly level.

### **III. AN OVERVIEW OF GALATIANS**

- A. *This Epistle was written to the churches of Galatia, which contained believers and unbelievers; Jews and Gentiles.*
- B. *There is a Jewish flavor to the letter.*
- C. *Key issue: how does one live righteously: by keeping the Law or by faith in Christ?*
- D. *Galatians is unique among Paul’s epistles because it contains no commendation (cf. 1:1-5).*
- E. *The epistle has a tone of urgency because Paul’s gospel of salvation by grace through faith was being challenged (1:6-7).*
- F. *Paul’s authority was being undermined and his motives questioned (1:8-10).*
- G. *Some of the Galatians had drifted back into Jewish legalism, thinking sanctification and true righteousness came through legalistic adherence to the Mosaic Law (3:1-5).*

*NOTE: Flesh* = Sinful inclinations of your fallen humanness.

- H. *Paul reminded them of his previous teachings:*
  - True believers are **dead to the Law** (2:19-20).
  - True believers are **redeemed from the Law** (3:11-14).

- All who attempt to keep the Law are **under its curse** (3:10).
- **Role of the Law** - External restraint that defined sin, condemned us, and drove us to Christ (3:19-24).
- **Role of the Spirit** - Internal restraint. Imparts love for God. Empowers for obedience.

**I. Chapter 5:1-6** - Contrasts legalistic obedience with faith  
Circumcision with Christ  
True Christian works (v. 6)

**J. Chapter 5:7-12** - Who had hindered you?

**K. Chapter 5:13-15** - You are freed from the Law, but don't abuse it.

#### **IV. KEY CONCEPT: VICTORY OVER THE FLESH**

##### **A. GALATIANS 5:16-18**

**1. Verse 16 = Key concept**

- Walk** = Live according to, walk a straight line, line up with, conform to, conduct yourself according to.
- Paul commands us to walk by the Spirit, but doesn't (in this context) tell us how.
- Parallels:** Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16
- Distinguish between Rom. 8** (that all believers are led and walk by the Spirit) and these practical injunctions to walk and be led by the Spirit. One is positional, one practical.

**2. Verse 17 - Spiritual warfare within, yet the point of the passage is that the Spirit dominates.**

**3. Verse 18 - As we follow the Spirit's leading, we have the Law fulfilled in us (v. 14) and we're not under its curse or producing the deeds of the flesh (flesh & Law being associated here).**

##### **B. GALATIANS 5:19-23**

Deeds of the flesh vs. fruit of the Spirit

##### **C. GALATIANS 5:24-25 (Contrast with 3:3)**

## **V. HOW TO WALK BY THE SPIRIT**

### **A. UNDERSTAND WHO AND WHAT YOU ARE**

1. *You are a spiritual creation - Rom. 8*
2. *You are a new creation in Christ - 2 Cor. 3:18*
3. *You are indwelt by the Spirit*
4. *You are Led by the Spirit*
5. *You walk by the Spirit (in the sense that the Spirit gives you life)*
6. *You are empowered by the Spirit*
7. *Sin's power has been broken in you*
8. *You need not sin - 1 John 2:1*
9. *You have been given a way of escape - 1 Cor. 10:13*

### **B. RELY ON THE SPIRIT - Drawing on His resources**

### **C. CALL ON THE SPIRIT - Prayer (release of His power)**

### **D. LEARN FROM THE SPIRIT - Knowledge of God' Word - Col. 1:9; 3:16**

### **E. YIELD TO THE SPIRIT - Obedience - Eph. 5:18**