

GOD'S SIMPLE TRUTHS (04).

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Introduction.

When the Lord saved you, what did He do and what did He accomplish in your life? Most likely, you were not immediately aware of several of the things that happened to you. As a matter of fact there are far too many Christians in our world who are not aware of what God accomplished in their lives when He saved them. When God saved you in Christ several amazing and miraculous things happened to you. Today I want to take you on a brief survey of how God described you before you were saved, what God accomplished when He saved you, and the spiritual war you have become embroiled in. Lord willing, next week we shall look at the basic principles you must follow for the maintenance of your Christian life.

I). Before You Were Saved.

The Biblical description of you as a sinner is utterly devastating. It shows the impossibility of you being saved without the prior gracious working of God in you. The most important description of you as a sinner is that you were dead, spiritually dead. Paul wrote to the Ephesians and described their state before they were converted to Christ as follows, “you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” (*Eph.2:1*). Paul said to the Colossians, “you were dead in your transgressions.” (*Col.2:13*). Paul said concerning both Jews and Gentiles, “for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (*Rom.3:22-23*). And in *Rom.5:12* Paul said sin brought death to all. In *Rom.8:6* Paul said, “the mind set on the flesh is death.” The mind that is controlled by our corrupted fallen nature is death itself.

What are the characteristics of this spiritual death? In a word, it is the sinner's total inability to respond to the things of God. Jesus said in *Matt.13:13*, "while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand." Spiritual death is manifested by spiritual blindness, spiritual deafness and a lack of spiritual understanding. In *Jn.8:43* Jesus asked the Jews, "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word." Note the word "**cannot**". It is literally, "*you are not able*" and speaks of an inherent inability that the sinner cannot overcome by his own power. Note the repetition of the word "**cannot**" in the verses I will be mentioning.

In *Jn.3:3* Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." "**Truly, truly**" is the very solemn "*I tell you the truth.*" The verb "**see**" also means "*perceive or understand*". In *vs.5* Jesus added, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Note the two important descriptions of spiritual inability here : "cannot see ... cannot enter."

In *2Cor.4:4* we are told, "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." *1Cor.2:14* says, "But a natural (**unsaved**) man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." Take note of the words "cannot understand". The unsaved man cannot understand the things of God. He does not have the spiritual ability to understand the things of God. The result is he regards them as foolishness and does not accept them. *1Cor.1:18* says "the word (**message**) of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing."

Please turn to *Rom.8*. Paul speaks here about "the mind set on the flesh." This is a description of the sinner. The "**flesh**" is the sinner's fallen corrupt sinful nature. The mind of the sinner is controlled by his fallen corrupt sinful nature. In a real sense his mind is the slave of his fallen corrupt sinful nature. Speaking about the sinner's slavery

Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” (*Jn.8:34*). Note again the solemn “truly, truly.” In *Rom.6:17 & 20* Paul described sinners as slaves of sin who do the bidding of sin. In *2Tim.2:26* we are told that sinners are held captive by Satan to do his will.

But going back to *Rom.8* now. *Vs.6* says, “the mind set on the flesh is death.” Paul did not say, “*the mind set on the flesh will die.*” Paul said, “the mind set on the flesh **IS** death.” The mind set on the flesh is at this very moment death itself. *Vs.7* says, “the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for (**because**) it does not subject itself to the law of God, for (**because**) it is not even able to do so.” This is a very frightening description. “The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God.” The mind set on the flesh is an active avowed enemy of God. The mind set on the flesh is actively waging war against God.

The primary manifestation of this war against God is that the mind of the sinner does not subject itself to or obey the law of God. The verb “**subject**” speaks of military obedience, unquestioning obedience, that is an obedience that does not challenge God’s sovereign authority. The reason why the mind set on the flesh does not obey God is that “it is not even able to do so.” The mind set on the flesh does not have the spiritual ability to move the will to obey God. Put this side by side with what Jesus said to the Jewish religious teachers in *Jn.5:40*, “you do not will to come to Me so that you may have life”, that is, salvation. In *Jn.6:44* Jesus said, “No one is able to come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” Note that : they do not will because they do not have the spiritual ability to will. They are spiritually dead.

Paul rounded off his description in *Rom.8:8* with these words, “those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” The sinner lacks the ability to please God in anything he does. The sinners thinks, maybe my good works will please God. Maybe my prayers will please God. But God says to the sinner, there is nothing you can do to please Me.

