



Light from the Word

Walking in the Strength of Christ's Sacrifice

*"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."*¹

Sin

Sin has separated man from God ever since the days of Adam and Eve. Any disobedience towards God is sin. Contrary to popular belief, God commandments were not arbitrary. Nearly all actions that God calls sin hurt others, and are the result of loving oneself more than one's Creator or one's neighbor. We have all been corrupted by our own selfishness and weakness.

A Partial Remedy

Although the sacrifice of animals took place in ancient times to provide atonement for disobedience, those sacrifices were simply a pattern of things in heaven and could never make men perfect. In much the same way as the physical things of the Temple were to be made according to the pattern of things in heaven, the form of atonement provided by the Law of Moses was simply a pattern of better things to come. The Law defined how man sinned, but had no capability to change man's behavior. The Apostle Paul writes that, *"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law."*² And in Hebrews we read, *"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."*³

The Better Sacrifice

The sacrifices given under the law could make atonement, but could never make men perfect⁴. They had no power to convert men's hearts and they were retroactive, only applying to sins that had already been committed. Knowing that our bodies are the temple of the Living God helps us understand that we are the "heavenly things" to which the author to the Hebrews refers. It was necessary that the heavenly things themselves be purified with a better sacrifice. In sacrificing His own life, freely giving it up and shedding His blood on the cross, Jesus atoned for sin proactively for all men in all times. Following the atonement, He promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who would believe.⁵

The strength of His sacrifice is demonstrated by the fact that Christ came in the flesh, but walked in the Spirit. He showed that man in the flesh did not need to be subject to the flesh, or more bluntly, no longer needs to be slave to sin. Scripture teaches that the converted life is no longer one in which sin has dominion—sin does not continue as if grace were license, it no longer reigns in ones' life, and it need not be yielded to when the power of Christ's blood is present in that life⁶. Through this better sacrifice—sin, in its various forms⁷—can be overcome. This can never happen by a nominal faith that denies the power of Christ, but only by faith that comprehends that the power of Christ can rest upon those who believe.⁸

Through His prophets, God spoke of the time when Jesus would provide the missing strength to consistently defeat sin on a personal level. For example, Isaiah reminds us, *"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be*

— Please turn to pg. 65

Continued Articles

Walking in the Strength of Christ's Sacrifice

— Continued from pg. 3

*weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”*⁹

Those who wait on the Lord will experience the fullness of Christ's sacrifice and be able to walk in strength.

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Trusting in His covenant, we will have God's royal law of love written on our hearts and in our minds. With this transformed attitude, we are called to live as Jesus did; loving all men, forgiving those who mistreat us, and submitting our will to the Father's will—all by the grace and power of God. Through Him we can rejoice as Paul did, saying, “*I can do all things through*

*Christ which strengtheneth me.”*¹⁰

By faith in His name, we can be endowed with power from on high—the Holy Spirit. Through His grace, our weakness can be empowered by His strength.

Undoubtedly, many of us feel our human weakness and struggle with these concepts, feeling inadequate or unable to put such faith into practice. We struggle to love the unlovable. We tend to wish ill on our enemies instead of praying for them. We lean toward sanctioning war instead of praying for peace. We want to defend our rights instead of turning the other cheek. When the Apostle Paul struggled with his weakness, Jesus told him, “*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”* Paul confirmed to the Corinthian church, “*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”*¹¹

Whatever our weakness may be, we can freely acknowledge it, call on God to give us the power of Christ, and trust that He will

enable us to overcome. We ought not to think that the power of Christ permitted Paul to succumb to the weakness that he admitted. In the strength of His sacrifice, God is able to put an open door in front of us which no man can shut. Walking in the strength of Christ's sacrifice, we are promised the power to overcome our selfish nature and, like Jesus, live righteously to the glory of God.

*“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”*¹²

(Footnotes)

¹ Heb. 10:14-17

² 1 Cor. 15:56

³ Heb. 9:22-23

⁴ Heb. 9:11-25

⁵ Acts 2:38-39

⁶ Rom. 6:1-18

⁷ Mark. 7:21-23

⁸ 1 John 1:7-2:2, Rom. 1:16

⁹ Isaiah 40:28-31

¹⁰ Phil. 4:13

¹¹ 2 Cor. 12:9

¹² 1 Peter 5:10-11