

SANCTIFICATION

The purpose of this paper is to show that sanctification is indeed begun with a work of grace, a crisis experience subsequent to conversion initiating the deeper Christian life that progressively increases until the end of life. This thesis will be advocated with an overview of Romans 1:18 through 12:1-2. Picture yourself in a jet plane coming in to land from 30,000 feet. Our first view of the subject in Romans will be from the high altitude and we will get closer and closer to the subject at hand, sanctification, until we land on it.

Death in sin and Life in Christ by grace through faith

This is clearly revealed in the epistle of Paul to the Romans. In chapter 1, verse 18 through 3:20 God inspires Paul to describe the fallen condition of humankind. He says that in spite of the fact that God revealed himself to them through creation (1:20), conscience (2:14-15) and the law (2:17), they rejected God and went their own way. Therefore God finds all mankind, gentile and Jew alike to be unrighteous (3:10 & 20) and thus condemned (3:19).

Paul then goes on to proclaim that righteousness is provided apart from the law and instead comes by faith in Jesus Christ (3:22) providing justification for the sinner through Christ's atoning work on the cross (3:24.) In places he says it is by faith (v 22) and other places by grace (v. 23). It is summed up in Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace you are saved, through faith; it is not of works lest any one should boast."

Chapter 4 of Romans cites Abraham as the Old Testament example of justification by faith, not by works (4:2).

The result of this justification we have "peace with God (5:1)." With it also comes the Holy Spirit (5:5), salvation (5:9) and reconciliation (5:10). Paul then reveals how the trespass, as measured and exposed by the law, brought and continues to bring death, whereas the gift given by God by grace through faith brings life (5:17). As the law "increased" the trespasses, so grace through righteousness increases all the more bringing eternal life through Christ (5:20-21).

So chapters one through five present the problem of sin, condemnation and death and the solution of righteousness by grace through faith unto justification, reconciliation and salvation unto life eternal begun. Sanctification has not yet been mentioned, although 5:3-5 and 10 may allude to and forecast it.

Note too that conversion is a crisis experience. It comes about when one who is dead in their trespasses and sins realizes their sorry, condemned state, seeing Christ revealed in his glory overcoming their spiritual blindness,(II Cor 4:4-6) and turns to Christ as savior and Lord, confesses sin, repents and embraces God in Christ Jesus, undoing the terrible exchange described in Romans 1.

Men and women, this is a crisis! Much of the carnality present in the church today is there because people have not had the first crisis of conversion let alone the second crisis of sanctification! "Saved by faith" has been presented to the seeker as a mere decision devoid of

any personal sense of sin, the fear of God, or his glory that is the greatest threat and treasure there is. This crisis is described in Romans 6:6 “Our old self was crucified...” Confession of sin and repentance is a soul-wracking experience one does not forget. It is a crisis.

Gathering the provisions for Sanctification

Chapters 6, 7 & 8 reveal the provision of sanctification in building on the foundation of justification and salvation begun in the atonement received by grace through faith.

Romans chapter 6 is usually seen as a sanctification passage. Here Paul raises the issue of sin and holiness in the life of the one who has righteousness by grace through faith. He raises the issue by speaking out the false implication of grace, “Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase?” By asking that question he raises the issue of the nature of life after conversion in regard to sin and holiness. He proceeds to answer the question in chapters 6, 7 & 8.

The argument from death and life

His first answer is strong: “May it never be!” His reason is clear: “We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer (6:2b)?” The argument is that sin was bringing death to us, revealed by the condemning and guilt imposing law, so why would we want to go back to it? That would be ridiculous! We experienced the misery of death from sin emotionally, physically and spiritually and came to hate it. Why would we go back to it?

He then moves from the descriptive to the prescriptive: “count your selves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (6:11).” He goes on in the negative and the positive: “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin... but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life... (6:13)” Then he concludes: “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace (6:14).” To paraphrase his argument, he is saying “Since you died to sin that was killing you, now keep on killing sin within your selves and offering your selves to God who gives life, not death.”

