***Sanctification
RO69-01***

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Please turn to Romans 6:3-4. We are studying the subject of "Death through Baptism."

**In Christ**

A believer in the church dispensation holds the unique position before God of being in Christ. This is not true of saints in other dispensations. Only in the church age is it true that a person who is born-again is, by God's reckoning, also united to Jesus Christ in a unique and distinctive way. He is in Christ. Union with Christ is the result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which everyone receives at the point of his personal trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. You do not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit after salvation, and you are never expected to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

**The Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

So, that should give you a great clue from the Word of God concerning many Christian groups. Anytime that you are in touch with a Christian group that is urging people to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit as believers, you know that you have stepped out of divine viewpoint instruction. You know that you have stepped into a place which is spiritually oriented. Anytime you are in a group that suggests that people should seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit, you know that they are completely disoriented to the Word of God. And the first thing you want to do, if you can't help them to learn better, is to get out of their presence.

**Newness of Life**

This position in Christ results in the possession by the believer of what Paul has called, in Romans 6:4, newness of life. This is a life which, before God, is united to the death and the burial of Jesus Christ in His payment for the evil of mankind. This is positional truth going back to the cross – retroactive to the cross. Newness of life is also a life which, before God is united to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and a life, therefore, which is free of all moral guilt.

**Positional Truth**

This is our current position. This is current position of truth. Thus, a newness of life person is one who is credited by God with absolute righteousness. It is one in whom the sovereign control of the old sin nature has been replaced by the sovereign control of the Holy Spirit, and is one who possesses eternal life. That is a newness of life person. He is absolute righteousness; the old sin nature no longer is able to dominate him; and, he has eternal life.

Newness of life in Christ is in contrast to the oldness of life in Adam. It is a contrast between guilt and death in Adam on the one hand, and righteousness and life in Jesus Christ on the other hand. The Christian's position in Christ, with its newness of life, is irreversible. Once you have this newness of life, you cannot lose it. A Christian can never again stand before God with moral guilt against him. A Christian can never again come under the sovereign authority of the old sin nature within him. The Christian's daily life is not an issue in deserving grace salvation.

So, we have a quality that has been added to the life of the believer which is absolutely magnificent. But it is very important that you grasp what has actually taken place between you and God once you receive Christ as Savior. We are so prone to sin; we fail so often; we foul-up our walk with the Lord so regularly; and, we fall so short of the ideal standards of the Word of God, that we get all confused about this newness of life business, that we conclude that we really don't have it. So, today I'm going to try to drive home just what you have in the way of newness of life.

**A Believer Currently has Newness of Life Already**

The Christian is immediately, upon salvation, in possession of newness of life. That's the point right now. I don't care what you've done this week, and I don't care how gross your lifestyle has been, right now, at this point, you possess newness of life. This is not something which a Christian is to develop through spiritual growth or godly living. You are not to go out to try to develop newness of life.

Generally, this is what preachers tell you – to get out there and to develop, and to build up your newness of life. That is exactly what the apostle Paul is trying to make clear here in Romans 6 that you are not to do. You possess newness of life. The Christian is currently already a new creation of God. So, you have newness of life.

**The Judicial vs. the Experiential Solution**

In Romans 5:12 through Romans 7:6, we pointed out that this is the section that relates only to God's judicial solution for the old sin nature, not His solution for your experience. So, let's see if we can get this straight again. This is not really that confusing, but it is an important point. You have to follow what Paul is thinking about at any particular point in this discussion in the book of Romans. And in these verses, Romans 5:12 through Romans 7:6, he is talking about what God, as judge, has done to solve the fact that the old sin nature is within each of us – inherited because of our guilt through Adam.

