

Light Brings Salt

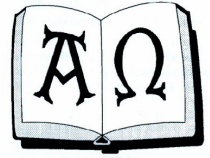
Volume 4, Issue 14

April 2, 2006



Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



Life of Self-Dependence or Dependence on Faith

Pastor John Griffith

One of the strongest evidences of mankind's fall into sin and his alienation from God is his proneness, indeed, his **commitment** to operate **independently** of God. Being a slave to his sin nature. As in the beginning with Eve, this is where Satan still seeks to deceive and tempt us the most, that is in doubting the Word of God. (Has God really said?)

It is true that salvation through faith in Christ means the believer is a new creation with a new nature and a new capacity for knowing, loving, and living before God. But the **old nature**, [or as some say the self-life,] or the flesh as it is also called, still struggles to rule, to dominate. (Rom 6:11-13)

One of the most prominent characteristics of the flesh is a desire or propensity of **self-dependence**--the desire to handle the circumstances of life apart from God's plan and resources. The "flesh" includes an attitude of independence and faith in self. As faith in self, it is a commitment to do our own thing, in our own way, and from our own resources. [wrong object]

Jeremiah presents a strong warning in **Jer. 17:5** about this dependence on one's self, flesh. Thus says the LORD, "*Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the LORD.*" This is followed by the consequences of dependence on self in **vs:6** and dependence on the Lord in **vs:7-8**. Are we depending on human resources, or on the divine resources which takes us to faith and it's object the Word of God.

We must be on guard against the infectious mentality of our modern culture. The

philosophies and fads of the day if we are not to be sidetracked from our objective as believers. As never before in human history, the very nature of our modern society seeks to undercut our dependence on God. With all the advances in modern science and technology in health, convenience, comfort, speed, power, amusement, a high level of information, etc., man's natural spirit of independence and self-sufficiency has become even more acute.

In spite of the gigantic social and moral problems facing society, mankind, as a whole, commonly thinks in terms of "**we are sufficient.**" The Scripture, however, declares that it is not within us and that we are not able to direct our own lives rightly. (Jer. 10:23) Jeremiah also made some important observations in **Jer. 9:23-24**.

We must also guard against the subtle imbalance of passivity. This is the "**let go and let God**" mentality which teaches that believers are to sit back and let God do it all. Just go with the flow. Dr. Ryrie warns about this as an imbalanced view of what the Scripture teaches. He writes:

"...there is the view which emphasizes the idea that God does all that needs to be done for us in the spiritual life. We not only can do nothing; we must do nothing; otherwise we will hinder the work of God in our lives" (Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 183, Moody Press).

This is basically the issue of personal responsibility to appropriate and to use God's resources.

The hundreds of commands in the New Testament make this clear along with all the 3rd class conditional "if" statements.

Certainly, we are to do these things **in dependence on God's resources**, but we are nevertheless responsible to do them.

God is not going to do them for us. [a few pages later Ryrie states]

"Dependence on the power of God and effort on the part of the believer are not mutually exclusive. Self-discipline and Spirit-dependence can and must be practiced at the same time in a balanced spiritual life.

Dependence itself is an attitude, but that attitude does not come automatically; it usually requires cultivation. How many genuine Christians there are who live day after day without even sensing their need of dependence on Him.

Experience, the routine of life, pride, self-confidence all tend to drag all of us away from that conscious dependence on God which we must have in order to live and act righteously" (Ryrie, p. 189).

In all obedience there must be the balance of disciplined dependence. A number of New Testament passages teach this and to fail to see this is to go off into an imbalanced, unbiblical position. For instance, note the following passages: [many imperatives] Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:13; 2 Peter 1:5-8; 1 Timothy 4:7-10.

To be sure, each of the above commands are to be done in the Spirit by faith in God's strength and provision, but still, we have a vital part, we are responsible within that sphere to make right choices. **God does not walk in the Spirit for us.**

We see the blending of these two concepts, **responsibility and dependence**, in Colossians 1:29 and 1 Corinthians 15:10. Understanding the balance between dependence on God's resources and expending human energy while depending on God's enablement protects a believer from two serious errors.

It protects him from:

(1) **the error** that there is some sort of a switch which he can activate in order to turn off the current of temptation and keep it from coursing through his being; that is some instant solution. What must be done is to make good decisions based on truth. Think the Word of God!

(2) also protected from **the idea** that the Christian life is a **passive one** in which all the believer does is **"yield."** Yield rightly

understand is not passive as it is so often used.

