

# FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

## Lesson SEVEN FREEDOM FROM SIN — ALIVE TO GOD

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### I. INTRODUCTION

We have already seen in Lesson 3, that God justified us through the sacrifice of Jesus. God forgave us all our sins and made us to be the righteousness of God in Christ (II Corinthians 5:21). This righteousness (right-standing with God) is based, not on works, but on faith. There were no good works which we did which made us worthy to receive. God declared us righteous on the basis of His mercy and grace, as we put faith in His crucified and risen Son.

Every believer is righteous on the inside, because he has become a partaker of God's divine, righteous nature (II Peter 1:4). Righteousness is infused into the very being of every Christian. This is why we can come boldly before God's throne. This is why we can have the abiding presence of His Spirit with us continually. Without our having been made righteous, we could not be called the sons of God (I John 3:1). God is righteous, and those who are born of Him have the same nature that He has.

But, righteousness means more than just right-standing with God. *"Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous"* (I John 3:7). John did not write this statement to condemn, or to make people feel that they are unsaved. He simply states that those who are righteous on the inside have the power and ability to ACT righteously. The idea of ACTING right cannot be separated from the New Testament concept of righteousness.

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10). We were not created by good works, but we were created for good works. God's desire is that the righteous, holy nature that is within us (that nature which enables us to stand before God unashamed) begin to manifest itself in our outward walk. It is abnormal for a righteous new creature to continue to walk under the bondage of sin. God has made the way clear for ALL believers to walk completely free from sin's domination in their lives. Indeed, He has called every believer to this kind of walk. *"But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior"* (I Peter 1:15).

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

*II Corinthians 5:21*

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.

*II Peter 1:4*

See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God, and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

*I John 3:1*

Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

*I John 3:7*

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

*Ephesians 2:10*

But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior.

*I Peter 1:15*

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### II. DEAD TO SIN

#### Read Romans 6:1-7

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For 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.

*Romans 6:1-7*

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.

*Romans 6:6*

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.

*Galatians 2:20*

God will not give a command to His people unless He has also given them the *ability* to fulfill that command. God's call to believers is for them to live holy lives, free from the bondage of sin. But, God has also given to every believer the ability to walk *above* sin and sinful habits. The new birth resulted in a new man, one that is *not* sinful. On the contrary, that new man is perfect, made in the very image of God. God has enabled us to walk free from sin's power: by putting to death the thing within us that drove us to sin, and by placing within us a powerful and righteous *new nature*.

Many believers try to fulfill this call to holiness without having a clear understanding of the work that God has done in their inner man. The work of the cross cleansed us from the guilt and condemnation of sin. Jesus' shed blood washed us clean from all our sins. Yet if that were all that was done, we would be forgiven, but still dominated by an evil inner nature which would make us sin. But, the work of Calvary not only removed the guilt and condemnation of sin, it also removed the source of sin within us. The evil drive within us that made us slaves to sin was done away with on the cross. We must have a clear understanding of this *fact* of redemption, so that we may walk in all the liberty God has purchased for us.

#### A. THE OLD MAN

*"Knowing this, that our old self (old man) was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin"* (Romans 6:6). The thing that kept us enslaved to sin was the "old man." This "old man" (or old creature) had to be killed in order for us to be freed from sin's power. This was the part of us that was crucified with Jesus 2,000 years ago. *"I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live"* (Galatians 2:20).

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### 1. Born into death

Our old man was that part of us that was *dead to God* before we were born again. When Adam sinned in the garden of Eden and fell from the glory of God, **he was born out of life into death.** He became a sinful creature, ruled and dominated by an inner nature which drove him to sin. This helpless state was passed onto all of Adam's descendants (Psalm 51:5; I Corinthians 15:21,22).

Unsaved men are thus left with an evil inner nature, which Paul calls the "old man." The old man cannot be reformed or rehabilitated. This is the reason that humanistic philosophy fails to bring about any real change in men. Trying to reform the "old man" will only end in failure. There is only one effective way to deal with the evil inner nature: **it must be killed.**

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

*Psalm 51:5*

For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

*I Corinthians 15:21,22*

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For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. 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? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! 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.

