

Striving For Perfection: Are You a Sinless Saint? : Part 1

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The following article actually began as a message thread on a certain unnamed person's Facebook page. I made a number of Bible-based doctrinal statements with which this person did not agree. As a result, rather than try to understand what I was saying, this person very hastily deleted my posts from his page, and basically stated that I don't teach Scriptural truth on the Bill's Bible Basics website. Immediately after this sad incident occurred, rather than allow myself to be defeated by this person's close-mindedness, I decided to post the same material on my blog. However, after doing so, and after having the post syndicated to my own Facebook page, I continued to make improvements and additions to my original blog post. I then realized that this subject really merited its own complete article. Thus, here it is for your personal consideration.

In the Gospel of Matthew we find Jesus saying the following to His listeners in His famous Sermon on the Mount:

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Matthew 5:48, KJV

No doubt a lot of people will read that verse and think to themselves "Man! . . . that is really a steep mountain to climb! Who can possibly accomplish that? Who can be perfect? That is humanly impossible!" Well, guess what? You are right. Not only that, but you will be happy to know that there is some relief for you, oh weary traveler. That is because many people -- including a lot of Christians -- have completely misunderstood what Jesus actually meant when He spoke about being perfect in that verse. Does it make any sense at all that Jesus would purposely ask us to do something which He knows that we cannot do? Does it make any sense at all that He would place a stumbling block and an obstacle in our way which He already knows will hinder our faith and discourage us? Is it possible then that this insurmountable obstacle was placed in our path by someone else; that is, by organized religion and the religionists?

The simple truth of the matter is that, contrary to popular opinion, and contrary to what so many Christians have been erroneously taught, Jesus wasn't speaking about trying to be a so-called "sinless Saint" who never does anything wrong, and who never makes any mistakes. As I will now demonstrate by way of the Scriptures, He was not talking about trying to reach some unrealistic state of sinless perfection while we remain in this earthly body of weak, sinful flesh.

Personally, I don't know anyone who never makes mistakes; do you? I will occasionally meet people who claim that they do not sin anymore, but let us be brutally honest: These people are really just deceiving themselves. In my view, even trying to achieve such an impossible feat -- that is, a sinless life -- amounts to embarking on a self-righteous works trip. It is not Salvation by Grace. I will be discussing this issue more at length in just a moment. So let's set the record straight. According to Thayer's Greek English Lexicon, in the previous verse, the word "perfect" is derived from the Greek words "teleioo" and "teleios", which actually mean to be complete.

We can confirm that this is what the word "perfect" means in the New Testament by examining verses such as the following:

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

James 1:2-4, KJV

Please note that in the previous verses, the word "wanting" actually means "lacking". It is derived from the Greek word "leipo". So by employing the use of the phrase "and entire, wanting nothing", James is clarifying what he means by the word "perfect". If we rely upon the actual Greek words that are used in that sentence, we could actually read it like this:

"But let patience have her [complete] work, that ye may be [complete] and entire, [lacking] nothing."

Now, tell me; doesn't that verse make a lot more sense when we use the correct translation of the Greek words? So again we discover that in these instances, the words "teleioo" and "teleios" are better translated as "complete", rather than as "perfect". To reiterate, the word "perfect" is not referring to being a "sinless Saint". That misguided definition was invented by organized religion -- such as the Roman Catholic Church and the "holiness" people -- who rely upon their own supposed "good works", instead of relying solely upon the Grace of God through Jesus Christ. Sinless perfection is in reality an invention of man. It is a false doctrine which was concocted by organized religion. It is not what God's Word really says or means concerning this issue of being perfect.

The "sinless Saint" doctrine is likewise a mechanism which is used by some churches as a means to keep people in bondage to their particular denomination, and to their particular belief system. It is this desire to become a "sinless Saint" which sometimes leads to extremism such as self-flagellation. It is people foolishly trying to prove their holiness -- as well as their worthiness -- to God. Their attitude seems to be "Well, maybe if I do this, and perhaps if I do that, and maybe if I mortify my flesh, maybe if I fast for forty days, maybe if I beat myself to death, and maybe if I say twenty Our Fathers, twenty Hail Marys and twenty Glory Be's, I'll somehow make it

to Heaven." Again, such acts are merely self-righteous works of the flesh, and nothing more. It is depending upon our own self-righteousness, and not the righteousness which we only receive through Jesus Christ.