Now the thing that's important about this is to notice that, right in the midst of this section, from Romans 5:12 through Romans 7:6, you find Romans 6:4. That, therefore, tells us exactly what Paul is talking about in Romans 6:4. He is talking about how God, the judge, has come up with a solution for the old sin nature. He is not talking about how God has come up with a solution for your daily experience of living. Experiential solution for the old sin nature comes next, in Romans 7:7 through Romans 8:39. When you get to that section, then he's talking about how you walk daily as a believer, and how you express in daily life the newness of life that you now possess. But right now, let's forget about all of the sinful things you do, and of all of the evil factors of your lifestyle. Let's just forget all about that and put that aside, because that's not what we're studying now. What we are involved in now is what God, the judge, has done for the fact that you were born with an old sin nature.

**Positional Sanctification**

What He has done is described as producing within you newness of life. God has done something relative to your position before Himself which removes the barrier of condemnation – the condemnation from the old sin nature. This is a judicial solution of God, and it is a matter of your position before God. So, indeed it does deal with sanctification in a way. Paul has gotten into sanctification in the sense of our practice, but it is sanctification in terms of our position.

**Sanctification**

Remember that the word "sanctification" also means "holiness." So, we're talking about positional sanctification. But this has nothing to do with the believer’s daily lifestyle. It has nothing to do with whether you are a carnal Christian or whether you are spiritual Christian. Paul gives God solution for the problem of Christian living next. But that isn't what we are in now. So, since Romans 6:4 is located in Paul's discussion of God's judicial solution for the old sin nature, it refers to newness of life as a position, not as exemplary living.

**To Set Apart (Holiness)**

So, let's take a look at this status that you have in terms of newness of life (or sanctification). First of all, the word "sanctification" is a terribly abused word with a lot of twisted meaning among Christians. It simply means "to set apart." If you get that straight, it'll help keep you straight. The word "sanctification" or the word "holiness" means "to set apart." It is related to the words "saint" and "holy.' They're all related to the same Greek and Hebrew words. Whether you're saying "saint" or "holy" or "sanctification," it's all the same idea – it's all the same basic word. So, sanctification is used in terms of someone or something being set apart to God from the world. The word "sanctification" does not imply a moral quality. It simply implies being set apart to God in some respect.

**Sanctification does not Imply Sinless Perfection**

So, sanctification or holiness does not refer to a process which results in sinless perfection; that is, coming to the point where you are unable to sin. Generally, this is how the word "sanctification" is highly distorted. When people say "sanctification," they think of somebody who is really a sinless kind of person living an exemplary life, and that has got nothing to do with sanctification.

**Corinth**

This is quite evident to us by the fact that the Corinthians church Christians were described as sanctified in 1 Corinthians 1:2. And yet when you study the book of 1 Corinthians, you discover that it was a congregation which was, by and large, very carnal: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus called saints, with all that in every place called upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." So, here was a congregation that was guilty of some very grievous sinning, and yet the first thing the Paul says to them, at the very opening of the book, is that they're sanctified people. So, let's just accept what the Bible says. Christians who are fantastically terrible sinners, by God's judgment, sanctified people.

**Saints**

The carnal Corinthian Christians also we're called "saints" in 1 Corinthians 1:2. They were not only sanctified, but they're called saints. So, they are placed in the highest category by God the Holy Spirit. This is not the apostle Paul's judgment of them. Paul is not calling these carnal people saints. Paul is not saying that these carnal people are sanctified. It is God the Holy Spirit who is doing that. So, we accept it.

**No Christian Ever Achieves Sinlessness in this Life**

The Bible makes it clear that no Christian ever achieves sinlessness (in this life). Anybody who tries to twist the words and the concept of sanctification into that idea is completely out of line with what the Bible teaches.

For example, if we look in 1 John 1:8, we read, "If we say that we have no sin nature, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." So, you're never rid of your old sin nature.

1 John 1:10 says, "If we say that we have not sinned (acts of transgression), we make Him (God) a liar, and His Word doctrine is not in us. So, here, John, in the very first of this particular epistle, makes it clear that you never get rid of your old sin nature, and you never get rid of your sins. And if you suggest that either is true, you are completely out of line with what the Bible teaches and with reality.