*Romans 7:14-25*

For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

*Romans 7:14*

For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

*Romans 7:15*

### 2. The unregenerate state

In Romans 7:14-25, Paul describes the state of an unregenerate man who is ruled by his sinful nature. Here we find a vivid picture of what it is like to be dominated by an old man that is yet alive and well. The man Paul describes:

- a. Is sold into bondage to sin (Romans 7:14).
- b. Does the very thing that he hates to do (Romans 7:15).
- c. Is unable to do the good that he wants to do (Romans 7:18).
- d. Is a *prisoner* of the law of sin in his body (Romans 7:23).
- e. Serves the law of sin in his flesh, even though it is contrary to the law of God which his mind acknowledges (Romans 7:25).
- f. Is a **WRETCHED MAN!** (Romans 7:24).

Careful reading of the previous chapter of Romans (chapter 6) will show clearly that Paul is *NOT* referring to himself as a Christian in this particular passage. *He is describing himself before he was saved.* Paul, as an unregenerate Jew, knew what was the right thing to do, but was *unable* to do it. The reason he could not do the things that he knew were right, was because the old man had not yet been done away with in Christ. There was a power within that drove him to sin that he could not overcome.

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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.

*Romans 6:6*

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

*Colossians 3:3*

For he who has died is freed from sin.

*Romans 6:7*

Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

*II Corinthians 5:17*

But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

*Galatians 6:14*

### B. CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

Paul said that the old man was crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6). That inner disposition to sin, which left men helpless, was put to death with Jesus. This was the beginning of our identification with His redemptive work on the cross. Paul was so acutely aware of the reality of this vicarious death that he told the Colossians, "***For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God***" (Colossians 3:3).

The key to our being freed from the slavery of sin is our death with Jesus. "*He who has died is freed from sin*" (Romans 6:7). Because we are now dead (that is, our old man is dead), **sin is no longer our master.**

#### 1. The body of sin made powerless

Once the old man is crucified with Jesus, then the "body of sin" is made ineffective. "*For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin*" (Romans 6:6 NIV). This gives us insight into what happens when the old man is crucified. The body of sin, that thing which drove us to sin, was "*rendered powerless!*"

The old inner nature always went in a way that was contrary to God and His ways; it was a power within us which made it impossible for us to overcome sin. But, the Bible says that the old man *was killed*, put to death on the cross. Since the old nature is DEAD, it **no longer has the power to dominate us.** "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away*" (II Corinthians 5:17).

#### 2. Dead to the world

The death of our old nature on the cross means that we are totally separated from the world and its sinful principles. "*But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*" (Galatians 6:14). We are separated from the world and all that it stands for, just as much as a physically dead man is separated from this physical world (i.e. his physical surroundings).

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### 3. Exposed by the Law

God exposed man's real inner condition (which was a sinful inner nature) by giving him the Law. The Law was given to show man once and for all that the problem *within* could only be dealt with through Jesus Christ. The Law was holy, righteous, and good (Romans 7:12), but because of man's sinful nature, it resulted in death. *"Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful"* (Romans 7:13).

The old man within took the Law, which was good, and turned it to evil. The Law could not change the inner condition of man; it only exposed it for what it really was. Thus, God showed sin to be "utterly sinful," without any hope of redemption apart from Jesus Christ.

God's solution to this dilemma struck a death blow at the very root of the sin problem in man. As we have said, death was the only way out of this trap, and this is exactly what God did through His Son.

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

*Romans 7:18*

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.

*Romans 7:23*

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! 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.

*Romans 7:25*

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

*Romans 7:24*

So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

*Romans 7:12*

Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

*Romans 7:13*

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A man who is physically dead no longer has any relation to this physical world. It doesn't affect him, because he is no longer a part of it. The government would not think to try to collect taxes from such a man, because governments and tax systems no longer have any relation to him. He is dead. He is not a part of this world. In the same way, believers are dead to the earthly principles of the world, because that old man which made them a part of this world system is no longer alive. He was crucified with Jesus. And so every believer is "**dead to sin**"; he is no longer a part of sin, nor is sin a part of him.

