

Spiritual Perfection By Putting to Death the Deeds of the Body

Rom. 8:9-13

Introduction:

1. Thus far in our studies about spiritual perfection we have distinguished three elements of perfection.
 - a. First, there is spiritual perfection achieved through our initial forgiveness.
 - b. Second, there is spiritual perfection achieved through the on-going process of putting to death the deeds of the body.
 - c. Third, there is spiritual perfection achieved through the final resurrection.
2. We have focused attention on the fact that spiritual perfection is not achieved by means of our performance, but through our dependence upon the power of God.
3. We have stressed that spiritual perfection is less about our being faultless and more about our becoming more complete and mature as we grow up in the Lord.
4. In this lesson I want to focus attention on the on-going process of putting to death the deeds of the body.
5. Reading Rom. 8:9-13. Note the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit. (Some might expect the Spirit to take control of them apart from their will and put to death the deeds of their body for them. Others might grit their teeth in self-sufficiency and think they will put to death the deeds of the body themselves.) How does the Spirit of God work together with our will to lead to our greater perfection?

Discussion:

- I. Rom. 8:1-24 seems to dovetail with our three areas of spiritual perfection.
 - A. Verses 1-11 speaks of our spiritual perfection achieved through Christ and begun with our being made alive by God who raised Jesus from the dead.
 - B. Verses 12-17 address the process of "putting to death the deeds of the body."
 - C. Verses 18-25 address the final redemption of our body.
 - D. There is some parallel here with what we have seen from Phil. 3:2-21.
 - a. No confidence can be placed in the flesh. No confidence can be placed in a righteousness of our own. Confidence can be placed only in that righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith (4-11).
 - b. Must press on reaching forward to while lies ahead living by the standard, walking according to the pattern (12-17).
 - c. Our body will be transformed (20-21).
- II. With this on-going process of putting to death the deeds of the body the Book of Colossians agrees.
 - A. Col. 2:12-14 speaks of our resurrection with Christ in baptism and the beginning of a new life.
 - B. Col. 3:1ff goes further.
 1. There are things to be "laid aside" (5-9).

2. There are things to be “put on” (10-17).
3. There are various lists like this in Scripture (ex. Gal. 5:16ff; Eph. 4:25-32; 1 Pet. 4:4-11). These lists are not meant to be exhaustive but to distinguish two courses: The one characteristic of the way of the world (the body, the flesh, the old self) and the one characteristic of the sons of God (the chosen, the new self, the spirit).

III. Rom. 12:2 speaks of Christians “not being conformed to the world but being transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

- A. Our minds are changed (renewed) as we learn the mind of God and our thinking is transformed.
- B. The world’s thinking is upside down. God turns things right side up (Acts 17:6).
- C. It is the message of God’s gracious dealings with us in Christ that begins the transformation. It continues as we continue to learn and bring our thinking into harmony with the mind of God. As this happens we learn what God’s will is, put to death the deeds of the body and live like His people.
 1. Gifts have been given to accomplish this task (Eph. 4:11-23).
 2. We stimulate one another to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24, 25).
 3. We strengthen the weak and make straight paths for our feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed (Heb. 12:12-13).
 4. Our leaders keep watch over our souls (Heb. 13:17; James 5:14-16).

IV. Our motivation for participating in this process.

- A. Sometimes we confuse “obligation” and “motivation.”
 1. We are obligated to obey God just because He is our Creator and we are the created. Contra. “I obey the Lord because He loves me.”
 2. You may obey God because He loves you, but you are obligated because you are the created.
 3. It is your motivation that I am concerned about here.
- B. Our motivation may be marred by our skewed perception of God. Is He an ogre out to get you or a loving Father?

good

1. Moses tried to communicate that God gave Israel the commandments for their good always.
2. Promised a land flowing with milk and honey.
3. Observe the statutes, “to fear the Lord our God for our good always and for our survival.”
4. God is gracious and kind and good and compassionate. His instruction is for our benefit. He is not giving us these commandments for His benefit. Many look at God’s instructions as inhibiting their happiness. They see Him as an abusive father. Why would anyone want to obey the commandments???
5. If He is a gracious Father who wants our good and is communicating His instruction for our benefit why would we not want to obey?
- C. The O.T. predicted a time of soft hearts and His Spirit within us (Ezek. 36:25-27; also Ezek. 11:19ff). Cf. Ezek. 37:14, 24-28. Note Rom. 8:9ff. Cf. Jer. 31:31ff; Heb.

8:8ff. It would be a time of willing submission to the Lord. The new covenant is about such willing submission.

1. Knowing God would be critical.
 2. Walking in His statutes and being careful to observe His ordinances the norm. Cf. The Sermon on the Mount. A righteousness surpassing that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20), a righteousness that responds to God's intent and is not looking for a bare minimum.
 3. Such people respond with lavish gifts of service (Matt. 20:28; Lk. 7:36-50; 2 Cor. 8:5).
 4. When God's spirit is in us we walk in His statutes and are careful to observe His ordinances. Rebellion, on the other hand, rejects the word of the Lord (cf. 1 Sam. 15:23).
- D. It is the message of the cross that softens hearts and creates submission to our good Father. It radically transforms us (cf. 1 Pet. 2:21ff; 3:8-12; Titus 3:3-8).

V. Putting to death the deeds of the body requires great effort. The enemy deceives. He works to destroy, as many, as severely, for as long as he can. "Sin will take you further than you want to go. Make you stay longer than you want to stay. And cost you more than you want to pay."

- A. We must renew our minds.
- B. Walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8ff) trying to learn what is pleasing to God, not participating in the deeds of darkness.
- C. Be strong in the strength of the Lord (Eph. 6:10ff).

Conclusion:

1. We move on from our initial forgiveness to an on-going process of putting to death the deeds of the body.
2. We are motivated by our understanding that God is revealing His will to us for our good, that we may experience the benefits of His wisdom.
3. The more faith we have in His good will the more intense our motivation to grow. Peter put it like this. He said, "Putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord" (1 Pet. 2:1-3).
4. So, when we are baptized we are committed to the transformation process that will reach its ultimate consummation in the resurrection. More on this later.