By way of summary, the sinner is spiritually blind, deaf, unable to understand, unable to enter, unable to move his will to obey, unable to please God, and unable to move his will to come to Jesus for life. In other words, the sinner is dead in his trespasses and sins.

II). What God Did.

We come now, in the second place, to consider what God did when He saved you. Please turn to *Eph.2:1-5*. (**read**). You were dead in your trespasses and sins. In this state of spiritual death you were dominated by the world, dictated to by Satan, dedicated to the flesh and destined for hell. In the words of *vs.12*, you had no hope and you were without God in this world. Then something happened. Paul said “**But God.**” Someone has described “**but**” as the conjunction of hope for hopeless sinners. God intervened. God who is infinitely gracious, rich in mercy and great in love, He intervened. And what did He do?

He “made us alive together with Christ.” We were spiritually dead. What we needed was life, spiritual life. God intervened and made us alive. In *Col.2:13* Paul wrote, “When you were dead ... He made you alive together with [Christ].” This work of God is also called the doctrine of regeneration. I want you to note that it is not the sinner who makes himself / herself alive by taking certain actions or following certain steps. It is God who makes the sinner alive. The sinner contributes absolutely nothing here. This is a gracious and sovereign work of God alone in the sinner.

Please turn to *Jn.3*. In *Jn.3:3 & 7* Jesus described this being made alive as being “born again” or “born from above”. Out of this came the expression, “*the new birth*”. In *vs.8* Jesus used the expression, “born of the Spirit.” The verbs Jesus used are passive and emphasize what is being done to the sinner. Now note *vs.8*. Jesus said, “The winds blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” The basic point here is that the new birth is a sovereign and mysterious work of

God's Spirit in the sinner. The verb "is born" is perfect tense and points to the fact that the results of this work of the Spirit are undeniable, unmistakable and irrevocable.

The work of salvation that God begins in the sinner with the new birth ends with the conversion of the sinner to Christ. This entire process, once it gets started with the new birth, moves forward irresistibly towards its final goal of the conversion of the sinner to Christ. Paul summarized this irresistible process for us in **Rom.8:29-30**. Please turn to **Rom.8:29-30**. Paul wrote, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom he called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

In these verses Paul takes us from eternity past to eternity future. He takes from God's electing love and choice of us in eternity past, brings us into time with God's effectual call and saving us and then takes us to our final glorification in the future. I want you to note that Paul speaks of our final glorification in the Greek aorist or past tense. Why? For Paul this was a done deal. **Charles Hodge** wrote, *"that tense [of the verb] is employed, because Paul is speaking of that God, who sees the end from the beginning, and in whose decree and purpose all future events are comprehended and fixed."*

When God makes the sinner alive in Christ, He also changes all the characteristics of the sinner's spiritual death. The sinner receives spiritual sight, hearing and understanding. (cf. **Matt.13:16**). The sinner hears the gospel and understands it. The gospel is no longer foolishness. The gospel is now the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. (**Rom.1:16; 1Cor.1:18, 23, 24**). In hearing and understanding the gospel, the sinner wills his mind to repent of his sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

In saving you, God forgives your sins in Christ and imputes to you the righteousness of Christ. God also works in you radical spiritual and moral change. He makes you into a

new creation in Christ. (*2Cor.5:17*). You are now a spiritually and morally new person. You are freed from your slavery to sin and Satan. (cf. *Rom.6:14; Col.1:13*). You are freed to obey Christ and you will to obey Christ. (cf. *Rom.6:16-19*). God removes all the spiritual and moral “*cannots*” or inabilities that once marked you. Now, as Paul said, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (*Phil.4:13*). I continually have the strength or ability to do all things through Him who is continually infusing strength or power into me.

III). A Different War.

We saw from *Rom.8:7* that as a sinner you were the active enemy of God and you were at war with God. Paul confirms this fact in *Col.1:21* where he said that as a sinner you were “alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds.” The day you became a Christian the war changed. On that day you became embroiled in a different kind of war. Now Satan has declared war on you. And the remains of sin in you have declared war on you. The question arises : how do you deal with these new enemies?