Allow me to share another verse with you in which the Greek word "teleioo" is used, which clearly proves again that the word "perfect" in the Scriptures means to be complete, as in quantity, or to render a thing full. At the very end of his Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle Paul writes as follows concerning the Old Testament heroes and Saints who he has just discussed in that chapter:

"God having provided some better thing for us, that they [meaning the Old Testament Saints] without us should not be made perfect."

Hebrews 11:40, KJV

Now, if we accept the erroneous doctrine which claims that the word "perfect" in that verse refers to a state of sinless perfection or being "sinless Saints", then that verse simply does not make any sense. After all, doesn't the Bible teach us that we will each be judged by the Lord as individuals? Doesn't it also teach us that we will each be judged based upon our own works, and not by the works of others? Consider these verses:

"If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"

Proverbs 24:12, KJV

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

Matthew 16:27, KJV

"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:"

1 Peter 1:17, KJV

". . . I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

Revelation 2:23b, KJV

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Revelation 14:13, KJV

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."

Revelation 20:12-13, KJV

It is clear then the Old Testament Saints cannot possibly be made perfect -- or become "sinless Saints" -- based upon the actions of other Saints who have lived many years after they have. Therefore, we must conclude that the word "perfect" in that verse must have some other meaning, other than what the religionists would have us to believe.

Considering that the Greek word "teleioo" actually means to make complete, to complete, add what is yet lacking in order to render a thing full, to bring to the end or to accomplish, it is easy to determine that what Paul is actually saying, is that until the remainder of the Saints join the ranks of the Old Testament Saints in Heaven, God's Work simply will not be complete, and the assigned number of predestinated, chosen and saved persons will not be complete. The number will not be full. To reiterate, this is the very same Greek word that is used in the verse that we discussed at the beginning of this article:

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Matthew 5:48, KJV

So again, if we apply the so-called "sinless perfection" definition to Hebrews 11:40, it does not make any sense at all. In order to remain consistent in our interpretation of the word "teleioo", we must apply the same meaning to both verses. When we do that, both verses make perfect sense. Now,

if after reading my explanation, you still remain convinced that Jesus is saying that we must be "sinless Saints" in the flesh in the above verse, then it seems to me that you are going to have a very difficult time explaining verses such as the following, where even the Apostle Paul is honest enough, and humble enough, to recognize his sinful condition, which he was not able to overcome in the flesh. Paul was no more a "sinless Saint" than are you and I:

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

Romans 7:14-20, KJV

Notice that Paul clearly states "sin that dwelleth in me." If, as Paul states, sin dwells in him, then obviously, he cannot be sinless, or a "sinless Saint". Thus we can only conclude that Paul was not perfect, and that he was in fact a sinner just like you and I. He kept doing things which he knew that he should not do. So even Paul was not able to live by Jesus' words "Be ye therefore perfect"; that is, if we believe the religionists and equate the word "perfect" with sinlessness. Should we just assume then that Paul was a failure insofar as being a Christian is concerned, because he was not perfect in the flesh, sometimes yielded to his flesh, and made mistakes?

If you have any doubts whatsoever that this is exactly what Paul is saying in the previous verses, then he makes it even more clear for us in his Epistle to the brethren at Philippi when he writes the following:

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching

forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:12-14, KJV

What?! Paul didn't attain to perfection? He wasn't perfect? He didn't apprehend -- take hold of or attain, from the Greek word "katalambano" -- perfection? He wasn't really a "sinless Saint"? Well, if he didn't, and wasn't, then how dare certain modern Christians foolishly claim that they have in their own pride and deception. Paul offers his own rebuke for deceived people such as these when he writes the following:

"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

Romans 10:2-3, KJV

If -- according to the definition of the religionists -- the Apostle Paul sacrificed so much, and was persecuted so much, and still was not perfect, and wasn't able to make the grade, how much hope does that really leave for us to also become "sinless Saints"? What realistic expectations can we have for ourselves who are nowhere near the status of the Apostle Paul?

It becomes clear then that if we toss out this false doctrine of "sinless perfection", and simply realize that this is not what Jesus is saying in that verse, then everything falls into place. God would not place a mountain before us which He knows we cannot climb. The obstacle was placed in front of us by the false doctrines and traditions of men of organized religion -- and not by the Lord -- in order to keep us in bondage to their systems.