### C. MADE ALIVE TO GOD

Our identification with Christ didn't end on the cross. "*Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him*" (Romans 6:8). Paul is not speaking here of the resurrection on the last day. He refers to the fact that just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too were made alive spiritually. "*. . . as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life*" (Romans 6:4). We were crucified with Christ, in order that we might **walk in newness of life**, alive to God and free from sin!

*"Even when we were dead in our transgressions, (He) made us alive together with Christ . . . , and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:5,6). Here we see the completion of our identification with Christ: **Crucified with Him! Made alive together with Him! Raised up with Him! Seated in heavenly places with Him!**

#### 1. Delivered and transferred

Just as the death of the old man separated us from the world, so our **being made alive to God makes us a part of His kingdom**. "*For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son*" (Colossians 1:13). We are part of His kingdom, because He has made us new creatures and filled us with His own holy and righteous nature. Our new nature is the nature of God (II Peter 1:4).

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.

*Romans 6:8*

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

*Romans 6:4*

Even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

*Ephesians 2:5,6*

For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. *Colossians 1:13*

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.

*II Peter 1:4*



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For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

*I Thessalonians 4:7*

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.

*I Thessalonians 4:3*

May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

*Romans 6:2*

We were once alive to sin and dead to God, because our old man was still alive. But now we are dead to sin and **alive to God**, because the old nature is dead (separating us from sin and the world) and a new nature has been given to us (which puts us in contact with God).

### 2. Willing and working

When we were alive to sin, we did by nature the things which sin desired. But now that we are alive to God, there is within us not only the power, but also the desire to do what is right before God. "*For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13). Our new nature within is made in the image of God. The new man has the ability to do God's good pleasure; but he also has the *will* to do God's good pleasure. We not only have the power to do the will of God, but we can do it without grudging or complaining.

## III. WALKING IN FREEDOM

When one begins to realize all that has been done for us through the death and resurrection of Christ, it becomes evident that **sin is NOT the normal Christian life!** God didn't put the old man to death to have us continue to live in slavery to sin. He didn't crucify us with Christ to see us flounder helplessly in sinful habits.

God set us free on the inside, so that we could live in **complete mastery** over sin and over the enticements of the flesh and the devil. God's desire is for every one of His children to rise above sin and live a life of purity and integrity. "*For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification*" (I Thessalonians 4:7; also read I Thessalonians 4:3). Sanctification signifies our separation from the world by virtue of our manner of life.

"*How shall we who died to sin still live in it?*" (Romans 6:2). To Paul, a Christian bound by sin was an abnormality. It was a denial by the believer that God had done anything inside him at all. Since he knew that the price for a believer's complete liberty from sin had already been paid, Paul was constantly exhorting Christians to live according to what God

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had done on the inside of them. He told the carnal Corinthians: "*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?*" (I Corinthians 6:19). "*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to **walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called***" (Ephesians 4:1). "*For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; **walk as children of light***" (Ephesians 5:8).

### A. FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

Paul gives us a vivid picture in Romans 7:14-25 of a man who is bound by sin. The man described there does not have the freedom to choose to do what is right. He is hopelessly trapped into doing the wrong thing. But, the death of the old man in us means that *we have been given back the freedom to choose between righteousness and sin*. This was the freedom of choice that Adam had in the garden. The old nature was done away with, and the driving force of sin was stripped of its power to dominate us.

So, the choice between sin and righteousness is before every believer. He is called upon to make this choice on a daily basis, as various temptations come his way. He can choose to follow the inclination of his regenerate spirit, or he can choose to follow the inclination of his flesh. God has given His children the freedom to choose.