The concepts, then, of "sanctification;" of "saint;" and, of "holy" are ideas that refer to a position in which God places us. But these are concepts which are terribly distorted by such groups as the Roman Catholics, who suggest that sanctification means exemplary living, or by the holiness groups (the Pentecostal charismatics), who suggest that sanctification is super piety or sinlessness.

**Old Testament Priests were Called "Holy Men"**

In the Old Testament, this meaning of sanctification apart from moral qualities, is also exemplified. It is illustrated by the fact that the Mosaic high priest was a holy man, though he was far from sinless in nature or living. In Exodus 28:41, we read, "And you shall put them (the garments) upon Aaron your brother and His Sons with him, and shall anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto Me in the priest's office." So, Aaron and the other priests would call "sanctified men" or "holy men." And yet we know that they were not morally perfect men.

For, we read, in Leviticus 16:6, in describing the sacrifice on the great day of atonement, that the high priests had to make a sacrifice for his own sins first before he walked in to the holy of holies: "And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself and for his house."

In Hebrews 7:27, we have that same fact stressed again concerning the Old Testament priesthood. It says, "Who needs not daily, as those high priests (speaking of Jesus Christ – He didn't have to do as the high priest of the Old Testament did) to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the peoples'. For this He did once when He offered up Himself." Jesus Christ, being sinless, did not have to offer up a sin offering for Himself first as did the Old Testament high priests.

**The Old Testament Priests were Sinners**

So, the high priest and all the priests of the Old Testament were sinners. They were not morally perfect people – sometimes far from it. But every one of them were holy men. Every one of them were sanctified men. Holy why? Because they were set apart to God's service in the temple. That's what sanctification means – to be set apart to a divine purpose.

**Holy**

The word "holy" is used in the Old Testament, believe it or not, of male and female prostitutes, as they are set apart in the pagan worship service for uniting the worshiper with the demon deities through sex. If you turn back to Deuteronomy 23:17-18, you have the word "holy" used in this respect: "There shall be no harlot of the daughters of Israel, nor sodomite of the sons of Israel."

**Separated**

Now the translators have tried to interpret for you what the original Hebrew says, but what the original Hebrew actually has, where it says "harlot," is the Hebrew word which means "a female holy one." You were going to translate this, it would be "holy one," because it's from the Hebrew word "qadesh," which is "holy." And the word "sodomite" here is the word "qadosh," which is related to "qadesh." Both of these words mean "a holy one." But in this respect, it is a holy one meaning what? Morally perfect? Morally significant? No, it is holy in terms of being separated – separated unto the purpose of prostitution to worship the pagan deity. And it has no moral connotation whatsoever.

**Not Freedom from Sin**

So, the translators convey to what the idea of holy ones mean: "There shall be no holy one of the daughters of Israel nor a holy one of the sons of Israel. You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the price of a dog into the house of the Lord your God for any vow, for even both these are abomination unto your Lord." So, the Old Testament makes it very clear that the concept of sanctification does not mean freedom from sin. It means separation. And here it is very clearly indicated that these holy ones (or set-apart ones) were for the purpose of evil, and not for the purpose of good.

All of you have been watching on television the wild craze in Iran of welcoming the Muslim leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini, and the desire to touch him. Why do they want to touch him? Because he's a holy man. Well, is the white-bearded one a holy matrimony or isn't he? You've learned enough about sanctification today to say, "Absolutely, he is a holy one." Why? Well, he's set apart. He set apart to the service of . . . the devil. And all of these wild Iranians (all of these Muslims) are reaching up there to try to touch Ayatollah are touching a holy one, separated unto the devil. Their craze is for one who is going to lead them at the head of the line straight into the lake of fire. That is because, as we have pointed out to you, God has His way of salvation.

So, these people are following this holy man with their zeal for this holy man, and their fanatical zeal. They believe that they are going to make things better for people (obviously, that's why they're doing this), but they are only going to make things worse for people.

