

Dear Friend,

I have been a Christian for many decades now. It is amazing to me how much my understanding of what a Christian's life should be like has changed over the years. In the very early days my thinking was more influenced by preachers than it was from me reading the bible for myself. Most of them (at least in the early years) taught that Christians were still "old sinners saved by grace." They taught a lot of good things like, Jesus loves you, He shed His blood for your sins, He paid the price of punishment that you deserved, if you believe on Him and trust in His finished work, you shall be saved. All of that is true and wonderful good news. But the part about a Christian still being a "sinner" after he is born again is very misleading. Here are just a few verses concerning what the bible says on that subject:

2Co 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Rom 6:17-18 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. (18) Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Rom 8:1-2 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

I could continue listing verses on the same theme for several pages. The bible is very clear that when a person is born again, the new nature God imparts to them makes them free from ever having to sin again. The confusion arises because ... virtually everybody "does" still sin even though the bible is very clear that they do not "have" to sin. We are not still "slaves" to sin. We have now become righteous beings with the power to walk free from sin if we choose to do so. Walking that way requires a renewed mind. A mind renewed to what the bible says rather than what man says, and even what past experience teaches. Notice this passage:

Rom 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

I underlined the phrase "by the renewing of your mind" because most people think they

are transformed by the power of the born again experience alone. No, the mind plays a very important part. The bible teaches you don't have to sin anymore. But if your preacher on Sunday convinces you are still "just an old sinner saved by grace" ... what are you to believe? If you believe the bible you will resist temptation and choose not to sin. If you believe the preacher you will believe you do not have the power to resist temptation and you will fall to sin again and again.

I have been teaching lately from a seldom quoted passage from the prophet Isaiah. Here he describes what God had in mind regarding people who would one day be born again through faith in Jesus Christ:

Isa 61:3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

Born again people are called "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord." When people are born of their mother's womb on earth, they receive a sin nature passed down through every generation from the first man Adam. That nature is like the sap in a tree. All men sin and fall short of the glory of God because they are born with the nature of sin at their core. One of the purposes of God giving His perfect law to unregenerate man was to prove to man that, no matter how hard he tried, he could not keep the law. Why not? Because man has a sin nature at his core. He is literally born a slave to sin.

But Jesus came to set us free from that nature. When we are born again we become a new creature ... a different kind of tree ... that no longer has the nature of sin at its core, but rather the righteous nature of Christ Himself. We are not still sinners by nature. We are righteous by nature and every time our renewed mind walks in agreement with that new nature ... we walk free from sin. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." [Jam 4:7]

Sue and I love you and appreciate you. We thank God for your generous and giving heart. God bless you!

Your friend and co-laborer,

*GARY*