No doubt some of my critics will ask "So are you saying that we should just do as we please and sin as we please, and not worry about any consequences, because God does not expect perfection from us?" Please don't be ridiculous. Of course I am not saying that! We should all strive to avoid sin in our lives as much as possible. As even Jesus told the woman who was caught in the very act of committing adultery:

". . . Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go,

and sin no more."

John 8:11b, KJV

Some people have erroneously interpreted Jesus' words as meaning that He was telling her to go and be a "sinless Saint", but that is not the case, in my view. Such people are extending the meaning of Jesus' words in order to make it fit their own man-made doctrine concerning attaining to some state of sinless perfection. If we take the time to read the entire story, we discover that it is specifically about the sin of adultery -- and self-righteousness as well. Thus, Jesus is simply telling the woman to stop committing adultery. He was not expecting her to become a "sinless Saint" overnight; because as Paul wrote in the above verses "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."

In an earlier incident that is also found in the Gospel of John, we find Jesus offering the very same warning to a man He had healed, who had been unable to walk for thirty-eight years. In this case, we are not told precisely what his sin was. However, whatever it was, not only does Jesus tell him to stop doing whatever it was that resulted in him becoming sick in the first place, but the Lord also warns him that if he falls back into that same sin again, a worse thing may come upon him, as we see here:

"Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

John 5:14, KJV

Clearly then, our sins do carry consequences; and the final consequence of our sins -- should we choose to not repent and accept Christ -- is to remain in sin, and death, as we see by the following verses:

"Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

John 8:21-24, KJV

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 6:23, KJV

On a side note, as I point out in the article "Are Personal Tragedies Due to Sin?", it should also be mentioned that not all sickness results directly from sin in a person's life. In the very next chapter of the Gospel of John, we find the Lord healing a man who has been blind since birth. In that incident, consider what Jesus said when His Disciples asked of Him concerning the man:

"And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

John 9:2-3, KJV

Along these same lines, you may also want to read my 1999 article entitled "Why Doesn't God Heal Me?", as well as my four-part series called "Demonic Possession and Sickness: A Biblical Perspective".

Returning to our main topic of discussion, like the Apostle Paul, we need to be honest with ourselves and recognize that we will never attain to some state of sinless perfection in the flesh. However, just because we cannot hope to achieve some state of sinless perfection by our human endeavors does not mean that we should not resist sin. After all, as the Apostle Paul also wrote:

"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."
Hebrews 12:4, KJV

In the previous verse, the word "striving" is derived from the Greek word "antagonizomai", which means to struggle or to fight. Thus, we must struggle or fight against the sin that dwells in our flesh. As I point out in such articles as "Are You Crucified With Christ?", we must continually wage war against the old man of the flesh with his sins, in order that the new man of the Spirit may thrive in us. Consider the following verses:

"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."

Romans 6:6, KJV

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;"

Ephesians 4:22, KJV

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;"

Colossians 3:9, KJV

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV

"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Ephesians 4:24, KJV

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:"

Colossians 3:10, KJV

Think about it. If it were really possible for us to become "sinless Saints" by striving hard enough to avoid sin in our lives, then we would not even need Jesus, would we? In such a theoretical case, He died in vain. Furthermore, by even striving to attain perfection by our own human endeavors, we have basically converted Salvation by Grace through faith in Jesus Christ into a self-righteous works trip, just like the Scribes and the Pharisees of old. But consider the truth of these verses:

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

Isaiah 64:6, KJV

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one . . . For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Romans 3:10, 23, KJV

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"

Titus 3:5, KJV

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Ephesians 2:8-9, KJV

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

Romans 11:6, KJV

In short, as the Scriptures make perfectly clear, the only righteousness we have, is that righteousness which is solely obtained through faith in Jesus Christ, and being washed in the Blood of the Lamb. He is the only one who can justify us all, as we see by the following verses:

"And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Acts 13:39, KJV

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith."

Romans 3:20-27, KJV

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of

righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)
. . . That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might
grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus
Christ our Lord."

Romans 5:17, 21, KJV

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law
by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another,
even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should
bring forth fruit unto God."

Romans 7:4, KJV

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin;
but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

Romans 8:10, KJV

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every
one that believeth."

Romans 10:4, KJV

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the
law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed
in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of
Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of
the law shall no flesh be justified . . . I do not frustrate
the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then
Christ is dead in vain."

Galatians 2:16, 21, KJV

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of
God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith."