#### 1. The truth

After Paul tells us that we are **dead to sin**, he goes on to enumerate the choice that is before us. "*Therefore **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 to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God***" (Romans 6:12,13). All the power to walk above sin has been given to us, but it is then up to us as to whether we will "*let sin reign in our mortal bodies.*"

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and that you are not your own?  
*I Corinthians 6:19*

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.

*Ephesians 4:1*

For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light.

*Ephesians 5:8*

Therefore 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 to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

*Romans 6:12,13*

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For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.

*Romans 7:19*

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. 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.

*Romans 6:16,19*

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

*Romans 12:1*

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.

*Romans 8:12,13*

When confronted with a temptation or enticement to sin, remember that you do have a choice. Satan will always try to convince you that falling into sin is inevitable, that there is no choice. Often he will quote the Bible (out of context) to support his lie. For example: "*For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish*" (Romans 7:19). This verse, describing a man *before he is born again*, is often used to try to convince ignorant believers that falling into sin is an inevitable way of life for them.

The truth is, however, that you are free to choose between sin and righteousness, because the old man is dead. If this were not the case, then Paul's exhortation for us not to "*let sin reign in our mortal bodies*" would be devoid of any truth or meaning. Paul exhorts us to choose because we do indeed have that freedom through the redemptive work of the cross.

### 2. Servants of righteousness

You are the servant of the one to whom you present yourself and the members of your body. If you present your body to sin, to obey its dictates, then you are sin's servant. But, if you present yourself to God on a daily basis, then you are a servant of God and of righteousness (Romans 6:16,19).

*"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship"* (Romans 12:1). Because God has restored to us our free will (i.e. freedom to choose), we can present ourselves to God, as servants of righteousness. We are given this option.

### B. PUT TO DEATH THE DEEDS OF THE BODY

*"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"* (Romans 8:12,13). We are **NOT** obligated to obey the lusts of the flesh. As we have said, we are **FREE** to choose not to sin.

However, there is something which we as believers must do with our bodies. We have been freed from sin, but this does not mean that every desire or thought that comes into our heads is godly and should be obeyed. Christians need to learn

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to put to death the deeds of the body. Because the body has not yet been redeemed from the fall (remember that this will not occur until Jesus' return — see Lesson 6,II,C), **we need to control it.** Even Paul said that he kept his body under control, so that he wouldn't be disqualified (I Corinthians 9:27).

### 1. Controlling fleshly desires

Since our bodies (flesh) are still mortal (as yet unredeemed), there remains in them desires that are contrary to God. Before we were saved, we had no control over those desires, because the old man within us empowered the flesh. But, now the dominating power of sin has been *removed*. We are still left, however, with a body (or flesh) which likes to do things which are against God's ways.

Remember, our spirits are the part of us that get born again. Our minds are renewed by the Word of God. But, our flesh is neither born again nor is it renewed. It must be kept under control. *This controlling of fleshly desires will get easier and easier as a person's mind is renewed to the fact that sin has no real dominion over his will.*

### 2. The war of the flesh and the spirit

The desires of the flesh and the desires of our recreated spirit are the source of the inner conflict with sin that all believers experience. *"For the flesh sets its desire against the (S)spirit (In the original Greek there are no capital letters or punctuation marks. In this verse I used a small "s" for the spirit, because Paul is referring to a Christian's recreated spirit, and not the Holy Spirit, as these translators believe), and the spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please"* (Galatians 5:17).

Every believer has a recreated inner man that likes to obey God. But, that inner man is housed in a body that likes to disobey God and to go the way of the world. And so, you have the desires of the flesh warring against the desires of your inner man. But if you choose to follow after the spirit, then the deeds of the flesh will be put to death in your mortal body. *"But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh"* (Galatians 5:16).

**But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.**

*I Corinthians 9:27*

**For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.**

*Galatians 5:17*

**But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.**

*Galatians 5:16*

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I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. 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. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

*Romans 6:19,22*

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

*James 1:14,15*

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

*Colossians 3:2*

Some mistakenly believe that this inner conflict against sin (the desires of the flesh) is really a fight between the "old man" and the "new man," who are simultaneously housed in the body. The struggle is thought to be between two *equally powerful* forces. But, the scriptures do not bear this idea out. The old man *was crucified*, and the body of sin rendered *powerless*. As we have already seen, the old man and the new man cannot coexist in one body. Either, one is a new creature, or he is an old creature; he can't be both at the same time.