Rem: yield in the context of Rom 6 means to present yourself, your members for service to God.

"Yielding means I decide to be what I truly am in Christ [live up to my position] through the Spirit's enabling power as He illuminates the Word I know no matter how great the struggle. Then it is clear that there will be a battle in our lives even as Paul stated when he wrote that *"the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are in opposition to one another, ... (Gal. 5:17).* The spiritual life is neither automatic or passive." (Bill Lawrence, Dallas Seminary Notes, 1993, p. 13-5).

I might add, the spiritual life is not only not automatic, or passive, but it also not painless. L.S. Chafer has a good summary of the issues under a section called, **"We are responsible to obey by faith."**

In a sense, the believer's responsibility in the spiritual life can be summarized in one word: **obedience.** The bottom line of the believer's responsibility in the spiritual life is obedience. Believers are to do what God has told them to do and they can do what God has told them to do because the Holy Spirit makes this possible, though not without the exercise of self-discipline. [Through the use of our volition to apply the truth.]

Self discipline is not a matter of obeying God in our own strength even as we obeyed our parents or our employers in our pre-Christian days. Self discipline is a matter of faith, because, *"whatever is not from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).*" Self discipline must be an act of trust in God's resources through which the believer draws upon the infinite power of God and meets His righteous standard.

Obedience by faith means that we act by dependence on the Holy Spirit and count on His enabling power as we trust Him. It means that we do act, that we exercise every ounce of energy and the Lord Jesus Christ *"... mightily works within ..."* us (Col. 1:29).

We act in His power; we obey through the Spirit's resources. We act, but Christ does it through us in the sense that it is

His power that enables us to do what He commands.

In terms of power, He does it through us; in terms of activity, we do it through Him. We do what we could never do in our own capacity: we obey God and live up to His righteous standard. *So that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* (Rom 8:4)

Your obligation is not to do it in any strength of your own, or to try to do it, but to do it in the enabling power of the indwelling Spirit . . . this is where the believer's responsibility brings him. That is the thing that constitutes the ability to live the spiritual life and that is none other than the ability to walk by means of the Spirit in your daily life.

That is the salvation (deliverance) from the reigning power of sin ... Therefore you fall back upon the infinite power, think of it, the infinite power of the indwelling Spirit (Chafer, *"The Believer's Responsibility,"* transcription of a class lecture, Dallas Theological Seminary, (Lawrence, Dallas Seminary Notes, pp. 13-7-8, 1993).

If we fall for any of these dangers, the error of thinking that there is some quick switch to turn off temptation or the idea of passivity, just "*yield*", getting sidetracked by these will not only kill our joy in Christ, but more importantly, will leave us powerless to truly experience God's deliverance and the Christ-filled life, i.e., Christ producing His character in us or the fruit of the Spirit.

Because these two dangers if present reflect that we are faithless in our new life in Christ, our position in Him, and in the power of the indwelling Spirit. If we fall into these errors we will be left powerless to deal with our spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil (**cf. Col. 2:16-23**).

For far too many Christians today, the Christian life is devoid of the spiritual power that it should have. Its really minus God's power.

For these Christians, who fall into this category, it is simply a matter of doing the

best they can to conform to certain expected standards.

What it really is for many, is trying to live in Romans 7. Yes your a new creation in Christ! Yes you have tremendous resources "in Christ."

The point of Romans 7 that Paul is asking is, then why try to live under your own power, your own resources; or even worse under the law, a law performance system and be doomed to perpetual failure! Neither are able to provide the spiritual power you need in dealing with the pressures of life.

Some are more successful at conforming than others, externally at least, but if they are honest with themselves, there is the awareness that something is missing.

Some find comfort in the ideas that "No one is perfect, we all have our weaknesses;" or " we all have a sin nature what do you expect!" or "I am doing my best, and I am sure God understands." Certainly, no one is perfect!

God does understand, and maybe we are doing our best, but this does not alter the fact that unless we are walking by faith, living out the new life given by God and using all the resources in Christ, we are missing the abundant life Christ offered when He said, "*I have come that they might have life and live abundantly*" (Jn. 10:10b).

That abundant life is Christ living within!
Gal 2:20; Col. 3:4 "*Christ, who is our life*"

Our best is really not what God wants.

He wants faith in His best, the Lord Jesus Christ, His thinking and viewpoint and when that is coupled with the 3rd person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, whom God has sent to indwell each believer and to empower us so we can experience the power of Christ and the ability to do our best, not in our own strength, but in the strength which God supplies (Col. 1:29; Eph 3:20).