Firstly, how do you deal with Satan? You must keep in mind that Satan and his legions of fallen angels are defeated foes. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross He defeated Satan. (cf. *Jn.12:31*). As a Christian, Christ’s victory is your victory. Christ’s victory is your victory because you are in Christ. As a matter of fact, as we have seen so often, you are a Christian because you are in Christ.

Now, Satan’s defeat does not mean he is powerless. He is powerful and if you are careless and presumptuous, you would quickly discover how easily he can defeat you. Turn to *1Pet.5:8-9*. “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith....” Peter is warning you that Satan is your adversary, your enemy. He is no ordinary enemy who must be taken for granted. He is pictured as an energetic, fierce and determined enemy and his goal is to capture you and bring you down.

Peter's commands to you for dealing with Satan are sharp. His commands call for urgent and immediate action. The commands, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert", call for active moral and spiritual vigilance against Satan. It is the opposite to any kind of moral and spiritual slothfulness. Moral and spiritual slothfulness opens the door to Satan's attacks. In *Jn.14:30* Jesus said, "the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me." This must be our approach to dealing with Satan. As far as is possible for us, we must leave no door open for him.

Next, Peter said, "resist him, firm in your faith." The verb "**resist**" is a military word that literally means "*to stand against*". This verb is also used in *Acts 13:8* to describe Elymas' strong opposition to Paul as Paul presented the gospel to the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. It is used to describe Paul's strong opposition to Peter's compromise in Antioch. (*Gal.2:11*). It is also used to describe how Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, how apostates oppose the truth and how Alexander the coppersmith opposed Paul's teaching. (*2Tim.3:8; 4:14-15*).

The verb speaks of an active resistance. It tells us that the Christian must take an active, definite and solid stand against the devil. **Thomas Schreiner** wrote, "*Resistance ... is not passive but represents active engagement against a foe. Believers will not triumph over the devil if they remain passive.*" Note carefully that we are told to "**resist**" the devil. We are not told to cast out the devil. Jesus did that. (cf. *Jn.12:31*). We are not told to rebuke the devil. We are not told to crush the devil with our feet. We are not told to flee from the devil. The word of God tells us to "flee immorality" (*1Cor.6:18*); "flee from idolatry" (*1Cor.10:14*); flee from the love of money (*1Tim.6:10-11*); "flee from youthful lusts" (*2Tim.2:22*). On the other hand *Jas.4:7* says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Note that, you take an active solid stand in resisting the devil and he will flee from you.

How are we to resist the devil? Peter said, "resist him, firm in your faith." (Literal : "firm in the faith of you.") We resist the devil by not giving in to him. We resist the devil by remaining firm in the faith we have committed ourselves to. The word "**firm**"

also means hard, solid and compact, like a rock. In his inner attitude, the Christian should stand firm and unyielding like granite rock in resisting Satan. **“The faith”** is the true gospel message that must be adhered to. Victory lies in standing firm in the work of Christ on the cross, where He defeated the devil.

Schreiner noted, *“The call to resistance does not summon believers to do Herculean acts on God’s behalf. Believers are not encouraged to gather all their resources to do great works for God.”* Resisting the devil means that believers must remain firm in their trust in God and in the great victory He accomplished through the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. In other words, the devil will do all he can to make the Christian life difficult for you. But the way to deal with the devil is not difficult. The way to deal with the devil is by remaining firmly true to the faith as revealed to us in the word of God. The problem is that we do not remain consistently and firmly true to the faith. This is why we get into all kinds of difficulties and then we say, *“being a Christian is so hard.”*

This brings us to the problem of indwelling sin. As a sinner, you were the slave of sin. Sin was your master. Sin ruled you. When God saved you, He set you free from your slavery to sin. Sin’s dominion over you was rendered powerless. (cf. **Rom.6:6-7**). In **Rom.6:14** Paul wrote, “sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” The problem is that although sin is no longer your master, sin is still a very powerful foe. This is what Paul describes for us in **Rom.7:14-25**. Please turn to **Rom.7:14-25**.

As a Christian, Paul discovered a fierce war taking place in him. Paul loved the word of God. He said, “I joyfully concur with the law of God.” (vs.22). He said the willing is present in him to do good. (vs.18). But doing the good he wants to do is not that easy. In vs.19 he said, “The good that I want, I do not, but I practice the very evil I do not want.” In vs.23 he said, “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.” In other words, indwelling sin is waging war on him,

resisting him, even defeating him. This battle against sin was so fierce and frustrating, Paul cried out, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (*vs.24*).