The television program I saw was rather pathetic because right in the middle of the screen, the camera zeroed-in on a little boy sitting on his father's shoulders, reaching out, struggling to touch Khomeini, because it would mean something for his eternal blessing. This child had been led to believe that his eternal happiness would be improved if he could reach out and touch this holy man. Here's this child who is sitting on his father's shoulders, being led straight into the lake of fire.

**The Three Phases to Sanctification**

So, sanctification means to be set apart. Having said that, we want to add one other thing to it, then we can apply this back to Romans 6:4. Sanctification has three phases to it. We're talking about newness of life again. Our newness of life is in three phases.

1. **Positional Sanctification**

Phase number one is positional sanctification. Believers are eternally set apart for God by redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is taught to us in Hebrews 10:10, where we read, "By which will we are sanctified (we are set apart) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is through the death of Christ, and the acceptance of that in our behalf, that we are given a position of sanctification. We are given a position of being set apart to God once and for all, forever. For this reason, Christians, from the very point of salvation, are called "saints" in Philippians 1:1, and they are called "holy" in Hebrews 3:1. This is true of every believer immediately when he is born again. This positional sanctification, you have now learned, has been created by the baptism of the Holy Spirit when we were placed into Christ, and thus set apart to God eternally.

1 Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Now, again, I remind you that positional sanctification has no relationship to the way a Christian lives daily. Carnal Christians were sanctified positionally by God in the Corinthian church. 1 Corinthians 6:11 indicates that: "And such were some of you, but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Positional sanctification is just as complete, therefore, for a carnal Christian as for the spiritual Christian. When we speak about positional sanctification, we are talking about newness of life. That's why we have stressed to you that you have it now. You have newness of life now. You have positional sanctification.

1. **Experiential Sanctification**

It is true that out of that flows a lifestyle, and we call that a second phase of sanctification, which is experiential, because it has to do with your experience. God the Holy Spirit, through Bible doctrine, is sanctifying the believer’s daily life.

Many Scriptures teach us that, such as John 17:17. Why do you need to attend the instruction in the Word of God? Why is it vital that you be in a place where the Word of God is being explained to you on the basis of what God the Holy Spirit has actually said in the language of Scripture? The Lord Jesus explains it in John 17:17, where He prays for all of us: "Sanctify them through Your Truth. Your Word is truth." Truth is what sets you apart from the animal world and enables you to live as a son and daughter of God, as a true and full human being.

Ephesians 5:2-26: "Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with a washing of water by the Word."

Then in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, we read, "And the very God of peace sanctify you holy, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, Who also will do it.

In Romans 12:1, the apostle calls for us to present our bodies as living sacrifices, sanctified unto holy living. Daily living and separation from evil – the evil of sins and of human good, but not senselessness. That's experiential sanctification daily living above evil.

**Grow in Grace**

1 John 1:10 tells about our moment-by-moment victory over the old sin nature. You achieve this through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God; through the use of the techniques of the Christian life; through the building of the spiritual maturity structure in your soul; and, through the intake of the Word of God. And this is progressive. Positional sanctification is not progressive. It's as perfect as it's ever going to be. You cannot improve it. But experience sanctification – now, that's progressive. That you can improve. And that's exactly what 2 Peter 3:18 tells us to do when, Peter says, "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

**Progress**

2 Corinthians 3:18 teaches us the same thing. Progress in daily godly living. Now that is experiential sanctification.

1. **Ultimate Sanctification**

There is a third phase of sanctification that you must be aware of if you are to understand this, and that is ultimate sanctification. Ultimate sanctification is the total eradication of the old sin nature, and living an absolutely sinless life. It's where your position in Christ becomes reality in practice. This is where you simply, not only, do not sin, but you are not able to sin. And this is the bottom line for the Christian – ultimate sanctification.

