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## *Help in the Daily Battle*

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IN THE SAME WAY COUNT  
YOURSELVES DEAD TO SIN BUT  
ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST  
JESUS.

*Romans 6:11*

In Chapter 5 we saw how God has delivered us from the realm and reign of sin through union with Christ in His death. We were slaves to sin and in slavery we committed sins. We developed sinful habits regardless of how "good" we were. But Jesus Christ came into this sinful world and took our place on Calvary. He died to sin and through our union with Him we died to sin also. Now we are freed from sin's reign; we are no longer its slaves. We are to count on this fact and resist sin so that it does not reign in our mortal bodies.

In Chapter 6 we saw how sin still lives within us, waging its "guerrilla warfare" through evil desires and deceiving our minds. It may well seem that whatever hope for holiness was held out in

Chapter 5 was effectively taken away in Chapter 6. "What good does it do," you may ask, "to be told that the war with sin was won by Christ in His death on the cross if I am still harrassed and often defeated by sin in my heart?"

To experience practical, everyday holiness, we must accept the fact that God in His infinite wisdom has seen fit to allow this daily battle with indwelling sin. But God does not leave us to do battle alone. Just as He delivered us from the overall reign of sin, so He has made ample provision for us to win the daily skirmishes against sin.

This brings us to the second point in Romans 6:11 which we are to count on and keep before us. We are not only dead to sin, as we saw in Chapter 5; we also are alive to God. We have not only been delivered from the dominion of darkness; we also have been brought into the kingdom of Christ. Paul said we have become slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:18). God does not leave us suspended in a state of neutrality. He delivers us from sin's reign into the reign of His Son.

What is the significance of being alive unto God? How does it help us in our pursuit of holiness? For one thing, it means *we are united with Christ in all His power*. It is certainly true we cannot live a holy life in our own strength. Christianity is not a do-it-yourself thing.

Notice the attitude of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:11-13. He is talking about how he has learned to be content whatever the circumstances, whether plenty or want, whether well-fed or hungry. He says he can respond this way through

Christ, who gives him strength. How does this apply to holiness? Our reactions to circumstances are a part of our walk of holiness. Holiness is not a series of do's and don'ts, but conformity to the character of God and obedience to the will of God. Accepting with contentment whatever circumstances God allows for me is very much a part of a holy walk.

But notice that Paul said he could respond in contentment because Christ gave the strength to do so. We see this again where Paul said he prayed that the Colossians would be "strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience" (Colossians 1:11). Where do endurance and patience come from? They come as we are strengthened with God's power.

Consider again another prayer Paul described in his letter to the Ephesians. He said he was praying for them "that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with *power* through His Spirit in your inner being" (Ephesians 3:16). He concluded the prayer by acknowledging that God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His *power* that is at work within us" (3:20).

This is the first implication we should grasp of being "alive unto God." We are united with the One who is at work in us to strengthen us with His mighty power. We have all known the awful sense of hopelessness caused by sin's power. We have resolved scores of times never to give in again to a particular temptation, and yet we do. Then Satan

comes to us and says, "You might as well give up. You can never overcome that sin." It is true that in ourselves we cannot. But we are alive to God, united to Him who will strengthen us. By reckoning on this fact — counting it to be true — we will experience the strength we need to fight that temptation.

Only as we reckon on these twin facts — that I am dead to sin and its reign over me and that I am alive to God, united to Him who strengthens me — can I keep sin from reigning in my mortal body.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, "To realize this takes away from us that old sense of hopelessness which we have all known and felt because of the terrible power of sin. . . . How does it work? It works in this way: I lose my sense of hopelessness because I can say to myself that not only am I no longer under the dominion of sin, but I am under the dominion of another power that nothing can frustrate. However weak I may be, it is the power of God that is working in me."<sup>1</sup>

This is not theoretical teaching, something to be placed on the library shelves of our minds and admired, but of no practical value in the battle for holiness. To count on the fact that we are dead to sin and alive to God is something we must do actively.

To do it we must *form the habit* of continually realizing that we are dead to sin and alive to God. Practically speaking, we do this when by faith in God's Word we resist sin's advances and temptations. We count on the fact that we are alive to God when by faith we look to Christ for the power we need to do the resisting. Faith, however, must

always be based on fact, and Romans 6:11 is a fact for us.

A second implication of being alive to God is that *He has given us His Holy Spirit to live within us*. Actually this is not a second result, but another way of looking at our union with Christ, for the Holy Spirit is the agent of this union. It is He who gives spiritual life and the strength to live that life (Romans 8:9-11). It is the Spirit of God who works in us that we may decide and act according to God's good purpose (Philippians 2:13).

Paul said, "God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8). Here Paul connects the giving of the Holy Spirit with our living a holy life. He is called the Holy Spirit and He is sent primarily to make us holy — to conform us to the character of God. The connection of these two thoughts, the Holy Spirit and a holy life, is also found in other passages. For example, we are told to flee sexual immorality because our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:18-19). We are also told that we are controlled not by our sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in us (Romans 8:9). We read, "Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of your sinful nature" (Galatians 5:16).

Why do we have the Holy Spirit living within us to strengthen us toward holiness? It is because we are alive to God. We are now living under the reign of God, who unites us to Christ and gives us His Holy Spirit to dwell within us.<sup>2</sup>

The Holy Spirit strengthens us to holiness first by enabling us to see our need of holiness. He enlightens our understanding so that we begin to see God's standard of holiness. Then he causes us to become aware of our specific areas of sin. One of Satan's most powerful weapons is making us spiritually blind — unable to see our sinful character. The Bible says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). No one can understand it and expose it except the Holy Spirit.