How do we deal with indwelling sin? Before I answer the question, let me say two things. Firstly, if you are experiencing this warfare with sin, be greatly comforted. This is a very important point for the assurance of your salvation. If you are not saved, sin will not wage war on you. If you are not saved, you are the slave of sin and you do sin’s bidding. But if you are saved you are not the slave of sin. You will resist sin’s temptations. You will resist and refuse to do sin’s bidding. And sin will wage war on you. The conflict with sin will be non-stop. In the words of *Eccl.8:8*, there is no discharge from this war.

Secondly, your final freedom from indwelling sin or final victory over indwelling sin will only take place when you die or if Christ returns before you die. Paul had this eschatological view in mind in *Rom.7:24-25*. Paul asked the question : “Who will free me from the body of this death?” He answered with a joyful eschatological shout, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Paul’s eyes are on that final victory. He knows that final victory is coming and the anticipation of this victory in Christ makes his heart leap and shout with joy. But in the interim the reality is the war continues. And this is this point in the rest of *vs.25*, “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.”

Now Brethren, how do we deal with indwelling sin? I want to point out two answers from Paul. Firstly, in *Eph.4:22* Paul said “lay aside the old self.” Take it off like an old dirty garment and lay it aside. In *vs.24* he said, “put on the new self.” The position is that you are no longer “old”. You are “new” in Christ. The practical reality is that you must now begin the process of becoming what you are in Christ by daily taking off the old and putting on the new.

From *vss.25-31* Paul shows you how this is done. He said if you are a person who was marked by telling lies, lay aside falsehood and begin to speak truth. If you were a person who was marked by stealing, lay aside stealing and start working to provide what you need and keep some to share with others. The same point is made in *Col.3:8-11*.

The second answer comes from *Rom.8:13* where Paul said, “put to death the deeds of the body.” By “**body**”, most likely Paul had in mind “the body of this death” he spoke about in *Rom.7:24*. How do we deal with indwelling sin? We must put the deeds of indwelling sin to death. We must be killing the deeds of sin. The verb is present tense and this indicates continuing activity. This is not something you will do once for all and be done with it. This is a daily duty. This is a twenty-four / seven duty.

There must be no compromise with sin in your life. Indwelling sin is not your friend. Indwelling sin is your avowed and implacable enemy. There must be no truce with sin. Indwelling sin is actively, continually and unrelentingly waging war against you. You must wage war against sin in the same manner. Sin’s primary goal is to destroy you. Your primary goal in waging war against sin is to destroy sin.

There is only one way for the believer in Christ to deal with sin – kill sin! But do not attempt to kill sin in your own strength. Paul said, “if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body.” Kill sin trusting in God’s Spirit and in the strength God’s Spirit supplies. Kill sin with the warfare weapons the Spirit has given to you. In *2Cor.10:4* Paul said, “the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh.” The weapons of our warfare are spiritual. The two most important weapons in our warfare against sin is the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God and the weapon called “all prayer”. (*Eph.6:17-18*).

The Lord Jesus made effective use of these weapons in His battles against Satan and He won. In *Matt.4:1-11* the Lord answered every one of Satan’s temptations with the word of God. For every temptation Jesus responded with, “It is written” and then quoted from the O.T. The word of God was used to defeat Satan. The Son of God used the word of

God to defeat Satan. And we must follow His example. The Lord Jesus was not using some new technique in His war against Satan. The Lord Jesus was following the proven simple method found in the O.T. *Psa.119:11* says, "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You." *Vs.9* says, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to your word." *Psa.37:31* says, "The law of God is in his heart; His steps do not slip."

Now I want you to note : killing sin in your life is your responsibility. You have to do this. Praying that God will kill sin in your life is a useless prayer. You ought to be praying that God will give you the grace, the strength, the boldness and the wisdom to kill sin in your life. Note also that as you engage in the negative activity of killing sin, at the same time you must engage in the positive activity of obeying God. If you are not actively and deliberately seeking to obey God, you will end up obeying sin.

Turn to *Matt.12:43-45*. (**read**). When sin is not replaced with obedience to God, what will happen?

The gospel is simple. The principles for living the Christian life successfully are simple. Do not make it complex.