### 3. The fruit of obedience to the spirit

Every believer has the power to say NO! to sin and temptation. The deeds of the body (flesh) are no match for the recreated inner man, because the dominating force behind the flesh (i.e. the old man) is dead. But, Christians must use their free will and choose to obey their spirits rather than the flesh. They must choose to keep their bodies under control and put to death evil deeds.

The fruit of doing this is *sanctification*, that righteous outward walk that God desires to see all His children experiencing (Romans 6:19, 22). The result will be a life above sin, free from sinful habits that destroy faith and fellowship with God.

### C. TEMPTATION

Every believer, while he remains in his "earthly tent," will experience temptation. The desires of the flesh, excited by the suggestions of Satan (the tempter), will try to pull a believer away from God and into sin (James 1:14,15). The key to overcoming temptation, and not succumbing to it, is in acknowledging who we are in Christ. "*Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 6:11). When Paul says "consider," he does not mean "pretend as if it were so." He means that we are to meditate on the **fact** that we are dead to sin and its power. We are to set our minds on the things of the spirit, and not on the things of the flesh. "*Set your mind on things above, not on the things of the earth*" (Colossians 3:2).

# FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

## Lesson SEVEN FREEDOM FROM SIN — ALIVE TO GOD

### 1. Resist condemnation

In dealing with temptation, one must recognize that **it is not a sin to be tempted!** Often, Christians feel condemned because they have a lustful or a hateful thought. The enemy will plant an evil thought in the mind of a believer, and then accuse that believer of being a vile and sinful creature. If he allows himself to be condemned by a temptation, then his next thought will be: “Thinking it is as bad as doing it, so you might as well indulge.” But, having a tempting thought **is NOT** the same as carrying it out.

The Bible says of Jesus that He “. . . *has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus was tempted in every way, and those temptations were not considered sin. He was victorious over every temptation and was without sin. It is no more a sign of failure or defeat for a believer to be tempted than it was for Jesus to be tempted. A Christian’s response to temptation should be one of *resistance* instead of condemnation.

### 2. Respond immediately

It is not a sin to be tempted. But, temptation will inevitably lead to sin if evil thoughts are entertained for any length of time. Dwelling on the things of the earth and of the flesh will only lead to a fall into sin (James 1:14,15). *Temptation must be dealt with quickly, the moment it arises. The longer a person waits to deal with those temptations, the harder they will find it to resist.*

Jesus’ response to temptation was immediate and effective. Whenever the devil brought a temptation before Him, He responded, *“It is written!”* (Luke 4:4,8,12). He didn’t wait and think about what the devil had said; He refuted the devil’s lies with the Word of God.

Paul tells us to meditate and dwell on the fact that we are now dead to sin, that sin does not have the power to dominate us. This must *always* be our response to temptation, one that affirms that we are dead to old sinful ways and are now alive unto God and righteousness. When a believer is tempted to sin, his response should be vocalized: “No! I am dead to sin. Sin does not rule me. I am alive to God in all righteousness and purity!”

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

*Hebrews 4:15*

And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’ ” And Jesus answered and said to him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’ ” And Jesus answered and said to him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ”

*Luke 4:4,8,12*

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

*James 1:14,15*

# FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

## Lesson SEVEN FREEDOM FROM SIN — ALIVE TO GOD

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

*Romans 13:14*

Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

*I Corinthians 15:33*

Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

*I Corinthians 6:18*

Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

*II Timothy 2:22*

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.

*I Peter 2:11*

And do not give the devil an opportunity.

*Ephesians 4:27*

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.