This text is often given as a text on sanctification, and it is. And since it flows right from justification without any hint of an initiating crisis, it seems to rule out the possibility of an initiating crisis. This text is often combined with Ephesians 1:3-14 which teaches us our position and identity in Christ advocating the affirmation of such as the sanctifying process in our lives unto holiness. Now the truths in these texts are, when appropriated, powerful sanctifying influences to be sure.

Indeed the experience of the indwelling Christ whose life is ours by exchange by grace through faith is wonderful, beyond a doubt (Galatians 2:20). Peter expresses the depth of this wonder in his first letter: “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” (II Peter 1:3-4) Partakers of the divine nature! Astounding! In fact some cults have taken this to mean we become gods. Though this is a heretical conclusion, it is an understandable one. Christ dwells within us, transforming us! How sublime is that?! Indeed Simpson was accused of heresy in this connection

by none other than B. B. Warfield accusing Simpson of teaching believers can actually become divine in nature. Warfield misinterpreted him, but we can understand the misunderstanding. (Warfield, Perfectionism; pp 385-387; Baker 1958)

Yet this provision described in the first half of Romans 6 is not the full provision yet to be revealed. There is more.

The argument from slavery

Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gives us another compelling metaphor teaching us to be holy as Christians. His argument is that to go on sinning would be to submit to a slave master that is lethal whereas God is the slave master who gives life (6:23) The logic is powerful: “Why would anyone who has known the slave master who gives death as the pay for the slaves’ labor continue to serve that master, when the slave has now experienced a new master, God, who gives life not for labor! To serve sin would be just plain stupid! “Should we go on sinning that grace might increase?” Of course not! The sin we served as a slave his master all our lives was killing us. Now we have a master who gives life! Why would we go back to the master that kills?!

While this is intellectually convincing, I can hear my sinful nature receive it as an idea to be agreed with while hearing it in church, yet go on sinning when temptation comes.

These are arguments for continuing in holiness, indeed growing in holiness as Christians, which is sanctification. Yet there seems to be no initiating crisis subsequent to conversion.

The argument from a bad marriage

He adds another persuasive illustration to motivate us not to continue in sin that grace might increase: Getting rid of a bad husband. He argues that by “dying” we are free from an abusive husband, the law, which not only brought us death, but also entrapped us by making sin look attractive (7:5b). So, the argument goes, why would we go back to that terrible husband?! Should we sin the more that grace might increase? Of course not! That would be like getting out of a bad marriage to an abusive husband legally and morally by our own death and then going back to him and marrying him again after we obtained new life and had become new persons! How dumb can one be!

Again, this would be persuasive in the company of Christians and does help to some extent when facing temptation. But it is not enough to overcome besetting sin that “so easily entangles us (Heb 12:1).” It is good, very good, but there is more.

So, Paul gives us three very powerful arguments for living a holy life. These arguments would seem to sanctify us. But they don’t. At least they don’t without the final answer, the answer that energizes the other three and more, the one who makes it happen: The Holy Spirit.

The final argument: The Holy Spirit gives the power to overcome the sinful flesh and give life!

The spiritual war within

But first, before he brings us to the Spirit and the Spirit to us, he brings us low by exposing the struggle of the soul. He brings it up in the context of the discussion of the law. He had just seemingly cast the law in a bad light: It was the bad husband to be rid of. Paul wasn't comfortable with that negative association with such a noble thing as the law so he sets the record straight. The law isn't sin (7:7). Here Paul personifies sin. Sin "springs to life" (7:9) when the law is present. So the commandment, intended to bring life, in fact brings death. But it is not the fault of the law but of the sin.

So does the law become death (7:13a)? No, it becomes the opportunity for sin to produce death. But notice this death is purposeful: "so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful (7:13e). This is the problem. We don't believe sin is utterly sinful. We believe it is a little sinful. It is just a "white lie," a harmless look (of lust), a little pleasure, when in fact it is killing our soul. We have reduced sin to a deed rather than a divide between us and God cutting us off from his life. The law provides the wonderful service of revealing that sin is deadly not cute.

Paul then proceeds to describe in vivid wrenching detail the internal deadly war, the spiritual struggle experienced by the believer. There can be no question this text describes the believer, not the unbeliever. The struggler hates the sin he commits. He agrees with the goodness of the law of God (7:16). He delights in the law of God in his inner being (7:22). The believer does all of these things, not the unbeliever. The post-modern unbeliever doesn't even believe there is such a thing as sin or righteousness, let alone delight in righteousness and hate sin!