Even Christians taking in the teaching of the Bible can be deceived about their own sins. We somehow feel that consent to the teaching of Scripture is equivalent to obedience. We may hear a point of application in a sermon, or perhaps discover it in our own personal Bible reading or study. We say, "Yes that is true; that is something I need to act on." But we let it drop at that point. James says when we do that, we deceive ourselves (James 1:22).

As we grow in the Christian life we face increasing danger of spiritual pride. We know the correct doctrines, the right methods and the proper do's and don'ts. But we may not see the poverty of our own spiritual character. We may not see our critical and unforgiving spirit, our habit of backbiting, or our tendency to judge others. We may become like the Laodiceans of whom our Lord said, "You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17).

David was like this when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband murdered to cover his first sin (2 Samuel 12:1-13). Was he repentant and humbled over his despicable acts? Not at all. In fact, he was ready to judge another man for a far lesser crime and to condemn him to death (verse 5). How could he do this? Because he was spiritually blind. It was not till Nathan the prophet said to David, "You are the man!" that David was able to see the awful heinousness of his crime.

It is the Holy Spirit's ministry to make us see that we are poverty-stricken because of our sins. He comes to us and says, "You are the man!" Even though such a message may come from the loving, caring lips of a brother in Christ, it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to accept it and to say as David did, "I have sinned against the Lord." The Holy Spirit opens the inner recesses of our hearts and enables us to see the moral cesspools hidden there. This is where He begins His ministry of making us holy.

The natural result of seeing God's standard and our sinfulness is the awakening within us of a desire to be holy. This is also the ministry of the Holy Spirit as He works to make us holy. We are sorry for our sins with a godly sorrow that leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). We say with David, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. . . . Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:2, 7).

Paul said, "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose"

(Philippians 2:13). Before we can *act* we must *will*. To will means to desire and resolve. When the Holy Spirit shows us our sinfulness, He does not do this to lead us to despair but to lead us to holiness. He does this by creating within us a hatred of our sins and a desire for holiness.

Only one who has a strong desire to be holy will ever persevere in the painfully slow and difficult task of pursuing holiness. There are too many failures. The habits of our old nature and the attacks of Satan are too strong for us to persevere unless the Holy Spirit is at work in us to create a desire for holiness.

The Holy Spirit creates this desire, not only by showing us our sins, but also by showing us God's standard of holiness. He does this through the Scriptures. As we read and study the Scriptures or hear them taught, we are captivated by the moral beauty of God's standard of holiness. Even though His standard may seem far beyond us, we recognize and respond to that which is "holy, righteous, and good" (Romans 7:12). Even though we fail so often, in our inner being we "delight in God's law" (Romans 7:22).

Here then is another distinction we must make between what God does and what we must do. If the Holy Spirit uses Scripture to show us our need and to stimulate a desire for holiness, then doesn't it follow that we must be in God's Word on a consistent basis? Should we not go to the Word, whether to hear it preached or to do our own study, with the prayer that the Holy Spirit would search our hearts for any sin in us? (Psalm 139:23-24).

After the Holy Spirit has enabled us to see our need and created within us a desire for holiness, there remains something more which He must do. He must give us the spiritual strength to live a holy life. Paul said, "Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of your sinful nature" (Galatians 5:16). To live by the Spirit is to live both in obedience *to* and dependence *on* the Holy Spirit. There is a balance then between our wills (expressed by obedience) and our faith (expressed by our dependence). But at this point we are considering the aspect of our dependence on the Holy Spirit.

No one overcomes the corruptions of his heart except by the enabling strength of the Spirit of God. Peter said that God has given us "His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world" (2 Peter 1:4). Through participation in the divine nature we escape corruption — and this participation is through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

We express our dependence on the Holy Spirit for a holy life in two ways. The first is through a *humble and consistent intake of the Scripture*. If we truly desire to live in the realm of the Spirit we must continually feed our minds with His truth. It is hypocritical to pray for victory over our sins yet be careless in our intake of the Word of God.

It is possible, though, to be consistent in our intake of the Word of God without an attitude of dependence on the Holy Spirit. God says, "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and

contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My Word" (Isaiah 66:2). We are to come to the Word in a spirit of humility and contrition because we recognize that we are sinful, that we are often blind to our sinfulness, and that we need the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

The second way we express our dependence on the Spirit is *to pray for holiness*. The Apostle Paul prayed continually for the working of God's Spirit in the lives of those to whom he was writing. He told the Ephesians that he prayed God would "strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being" (Ephesians 3:16). He prayed that God would fill the Colossians "with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding" so that they might "live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way" (Colossians 1:9-10).

He wrote to the Thessalonians, "May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you [make you holy] through and through" (1 Thessalonians 5:23); and, "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else. . . . May He give you inner strength that you may be blameless and holy in the presence of God" (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13). Clearly the Apostle Paul knew we depend on the Holy Spirit for holiness, and he expressed this dependence through prayer.

As a young Christian I had the idea that all I had to do to live a holy life was to find out from the Bible what God wanted me to do and go do it. Christians with maturity will smile at this naive assumption, but I see younger Christians starting

off with the same air of self-confidence. We have to learn that we are dependent upon the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to attain any degree of holiness. Then, as we look to Him, we will see Him working in us — revealing our sin, creating a desire for holiness, and giving us the strength to respond to Him in obedience.

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- NOTES: 1. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 6*, page 144.
2. It is also true that the Holy Spirit is the divine Agent who has made us alive to God (John 6:63). But we are here considering the results of being delivered from the realm of sin into the realm of God, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is one of the results.