**The Wesley Movement**

Now, way back 200 years ago, when the Wesley movement of Methodism was creating a revival that the Church of England certainly needed, one of the unfortunate things that happened in the doctrinal weakness of the Wesley movement was that Satan shoved in the idea of ultimate sanctification prematurely. They found this in the Scriptures, and they made the grievous mistake of associating ultimate sanctification with our lifestyle on earth now. They did not realize that doctrine made it very clear that ultimate sanctification depends upon our being in the presence of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures say, "When we see Him, we shall be like Him," but never until then.

**The Charismatic Movement**

Well, the tragic thing about that was that, from that beginning of the Wesley movement of pursuing ultimate sanctification (that is, perfection of sinless living now) was begun the chain of events that Satan forged over the next 200 years after that, that eventuated, in the middle 1950s, in what is known today as the charismatic movement. And the trap has been slammed shut on millions of human beings. For many of them (a large number of them), this mistake is going to cost them their eternal souls, because in the process, the whole grace basis of salvation got completely fouled-up. You cannot be saved by any basis except grace. If you foul-up at that point, all is lost.

Secondly, for those who do manage to get into eternal life, in spite of their confusion on ultimate sanctification, they have completely dissipated their ability to serve the Lord and store treasures in heaven. So, they're going to be robbed of the quality of the eternal life they could have enjoyed in heaven. It was a tragic mistake. And if you want to follow this, you can get the tapes that were made on this that show how step-by-step, over the decades, one mistake after another was added to this Wesleyan mistake that finally led to Satan having such fantastic control over millions of sincere people today in the charismatic movement, whom he is destroying, and whom he has neutralized as an effective force for God.

Ultimate sanctification is a marvelous thing, and we all look forward to it. And we look forward to our being in the presence of Jesus Christ, and having this cleansing on the ultimate level. Ephesians 5:27, therefore says, "That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish;" that is, that we are going to be presented as the church of Jesus Christ without any blemish whatsoever. We're going to be absolutely senselessly perfect.

In 1 John 3:2. John says, "Beloved, now are we the children of God. And it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He (Jesus Christ) shall appear, we shall be like Him. For we shall see Him as He is now." Now that's when ultimate sanctification comes in. That's when we shall be like him, but never before then.

So, the Lord Jesus Christ promises this ultimate to us, and that is a phase of sanctification which is yet before us. And Jude 24 gives us the encouraging word that He will preserve us to this end. There is no place you can go except to ultimate sanctification. If you are a believer now, there is no place you can go but to spiritual perfection. There is no place you go but to sinlessness in every absolute sense of the word. This is the final goal of salvation. Sinless perfection is so aptly described in 1 Thessalonians 5:22-23 to affect our body; our souls; and, our spirits.

Now, does Romans 6:4 referred to ultimate salvation? Well, we see this it could not do that. That awaits the presence of Jesus Christ. Does Romans 6:4 refer to experiential salvation? It can't do that because that's not what Paul is talking about at this point in his letter. That he gets to when he gets to Romans 7:7. But right now he's not talking about that. Later he will.

So, obviously what we are talking about in Romans 6:4 is positional sanctification, and it is newness of life in that respect. It is not newness of life in the fact that you start acting like a godly person. Now that's coming down the line, but that is not here. And the newness of life of which he is referring to, that you now possess, is this position in Christ of absolute preservation of a destiny for heaven. You, therefore, are described by Peter in 1 Peter 2:9 as a royal priesthood. You are a chosen generation – a royal priesthood."

Now that is your position. You are royalty. And it is beneath a person with royal authority to live under the authority of the old sin nature. The old sin nature was once a reigning monarch in your life, but now you are royalty. You are the royalty in Jesus Christ and it is unfitting that you, as the royalty of Christ, should subject yourself to the royalty of the old sin nature. Christ reigns over your old sin nature. That's part of newness of life.