*Romans 8:6*

Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

*John 8:31,32*

### 3. "Flee immorality"

No believer will ever reach the level of maturity in which he cannot be tempted. As long as he remains in his earthly body, he will have to deal with temptation. This means that *he cannot expose himself* to the "gravitational pull" of sin. It is one thing to be tempted by the enemy. It is quite another to place yourself in a position where temptation is inevitable. "*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, in regard to its lusts*" (Romans 13:14). Staying around sin and its pull will always result in a fall.

The believer is free from sin. But, that does not mean that he is free to frequent places of sin or to consistently fellowship with sinners. "*Bad company corrupts good morals*" (I Corinthians 15:33). To be free from sin means that you are **FREE TO RUN AWAY!** Paul said, "*Flee immorality*" (I Corinthians 6:18), and "*Now flee youthful lusts*" (II Timothy 2:22). The redemptive work in you has given to you the ability to "*abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul*" (I Peter 2:11). But, we must be careful that we "*do not give the devil an opportunity*" (Ephesians 4:27) by **placing ourselves** in a position where he can easily tempt us.

### D. WALK BY THE SPIRIT

The Bible makes it clear that believers have a *responsibility* to set their minds on the things of the spirit and not on the flesh. "*For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace*" (Romans 8:6). Whether or not a person sets his mind on the flesh or on the spirit is up to the individual; God will not do it for us. But, we are told that if we *do* set our minds on the spirit, and *walk by the spirit* (that is, the new creature God has made us to be), then we will **not** fulfill the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

This is God's prescription for walking in total liberty from the bondage of sin and sinful habits. When a believer begins to dwell on the fact that his old man is dead in Christ and sin no longer has the power to dominate him, and when he sets his mind on those things which are above — the things of the spirit, then he will know the way things actually are (the truth), and that knowledge will **set him free** from the shackles of sin (John 8:31,32).

# FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

## Lesson SEVEN FREEDOM FROM SIN — ALIVE TO GOD

The power to act like the new man that we are on the inside comes as we meditate upon God's Word that identifies that new man (II Corinthians 5:17,21). As a believer acknowledges who he is in Christ and sets his mind upon the things of the spirit, rather than on the things of the flesh, he'll find that the desires of the flesh don't have any power to overcome him.

### E. THE WAGES OF SIN

**Sin is destructive!** One look around at the state of the world will suffice to show beyond doubt that sin always results in death and destruction. "*For the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). That is why it is **dangerous** for a Christian to take a relaxed or neutral attitude toward sin. Sin always results in misery, as it did at the Fall when Adam sinned. It should be regarded as a deadly enemy, because that is what it is. "*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life*" (Galatians 6:7,8).

#### 1. Sin destroys faith

Sin destroys faith in the believer. It is impossible to receive from God through faith, when one is living in sin (I John 3:22). The principle of faith stated in Mark 11:24 will not work unless the principle of Mark 11:25 is followed. "*Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions*" (Mark 11:24,25).

In Joshua chapter seven is the story of Israel's defeat at Ai. The children of Israel had just soundly defeated the people of Jericho and went forward in the same faith to destroy Ai. Yet they were defeated by the inhabitants of that city. When inquiry was made, it was found that there was sin in the camp; some of the soldiers had taken spoils from Jericho, as was strictly forbidden by the Angel of the Lord (Joshua 6:18). It was not until sin was eradicated from the people that Israel could go up and defeat Ai (Joshua 7 & 8).

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

*II Corinthians 5:17,21*

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Romans 6:23*

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.

*Galatians 6:7,8*

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

*I John 3:22*

"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions."

*Mark 11:24,25*

"But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, lest you covet them and take some of the things under the ban, so you would make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it."

*Joshua 6:18*



# FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

## Lesson SEVEN FREEDOM FROM SIN — ALIVE TO GOD

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

*I John 1:6*

My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

*I John 2:1*

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*I John 1:9*

### 2. Sin destroys fellowship with God

Sin also destroys fellowship with the Father. One cannot have fellowship with God and walk in sin at the same time.