When one begins to follow Jesus he or she is relieved of guilt, to be sure, but takes on a commitment through repentance to holiness. The unbeliever does not pursue holiness. The true believer does. This introduces stress into the believer's life. Now they care about sin and righteousness! Before they beheld Christ and embraced him they did not care about it.

Paul alludes to this struggle in the life of the believer also in a parallel passage recorded in Galatians 5:17, "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want." Believers are clearly the object of his description of the internal struggle as well as Romans 7, not unbelievers.

In both texts the enemy is sin expressed also as "the sinful nature." The good guy is the "inner man." The enemy wants to do evil. The "inner man" wants to do well. The two are at war. Sin has an ally: "The sinful nature" (7:18) specifically "the members of my body" (7:23). So it is the body versus the spirit. Sin, allied with the body, wins out every time, "making me a prisoner of the law of sin (7:23)." In this context "law" is equivalent to "force." The force or power of sin is greater than the force of his inner being.

This is Paul the believer, not wanting to continue in sin that grace may increase, not wanting to be dead in his sin, a slave to sin or married to the law that produces sin and yields death, yet he still is! This is Paul the believer who wants to live the resurrected life, be free from the slave master sin, free from the bad husband. He wants to "count him self dead to sin and alive to God,"

but he can't. He wants to affirm his position and identity in Christ, but he can't. He wants to be sanctified, but he can't.

This deep incongruity, hypocrisy, and spiritual futility produces in him the greatest angst he has ever felt. In that despair he cries out, "Wretched man that I am, who will save me from this body of death (7:24)?!" Note it is the body he needs the rescue from, not the spirit, the inner man.

The crisis

There is the crisis! Feel the despair of Paul in the spiritual war he is experiencing unto desperation! He is experiencing the "utter sinfulness of sin (7:13e). This is 12 on the Richter scale of spiritual earthquakes. "Wretched man that I am, who will save me from the body of this death!" Tell him he is not in a crisis, but he will not believe you!

The overcoming resource-Jesus Christ

The answer to his question, wonderfully, is "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our lord (7:25)!" Then Paul goes into detail describing just how Jesus is the answer. Significantly he follows this triumphant declaration with a summary of who he is: divided (7:25b). "So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin (25b)." His body is still a problem to him.

So how is Jesus the answer? First, in justification: Verses 1-4 rehearse the atonement and justification described in chapter 3:21-5:1. Verses 5-8 describe the unregenerate and regenerate man and their respective mind sets and outcomes. Note there is still no comment on the body, which is the problem, but just the mind which can be a problem or not depending on whether one is regenerate. Verse 9 addresses the Roman Christians saying they are not unregenerate but regenerate and are therefore not controlled by the sinful nature. However, he must mean that their minds are not controlled by the sinful nature for he goes on in verse 10 to say their bodies are dead because of sin and their spirits (minds) are alive because of righteousness (imputed).

So the answer is in Christ for the mind and spirit so far in this text, but not for the body. The body is still a problem. The second phase of the answer is coming. He solves the body problem in verse 11. "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." Finally the body is given life! The body that was dead in its trespasses and sins can be made alive by the same Spirit that raised Jesus' body from the dead! The answer to the struggle between the body and the spirit described in Romans 7 is in Christ by his Spirit! Thus the body that always desires what is wrong and prevails in the war against the inner man, the spirit, is brought by resurrection power into unity with God and his will and becomes one with the inner man overcoming the sinful nature and producing Spirit inspired Christ life sanctification.

This is the final answer to the question of 6:1 "Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase?" To paraphrase what he is saying: "No! Why should we go on sinning when we don't have to? If there were no hope to overcome my sinful nature, my body, then perhaps I would have to answer 'yes' I will go on sinning that grace may increase (I hope!)! But now that I have learned of

resurrection power by the Holy Spirit, why should I? I now have a way to rid myself of the slave master and husband that brought me death.