**Absolute Righteousness**

So, the church believer’s newness of life provides him with something really very fantastic. Let's take a look before the church age (BCA). Before the church age, we had a condition here. We had a person who would be saved. If he was saved, what happened to him? He received something very distinct as the result of coming into salvation. What he received was, first of all, absolute righteousness. What happened when Abraham was saved? What happened when David was saved? Absolute righteousness was credited to his account. The Bible is very clear to us that this is what happens to believers. They are given absolute righteousness, but they we're also given something else.

**Eternal Life**

They were also given eternal life. When Abraham received absolute righteousness, he received eternal life. When David received absolute righteousness, he received eternal life. They all received it on the basis of faith. We've already learned that earlier in the book of Romans. In Romans 4:3, we read, "For what's at the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. They were saved on the basis of faith.

But now what happens today when a person is born again? Well, today, when a person is saved, let's take that category. You believe in Jesus Christ as personal Savior. This is after the church age has begun. You believe in Jesus Christ as Savior. You receive absolute righteousness (+R). You also receive eternal life. 1 John 5:11-12: "And this is the record that God has given to us eternal life. And this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has light, and He that does not have the Son of God does not have life."

You get everything they got, but notice something else happens because you happen to live in the church age. You receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is only to you in the church. What does that do? Well, that places you in Christ. When you are in Jesus Christ, you share everything that He has. What does Jesus Christ have? He has absolute righteousness. What does Jesus Christ have? He has eternal life. So, lo and behold, you as a Christian have a double guarantee of your destiny to newness of life, and a double guarantee of ultimate sanctification. You have the guarantee of absolute righteousness and of eternal life that everybody in all the ages of all the dispensations had. You have it in addition because you share the righteousness of price and His eternal life, because you have been eternally united to Him.

So, we read in 1 John 5:11-12: "And this is the record that God has given to us eternal life. And this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life, and he that does not have the Son of God does not have life." And this is speaking about eternal life. If you have eternal life of the Son, you must also have His absolute righteousness, or you would not have His eternal life.

So, isn't it great to be part of God's royalty? Abraham is not part of God's royalty. David is not part of God's royalty. He's part of the earthly Jewish peoples' royalty, but he's not part of our royalty. He's not part of the heavenly royalty that you and I are part of. As the royal priests of God, we enjoy a double guarantee of eternal security in our salvation; a double guarantee of freedom from the control of your old sin nature; and, a double guarantee of newness of life.

Well, indeed, it is true that such a privileged position in the believer does call upon Him to give us a freshness of experiential salvation that is befitting our position, and that's exactly what happens. We get a freshness and newness of lifestyle, but it's because we already have that newness of life, and we have a double guarantee on it.

You're not going to get this newness of life by hustling around for the Lord in one way or another. And you're not going to get it because you have some emotional urges, or some self-denials, or any other spiritual deception like the charismatic groups play upon themselves. You're not going to get any kind of freshness of newness of life that way.

**The Devil's World is Falling Apart**

So, I hope I've driven home to that newness of life is something you have now. That means that you are free from all human good production. Isn't that great? You are free from all human good production. Remember that all human good has one great goal, and that is to take the devil's world, and to whitewash it – to make the devil's world seem something elegant. And everything of human good is designed to prop up the decrepit, hopeless world system that Satan has put together.

Now the system is coming apart. It's coming apart in ways that are fantastic. I've heard some things this week that are shocking to me. I'll brief you on those tonight at our Lord's Supper meeting. But the devil's world is coming apart. The politicians are whistling in the dark. The nations of the world see the handwriting on the wall, and panic and desperation control the upper echelons of the power structures that rule the world and the nations of the world. You and I are free from having to stand around and to try to prop up that failing system. We are free. We are newness-of-life people. We don't have anything to do with that crummy old life that surrounds us in our society today. Newness of life means that you have the ability to apply yourself to storing treasures in heaven, to the production of divine good.