Galatians 3:11, KJV

"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you
are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

Galatians 5:4, KJV

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness,
which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of
Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:"

Philippians 3:9, KJV

Now, if Jesus truly expects us to be "sinless Saints" as
some of these holiness religionists seem to believe -- and
falsely teach -- then I have to candidly admit that after

all of these years that I have known the Lord and His Word, and preached His Word to millions over the past forty years or so, I have apparently still failed at being a Christian; because like the Apostle Paul, I still have not attained to a state of sinless perfection. Have you? Be honest with yourself and with the Lord. Don't you still struggle with some of your same sins of the flesh day after day, and year after year?

No doubt you have prayed many desperate prayers and said "Jesus, please help me with this sin. I am just too weak to overcome it alone. I really need your help." And yet, you eventually fall back into the very same things again, don't you, just like the Apostle Paul and all the rest of us. Well, Jesus said that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light; so if we feel that we are so loaded down by the burden of sin, then something must be wrong somewhere. Is it possible that the problem is that we are trying to carry the load of sin by ourselves, and that we are endeavoring to perfect ourselves through our own works of the flesh, instead of relying upon His Atoning Sacrifice for our Salvation? In our pride, are we trying to prove something to ourselves, to others, and perhaps even to God? Consider these verses:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30, KJV

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

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Striving For Perfection: Are You a Sinless Saint? : Part 2

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Can We Hope To Ever Be Perfect?, Vacating Our Flesh, Flesh And Blood Cannot Inherit The Kingdom Of God, Last Trump And Spiritual Bodies, Jesus Inhabited Sinful Human Flesh, Jesus' Victory Over The Flesh Sin And Death, Live In God's Spirit, Walk In Newness Of Life, Quickening And Rebirth, Quickening And Our Resurrected Bodies, All Have Sinned And Missed God's Mark, Sin Is Transgression Of God's Laws, O Wretched Man, Paul Persecuted The church, Paul's Burden Of Sin And Guilt, Paul Initially Rejected By Christian Church, Paul Persevered In Spite Of Obstacles, Paul's Expansive Writing Career And Establishing Churches, Paul Kept His Eyes On Jesus, Author And Finisher Of Our Faith, Confidence Faith And Obedience, Lay Aside Every Weight And Sin, I Am What I Am, Leave Your Past Mistakes Behind, Press Toward The Mark For The Prize, Cast Your Burdens On Jesus, My Personal Struggles With Sin, Keep Your Eyes On Jesus And Not On Yourself Or Your Sins, Trials And Tribulations Of The Old Testament Prophets, My Calling As The WordWeaver, Some Questions For The Reader, Except Your Righteousness Exceed Righteousness Of Scribes And Pharisees, God's Righteousness Through Jesus, A Choice

By this time, you are probably asking yourself, "Can we ever truly hope to be perfect then? Is it really possible for us to become 'sinless Saints' like some of these Bible teachers and preachers claim?" Indeed it is possible. However, I am convinced by the Scriptures that this will not happen in our current life. In other words, it will not happen as long as we continue to dwell in our sinful flesh. Be honest. Don't your own personal experiences with your own sins prove this point to you?

My current view is that one day we will be "sinless Saints", after we have vacated this mortal body of flesh and blood, and have become complete in Christ; because as we have seen, He alone is our righteousness. We must put off the sinful shackles of flesh and blood, because as the Apostle Paul so wonderfully informs us, flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. That is why we require new spiritual bodies wherein dwells no sin. Consider these verses:

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

1 Corinthians 15:50-52, KJV

As the Apostle Paul likewise informs us in his Epistle to the Romans, as well as in his Epistle to the Hebrews, this coming glorious event became possible for us, because Jesus Christ was obedient to His Father, and was willing to come to this Earth, and inhabit a body of sinful flesh. By doing this, He condemned sin in the flesh. Furthermore, by way of His own Substitutionary Death on the Cross, Jesus Christ also wrought a victory over death, which, as we have already seen, is the wages of sin. That is why Paul concludes the following verses in Romans by saying that He "shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you", precisely as he also writes in his first Epistle to the Corinthians in the previous verses. Please notice in the verses below that Paul specifically informs us that Jesus was "in the likeness of sinful flesh":

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of

righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Romans 8:1-11, KJV

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

Hebrews 2:14-18, KJV

The Apostle Peter likewise informs us in his first Epistle that Jesus bore our sins in His own flesh as He hung on the tree, as we see by this verse:

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

1 Peter 2:24, KJV

Please notice also that Peter states "that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." The Apostle Paul said the very same thing in his discussions concerning the old man and the new man. He informs us that because we still dwell in our bodies of sinful flesh, we are dead in our sins. As such, the only solution is to walk in newness of life. The new life of which Paul speaks was symbolically given to us at the time of our spiritual rebirth, when we first accepted Christ, and were cleansed by His Blood. Consider the following verses:

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Romans 6:4, KJV

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead

wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

Romans 7:6, KJV

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;"

Colossians 2:13, KJV

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins . . . But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 2:1, 4-7, KJV

Now, lest you become confused by some of the verses which I have shared with you, allow me to clarify something for you. The Apostle Paul is actually describing two very different quickenings. The first quickening is a symbolic quickening, or a purely symbolic resurrection from the dead, that occurs at the time of our spiritual rebirth. There is really nothing physical about it, other than the fact that it may manifest itself through the positive changes which occur in our life following our acceptance of Christ. As many of you will know, Jesus discussed this spiritual rebirth, symbolic quickening, and resurrection from our old man of the sinful flesh, in the following verses:

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born

again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

John 3:3-8, KJV

To reiterate, this is a symbolic resurrection and rebirth. It does not free us from our sinful flesh in any way. Like it or not, we are stuck with the old man of the flesh until the day in which we die. Thus, as occurred with Paul, and as must also occur with everyone else who accepts Christ, while we strive to walk in newness of life, and while we may wage constant war against our old man, we still have not arrived at some hoped for state of sinless perfection. We are still not so-called "sinless Saints", because we are still in the tabernacle of our sinful flesh.

Again, that is why we all must experience a separation at the moment of our death. The new man of the Spirit must be rent from -- or separated from -- the old man of the flesh; because sinful flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. As we have seen, this is what Paul is describing for us in 1 Corinthians 15. It is also what is described in these inspiring verses as well:

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"

Romans 6:5, KJV

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Romans 8:29, KJV

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

2 Corinthians 5:1-4, KJV

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
Philippians 3:21, KJV

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

1 John 3:2, KJV

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

1 Corinthians 15:40-52, KJV

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, KJV

Considering the abundance of Scriptural evidence which I have now provided in this article, it should be clear to you why we must by necessity leave behind this earthly body of flesh and blood. It is sinful. It is unclean. It is not perfect. We will never become so-called "sinless Saints" as long as we remain in it, no matter what anyone tells us. As we have now seen, we must war against it, we must resist it, and we must allow our new spiritual man to dominate it until the day in which the Lord chooses to take us Home, just as the Apostle Paul also discovered. Then, and only then, will we receive a permanent victory. Then, and only then, will we truly become complete -- or perfect -- in Christ, as Jesus admonished us to do in Matthew 5:48.

If you continue to believe otherwise, and if you continue to think that you can become a "sinless Saint" in the here and now, I am sorry to disappoint you, but you deceive yourself. As we saw in part one, the Apostle Paul and other writers in the Scriptures make it very clear that our own righteousness stinks. We have all sinned, we will continue to sin, and we will continue to come short of the glory of God. In short, we will continue to fall short of the mark every single time, no matter how hard we endeavor to do otherwise.

As the Apostle John informs us, sin is missing the mark. It is transgressing, breaking and violating God's Laws in even the smallest of ways, and we all do it every single day. As a result, the Apostle James informs us that we are guilty of all. Therefore, we cannot be "sinless Saints", or attain to some sinless state of perfection, as long as we dwell in our flesh. Please consider the following verses:

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

James 2:10, KJV

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."

1 John 3:4, KJV

One important question still remains to be answered. Until we are someday freed from our sinful flesh, exactly what are we supposed to do concerning this burden of sin which so often

overwhelms us? As we saw in part one, Jesus told us that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. Despite this fact, we so often struggle with our personal sins and shortcomings. In fact, each time that we strive to become "sinless Saints" and perfect in the flesh, and fail, what happens? You know the answer as well as I do. We become even more discouraged and overcome by a sense of hopelessness. You see, I know what you go through without even knowing you, because I know what I also have gone through. Like the Apostle Paul, we can all say:

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Romans 7:24, KJV

In actuality, I already provided the solution for you in part one, if you were sharp enough to recognize it. The answer can be found in the life and writings of the Apostle Paul. Think about this for a moment. If anyone could have lugged around and become burdened and discouraged by his own sins, surely it was Paul. As Paul tells us in his own words, he persecuted and killed by proxy, a lot of Christians, as we see by these verses:

"And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

1 Corinthians 15:8-10, KJV

Clearly then, Paul had a very heavy burden of sin and guilt to carry around. To make matters even worse, at first, the Christian brethren didn't even like or trust Paul. Would you have felt any differently if you suddenly heard that one of the worst and most feared enemies of the First Century Church had converted to the faith? Would you have embraced Paul? Are you certain? Looking backwards to the past, it is easy for us to say "yes", because we know how the situation eventually turned out. Furthermore, we have been tremendously blessed by his writings. But imagine if you had been there before all of this had happened, and right when Paul was first embarking on his ministry.

Despite these obstacles, Paul did not allow these challenges to stop him or to slow him down. Quite to the contrary, Paul went on to become one of the most influential Apostles of the First Century era. Not only did he write a major portion of the New Testament Scriptures, but with the wonderful help of his traveling companions such as Luke, Barnabas, Mark John, Silas, etc., Paul also converted both Jews and Gentiles alike to the Christian faith, and helped to establish churches in nations which we know today as Israel, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain, Crete, and probably other countries along the Mediterranean Sea and in the southern European region.

How did Paul accomplish this? How did he prevent his wicked and rebellious past from overwhelming him? What kept Paul from becoming discouraged not only by his own personal sins and shortcomings, but likewise by the rejection which he no doubt experienced, first from the Christian Church itself, and then from the towns and villages where the Gospel was not received? Was Paul such a spiritual giant? As we have clearly seen from the verses which I have shared in this article, even Paul recognized that he was really no such thing. Paul's real secret is found in two verses that are found immediately after a verse that I shared with you in part one. That verse was Hebrews 11:40, which reads as follows:

"God having provided some better thing for us, that they [the Old Testament Saints] without us should not be made perfect."

Hebrews 11:40, KJV

Even though it has been divided into a separate chapter in our modern Bibles, what comes next is really a continuation of the above verse. Paul writes as follows:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Hebrews 12:1-2, KJV

In the previous verses we are given a two-part solution, and the formula which Paul used personally in order to achieve success as a Christian, and as an ambassador of the Gospel. Of the two, the most important one is obviously the fact that he kept His eyes on Jesus. He recognized Jesus as the Author and the Finisher of his faith. Paul knew that if Jesus had begun this work in him, then He would also finish it as well. In fact, Paul shared this very same wise counsel with the brethren in the town of Philippi when he wrote the following:

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"

Philippians 1:6, KJV

Paul had confidence and faith in Christ, that He would do it. Paul knew that he personally didn't have to do it. All he had to do was to receive his instructions from the Lord, and then to follow through on them. His part was to simply obey God's guidance. This brings us to the second part of Paul's "secret" formula for success. In the previous verses Paul writes "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." What?! That's right. Paul advises us to just chuck our sins and burdens aside. Just don't even worry about them. Don't let them drag you down. Don't let them hinder you or ruin your effectiveness for the Lord.

As we saw a minute ago, Paul wrote "I am what I am". What he is really saying is "I am what I am, I did what I did, and I can't really change the past, so let's just move forward and preach the Gospel." If you doubt that this is what Paul is saying, then you have already forgotten what I shared with you in part one. To refresh your memory, in his same Epistle to the Philippian brethren, Paul wrote "but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before". Wow! Inspiring!

How could he do this? How could Paul just chuck it all out the window and not worry about it? Simple. It goes back to the first part of his solution: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Again, Paul placed his faith, confidence and trust in Jesus. He wasn't relying upon some self-contrived sense of greatness or holiness. He had no delusion about being a "sinless Saint" in the flesh. Paul

was fully aware of the fact that his flesh was sinful, that his own righteousness stank, and that his only hope was in Jesus, and not in himself. So why bother? Why even try? He had more important things to do with his life, other than to be weighted down by his own disgusting self.