*"If we say we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth"* (I John 1:6). If a believer continues to violate his conscience with sin, he will not have any confidence before God, and fellowship will remain dead until that sin is renounced. If he persists in that sin, his heart will become hardened, and the awareness of God's presence will drift farther and farther away.

Believers cannot afford to take sin with a light attitude. God has called us to a life of holiness before Him, because He knows the destructive power of sin. God tells us to live uprightly before Him, because He knows that that is the only path of life and peace (Romans 8:6). Any parent would strictly forbid his child from playing in a pit that was filled with rattlesnakes. He would do so, not because he didn't want the child to have any "fun," but because he wants the child to live! In exactly the same way, God calls His children to live a life above sin, for He is fully aware of sin's destructive power.

### F. WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE

*"My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (I John 2:1). If a believer does sin, it is not the end. Even if a person has been bound for years with the same sinful habit, God's Word proclaims *forgiveness* and *release*! Jesus is our Advocate with the Father, for His blood has forgiven us all our sins. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (I John 1:9).

God will forgive us every time we sin, if we will confess it before Him and ask forgiveness. This is not meant as a license to sin. It is meant to get us back into fellowship with God, and back into a position of faith and confidence from which we can walk free from sin's bondage. No one will ever walk free from sin if he is laboring under condemnation. Condemnation doesn't help a person to overcome sin; it drives him further into it, because it drives him away from God.

# FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

## Lesson SEVEN FREEDOM FROM SIN — ALIVE TO GOD

*"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1). Unless a believer understands this principle, he'll never walk free from sin. If a person falls in some sin, he must ask forgiveness, and then **get up again**. A baby would never learn to walk if it decided to stay on the ground after a fall. If a baby falls while it is learning to walk, it will get up and go again. Similarly, if a believer falls in some sin, he must repent and get up again, confessing that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

### IV. WATER BAPTISM

Water Baptism has its roots in the ritual washing prescribed in the Old Testament (Exodus 30:17-21; Leviticus 11:25). By the time of John the Baptist, some of these washings had developed into a practice called "baptism." The word "baptize" literally means "immerse in water," and this is what John was doing in the river Jordan. John's baptism was one of repentance. It was the people's sign that they had renounced sin. This explains John's sharp rebuke for the hypocrites, who came to be baptized; he rebuked them because they had not turned from sin (Matthew 3:7,8).

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

*Romans 8:1*

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it. And Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it; when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, that they may not die; or when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up in smoke a fire sacrifice to the Lord. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they may not die; and it shall be a perpetual statute for them, for Aaron and his descendants throughout their generations."

*Exodus 30:17-21*

And whoever picks up any of their carcasses shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening.

*Leviticus 11:25*

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with your repentance."

*Matthew 3:7,8*

# FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

## Lesson SEVEN FREEDOM FROM SIN — ALIVE TO GOD

And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.

*Acts 16:33*

And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized? And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him.

*Acts 8:36-38*

"Surely no one can refuse the water or these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

*Acts 10:47,48*

John's baptism was a baptism of the Old Covenant, and it was very different from the baptism which Jesus charged His disciples to perform, before His ascension (Matthew 28:19). John's baptism symbolized for that time the people's act of repentance and purification. The kingdom of heaven was at hand, so the people prepared themselves (Matthew 3:2). The New Covenant baptism which Jesus commanded symbolizes a miraculous, inward transformation, in which all sins are washed away (Acts 22:16).

### A. WATER BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus gave to His disciples the command to make disciples of men and to baptize them (Matthew 28:19). Throughout the book of Acts we find that the disciples obeyed this command. As soon as a person had been saved, he was baptized in water. The Philippian jailer was baptized the very night that he accepted Jesus as Lord (Acts 16:33). The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized as soon as he was converted (Acts 8:36-38). Cornelius, the Roman centurion, was baptized when the disciples recognized that he had been born again and had received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47,48). In each one of these cases, new converts were baptized in water in *obedience* to the command of the Lord Jesus.

# FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

## Lesson SEVEN FREEDOM FROM SIN — ALIVE TO GOD

Jesus' command was that His disciples baptize "*in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*" (Matthew 28:19). However, in the book of Acts, it is recorded that people were baptized *in the Name of Jesus* (Acts 8:16; 10:48; 19:5). This has been an issue of considerable controversy. Suffice to say that the *merit* of water baptism is in the faith that the individual puts in it, and not the formula by which it is done. The Corinthians were caught up in this same kind of controversy. But in his letter to them, Paul simply retorted, "*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel*" (I Corinthians 1:17). Paul wasn't belittling the meaning of baptism; he was just putting it in proper perspective.

### B. WATER BAPTISM IN PERSPECTIVE

*"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death . . ."* (Romans 6:3,4). When a person is baptized, he is identifying himself with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. (Colossians 2:12). (Water baptism is a person acting out his faith in the fact of the new creation.)

When a person is born again and the old man crucified, he is separated from the world and its values. Identifying with Jesus in baptism is then making a **statement of the fact that we are no longer a part of this world**. We are in the world, but not of the world (John 17:15,16).

For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days. And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

*Acts 8:16; 10:48; 19:5*

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void.

*I Corinthians 1:17*

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

*Romans 6:3,4*

Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

*Colossians 2:12*

"I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

*John 17:15,16*

# FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

## Lesson SEVEN FREEDOM FROM SIN — ALIVE TO GOD

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea.

*I Corinthians 10:1*

And all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

*I Corinthians 10:2*

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

*Romans 6:4*

### 1. The point of separation

In I Corinthians 10:1 we are told that the passing of the children of Israel through the Red Sea was a type or shadow of baptism (I Corinthians 10:1,2). To the children of Israel, the Red Sea was their point of absolute separation from Egypt and their former life of bondage. Egypt is symbolic of the world and of our former bondage to sin.

So, water baptism is to be a clear *point of separation in the life of every believer*. It signifies the death of the old man, which connected us to the world's system, and the birth of the new man, which connects us to God Himself. "*Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life*" (Romans 6:4).

### 2. Identifying with Jesus

The apostle Peter likened baptism to the experience of Noah, in which Noah and his family were saved from a society which was under the judgment of God. The people in the ark were saved from destruction because they were separated from that wicked society.

Through water baptism we cease to identify with the world that crucified Jesus and unite ourselves with Christ's body and family.

If you are a believer, and you have not been water baptized, do so. You need to make this step of obedience to the Lord Jesus. You need to affirm by a physical and public *act* that you no longer consider yourself a part of this world system. You are now a child of God, and so not of this world.

If you *have* been water baptized, mix faith with what you have done and walk in the light of your being a new creature in Christ.

# FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

## Lesson SEVEN FREEDOM FROM SIN — ALIVE TO GOD

### V. SUMMARY — WALKING IN THE LIGHT

God has made every provision for us to walk uprightly before Him. He put to death the power that forced us to sin and placed within us a righteous new nature. There is no reason for any believer to walk in anything but complete victory and mastery over sin and sinful habits. God created His Church for victorious living, not for constant defeat at the hands of sin. However, it is up to the individual as to whether or not he or she will make the quality decision to walk according to the new man, rather than according to the dictates of sin and the flesh.

If a believer chooses to walk according to the flesh, death in one form or another will be the result. But, if that believer chooses to walk according to his recreated spirit (the inner man) then the result will be life and peace. *"But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (I John 1:7).

But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

*I John 1:7*

# FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

## Lesson TWO THE NATURE OF GOD

But as vast and powerful as God is, He has not separated Himself from us, or made Himself unapproachable. Knowledge of God's vastness must be tempered with the revelation that "God is love!" All of God's attributes are manifested in keeping with His loving character. Because God is love, He didn't use His power and wisdom against us, but *for* us. He sent His only Son to purchase our redemption. Thus, God's vast power and knowledge is channeled toward our good and benefit because God is a loving Father. We serve a God who is Almighty and who has no peer. But that Almighty God is a loving Father, whose good intentions are directed toward us, His children.