Romans 6:11 instructs us to “Count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God,” but it doesn’t give us the power to do it. Romans 8:11 gives us the power to do it. So then Romans 6 is a sanctification passage empowered by 8:11. Romans 6:16 strongly implies we should not go back to the evil slave master. Romans 7:1-6 strongly implies we should not remarry the evil husband after we have died and been resurrected. However, neither of them empowers us to abide by those instructions. Romans 8:11 empowers us! It fulfills Acts 1:8 “And you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you.”

Power is the ability to do work: Spiritual work. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live holy lives and be effective in ministry.

Why does Donald Trump fire people? Because he can! Why does Shaquille O’Neal slam dunk the basketball? Because he can! Why do we do righteousness? Because we can! By the life giving power of the Holy Spirit.

Instructions

He then moves again, as he did in chapter 6, from description to prescription; from passive to active; from indicative to imperative. I’ll paraphrase: “Since the Spirit can raise your sinful nature, your body, from spiritual death you are not ‘under obligation’ to it any longer. Rather now you may live by “putting to death the misdeeds of the body” (V12).” Being so led by the Spirit we then are whole, we are “sons of God,” and “heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ.” (V17) We have moved from being slaves to sin to sons of God! We are no longer divided between “body” and “spirit,” “sinful nature” and “inner man.” We are made whole by the Holy Spirit empowering us to be holy.

Since “the old self was crucified (6:6)” we are now instructed to “put to death the misdeeds of the body by the Spirit and you will live.” (7:13b) What does that look like? Generally it means to do the opposite of what your sinful self tells you to do. It tells you to lust sexually by watching erotic television. It doesn’t even have to be hard core pornography. Instead of watching that program, put it to death and “present your selves to God as instruments of righteousness.” (6:13) When you are questioned in your ministry by a lay leader your flesh tells you to get defensive. Put that defensiveness producing pride to death and be open, inviting advice, and thus offering your self to God. Confess a sin, be generous, give a compliment, be quiet, speak up, compliment your competitor, and follow the instructions in Romans 12:9-21).

But what does it mean to do this “by or in the Spirit?” Well, it is the opposite of doing it “by the flesh.” It means to first confess your own guilt and/or inability to be and do righteousness on your own. Experience the Romans 7 struggle over the matter, cry out to God in desperation and ask him to raise your body from the dead just like he raised Jesus from the dead, and give you moral ability you don’t have apart from him. And while you are at it, ask him to give you the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Luke 11:11-13) And ask him to fill you with his Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

So, first confess your sins, weakness apart from Christ; secondly, cast your self at his feet committing your self to him; thirdly cry out to him for his Holy Spirit to fill you and raise you from the death of sin; fourthly, thank him for who you are in him and then step out in faith in righteous love and faith inspired obedience. This is what it means to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25) and to live in/by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16).

This is what God means when he inspired Paul to write, “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Phil 2:12b-13) Our “working” is futile unless God is at work in us both to will and to do! That says it all; that does it all. Many other scriptures describe this inspiration of power from on high.

Summary of Biblical basis of the crisis experience

The forgoing exposition of Romans 1:18-8:14 supports the doctrine that sanctification begins with a crisis subsequent to conversion. It will not be the last sanctifying crisis in the believer’s life, but it is the first one. Romans chapters 1 through 8 are a spiritual and theological autobiography of Paul. I fully believe that if I could talk to Paul and ask him “Paul, when did the crisis you described in 7:24 occur in your life? Tell me about it.” He would proceed to tell me a story when he hit spiritual bottom, cried out in a desperate cry for help to God and God him filled with his Spirit, raising his mortal body from its spiritual death. We know from other scriptures that Paul had other crises in his life later on. But his sanctification which was positional at his justification became experiential and began with this crisis.

Implications for ministry

The work of the Holy Spirit is directed not only at the sin and holiness issue, but also at effective ministry. The CMA statement of faith says, “It is the will of God that each believer should be filled with the Spirit and sanctified wholly...thereby receiving power for holy living and effective service...” Just as we are incapable of overcoming sin so we are incapable of effectively doing his work. Consider this: Our work is to extend his kingdom. His kingdom is the rule of his love and truth in the hearts of men and women. Our work is to change hearts. We can’t do that! We can’t even change our own, let alone others.

When we are witnessing, presenting the gospel with the hope of conversions we can’t convince people of sin, righteousness and judgment! Only God can do it.