To sharpen my answer even further, Paul didn't just cast his burdens and sins aside. He did much better than that. He was smart enough to follow Jesus' own counsel in Matthew chapter eleven. That is why, just like the Apostle Peter -- who was likewise a great sinner who even denied the Lord -- Paul also threw his burdens on Jesus' shoulders and simply said "Here; you take it. I trust you. You take care of it for me." In his first Epistle, Peter wrote as follows:

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
1 Peter 5:7, KJV

Folks, I can tell you from personal experience that this is basically what I have done as well. Similar to the Apostles Peter and Paul, I am more than aware of my personal sins and shortcomings. I know my sins inside and out. I have had them long enough. There was a time many years ago, decades ago in fact, when I used to worry about them all the time; at least a lot more than I do now. I was so into myself, and my own problems, that I was constantly getting discouraged, and it no doubt affected my overall spiritual condition, as well as my effectiveness for the Lord. I just did not know how to keep the victory in my life. Apparently, my problem was that contrary to Paul's advice, I had my eyes too much on me, and not enough on Jesus, who is the Author and the Finisher of my faith.

I honestly don't recall when it happened, or exactly how it happened, but I eventually reached the point where, like the Apostle Paul, I just decided that I was not going to worry about it anymore. At least I am not going to allow my sins to hold me back from serving the Lord. I simply don't have time for such nonsense. I have more important things to be doing with my life; primarily running this online ministry.

Consider the Old Testament Prophets for a moment. They were people just like you and I. Yes, they were anointed by God's Spirit, but other than that, they dwelt in the same sinful flesh as you and I. Now consider the contents of most of the

messages which the Lord gave them to deliver to the people. As you will know, a lot of it was quite dark and negative, because to be honest, the ancient Israelites were very often a stubborn, rebellious and backslidden people who required a heavy hand from the Lord.

As a result, as I point out in such series as "Revelation's Babylon the Great", many of the Prophets were persecuted and slain by the very same people to whom they were sent to warn. But aside from that, has it ever occurred to you that they too must have had self doubts? Surely they must have been aware of their own sinful condition. Is it possible that at times they may have thought to themselves, "Who am I to be delivering this message? I am no better than the people to whom the Lord has sent me."

What if they had become discouraged? What if they had thrown in the towel, hung up their Prophet's robe, and given up? We would not even have a major part of the Old Testament today. Thank God that they didn't. Thank God that they had spiritual vision and the foresight to plow on in spite of themselves. I feel the exact same way. I too must plow on in spite of myself as well. Sinner that I am, I am convinced that God has given me a special calling with this online writing ministry. I do not say this to boast, but merely as a matter of fact in my life. It is inescapable. It is what He has apparently called me to do. He made me the WordWeaver. I am His creation. Like Paul, I too feel compelled to say "by the grace of God I am what I am." It does not make me better or more spiritual than anyone else. It is just the way it is, and I have accepted it.

So what about you? Do you place your faith, confidence and trust fully in Jesus? Do you trust utterly in Him for your righteousness, as well as for your Salvation? Do you realize in your heart what an utterly hopeless case you really are? Similar to the Apostle Paul, are you humble enough to admit "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing"? Are you fully leaning on and depending on the Grace of God?

In contrast, are you so full of yourself, and so full of your own perceived goodness and righteousness, that you have been deceived into believing that you are a "sinless Saint" who has achieved a state of sinless perfection? I truly hope that

it is not the latter, because if it is, people will be able to smell your spiritual stench a mile away. It is in fact the very same disgusting stench that followed the Scribes and the Pharisees wherever they went, as they solicited the praises of men. Just remember what Jesus said concerning them:

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 5:20, KJV

Jesus' whole point in making that statement was to say "They don't have any righteousness of their own, so you had better accept the Righteousness that comes from God, through me."

As we saw in part one, the Apostle Paul wrote:

"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

Romans 10:2-3, KJV

So the choice is really up to you. You can either honestly and humbly admit your need for the Lord, and accept His righteousness as your own, or else you can continue on in your sanctimonious pretense, endeavoring to impress people with your self-assigned holiness and air of perfection. But please keep in mind that if you keep up your charade long enough, one of these days, the Lord will surely burst your bubble, as we see by this verse:

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Proverbs 16:18, KJV

With these last thoughts I will bring this article to its conclusion. I pray that you have found it informative, and that it has been a blessing and an inspiration in your life. It has indeed been an inspiration for me to write it. I am always blessed whenever I dig into God's Word. If you have also been blessed by this article, I encourage you to share its URL link with all of your online friends. Also, if you have an account with Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would likewise very much appreciate if you would take the time to

click on the corresponding link that is found on this page.
Thanks so much, and may God bless you!

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