Let's look at one Old Testament illustration.1 Corinthians 10:11 tells us that the Old Testament is recorded to teach Christians spiritual principles. I want you to notice one in Exodus 15:22: "So, Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found the water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. (That's a play on Hebrew words here). And the people murmured against Moses saying, 'What shall we drink?' And he cried until the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree which, when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he tested them and said, 'If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, and will do that which is right in His sight, and will give ear to the commandments and keep all His statutes, I'll put none of these diseases upon you which I have brought upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord that heals you."

Here are these people coming out of an old way of life; the way of slavery; and, the way that was nothing but working and death for them in Egypt. They have broken out into the wilderness area. They have crossed the Red Sea, and now they're out in the desert. And the first problem they face is lack of water. They come to a place at Marah, which had water, but the waters were bitter; that is, they were toxic, and they caused death.

So, here they are – out of that old life of death and all that that connotes, and they are now standing on the verge with God of death out in the desert. They need something done for them. What do these Israelites need? They need a newness of situation. They need a newness in their position.

So, God told Moses to take a tree, and to put that tree in the waters, and it would remove the toxic effect, which he did. And the waters of death became for them the waters of life. I think that this is a beautiful picture of mankind under the sentence of death through Adam and the oldness of life. The life of joy with God, and of Eden, turned into a night of bitter tears of suffering and of dying. How nice it would have been had Adam not followed it up.

Man's nature today is the nature of a monster. It's monstrously evil: human viewpoint; rebellion against God; and, cruelty even on the level of parents. Everything within a decent person's heart, and everything in the regenerated heart of a born-again believer recoils with loathsome horror as we have to listen on television to the reports of the mother who recently killed her two children. They were junior-aged children: a beautiful looking boy, by stabbing a screwdriver into his brain; and, beating a little girl – both of them dead. And you shake your head and say, "How can this be?"

This is the nightmare of death that Adam brought us into. This is the degenerate, loathsomeness that is true of every one of you. Take a look at yourself, good Christian. This is we of whom we are speaking. And only the grace of God prevents us from doing what that mother did. Only the newness of life in Jesus Christ prevents us from following this same pattern.

Now, what changed it? A tree. It took a tree for Israel in that wilderness to have their situation changed from oldness of death into newness of life. And it took a tree, in 1 Peter 2:24, to do the same for you and me: "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins should live unto righteousness, by who stripes you were healed." The tree referred to here as the wooden cross on which Jesus Christ the God-man died to remove the spiritual night and death that we inherited. This tree of the Lord Jesus Christ made the bitter waters of our spiritual death sweet with the resurrection of newness of life. From the bitterness of Adam's independence and of his death, we can return to the sweetness of dependence of life in Jesus Christ. All of the stain of our sins, and all of the condemnation have been forever removed by the tree of Jesus Christ.

Noticed these Old Testament passages: Micah 7:19, says, "He will turn again. He will have compassion upon us. He will subdue our iniquities, and I you cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." God's judgment upon our sin has permanently removed our guilt.

Psalm 103:12: "As far as the East is from the West, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." The stain of sin and condemnation have been forever removed by the work of the Lord Jesus.

Then Isaiah 38:17: "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness. But you have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back." And what is behind one's back cannot be seen.

Jeremiah 31:34: "'And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them until the greatest of them,' says the Lord. 'For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'" God removes all the oldness of sin and all the stain from us.

Isaiah 1:18 gives us divine viewpoint understanding about the tree of Christ, because it tells us that that tree will take all the stain and all the death away from us: "'Come now. Let us reason together,' says the Lord. 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'"

Now that is newness of life. The experience of the Israelites was there for our learning, from the place of death into the new place of life. What did it take? The tree. Now that tree you have received in Jesus Christ. Therefore you have newness of life.

If you don't understand that, there are going to be times you will get terribly discouraged and disgusted with yourself. You're going to start hating yourself. And the image that you have of yourself must begin with (no matter what your experience is): you are a new life person. Newness of life is what you are.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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