Paul expressed it well: “When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.”

And again: “Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He

has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” (II Cor 3:4-6)

Do you hear his desperation, the same as he felt in his war against the flesh in regard to sin? Again he desperately depends on the Spirit to raise the dead! How does he do that? Prayer in the same manner as the battle against sin: Confess your inability; commit your self and your ministry act to the Lord; cry out to him for his Spirit to fill you; affirm what he can and will do through you by his Spirit; step out in loving, obedient faith. And then watch him work in you and through you unto the transformation of lives around you.

And note the nature of ministry in the New Covenant. It is a ministry of the Holy Spirit. So whether one is preaching, counseling, caring, showing mercy, giving, praying, leading, serving or ministering in any way, we must be filled with the Spirit in order for that ministry to be effective unto the transformation of lives, ours and others.

Is this then the end of sin in our lives? No, we are not perfectionists. Is this the end of ministry setbacks, and failure, resistance of lay leaders, persecution, false accusations and the like? It is certainly not. This is still planet earth. His will is not being done on earth as it is in heaven. And we are called to take up our part of his suffering.

The nature of Spirit-filled life on the planet

The rest of chapter 8 describes life as Spirit filled “sons of God.” Even we who are Spirit filled suffer. Life in the Spirit is not one of joy unmixed with sorrow and pain or free of sin. This text clearly teaches that even we “who have the first fruits of the Spirit,” struggle. Other scriptures teach us that all Christians do sin, even those who are being progressively sanctified subsequent to their crisis! (I John 1:8 & 10) The crisis experience does not bring us to perfection here and now, but “jump starts” our engine to move us on the road toward Christ-likeness, godliness, and holiness. The crisis experience breaks the absolute power of sin over the flesh; sin is no longer our slave master. We are no longer “under obligation to live according to it.” But while the slavery is gone, the freedom is not absolute. There will remain the need for transformation within us for the rest of our lives. Sanctification begins with a crisis experience but it is progressive from there and will include more crises before we die (Phil 3:12-16). Only in heaven will we reach perfection (Rev. 21:1-4).

Meanwhile there are consolations to get us through. First, we have the hope that our present suffering is small compared to the glory that is to come (v18f). And we have the blessing of the Holy Spirit praying for us when we cannot (v26). And we have the unshakable confidence of God’s sovereignty in our lives (v28). And most of all the joy of his love from which we cannot be separated (v31ff).

All of chapters 9, 10 and 11, are a wonderful parenthetical diversion from Paul’s main line of teaching wherein he describes the place of the chosen people, the nation Israel, in God’s plan.

Final instructions

The argument is resumed in 12:1-2. Paul, inspired by the Spirit of God, gives us the summary of how to be sanctified. He has already described it in 6:11-13, “Count yourselves dead to sin and alive to righteousness!” and in 8:12 “if you put to death the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit,” and now he summarizes it: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” We have died with Christ (6:8) and our old self was crucified with him (6:6). We didn’t crucify our selves at that point. The Holy Spirit of God did it. He killed us in our sinful flesh when he convicted us of our sinfulness and we died with Christ. Now, what was done to us in our baptism, we now do as an act of faith. We present ourselves as living sacrifices. We put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit. We die daily (II Cor 4:10). We have been crucified with Christ and we no longer live, but Christ lives in us, by faith (Gal 2:20).

How are we to minister sanctification?

Many Christians are in the middle of the Romans 7 struggle. They are in it because though they are regenerated, redeemed and justified, even positionally sanctified, their bodies are winning out over their “inner” minds; their spirits. Since conversion they want to be holy but they cannot. They intellectually believe the “wages of sin is death,” but they still “make provision for the flesh, to fill the desires thereof.” (Romans 13:14) They see the eternal value of living for Christ, but their bodies tear and wear them down into sin. God is showing them, by hard experience, “the utter sinfulness of sin.” He is teaching them to hate sin so they want to kill it in them selves.

At that point they come to you. They say, “I give up. I can’t live the Christian life. I can’t renounce God and say I don’t believe in him, but I can’t do what he asks. Rather than be a hypocrite I am going to just quit the Christian life.” They already understand grace to a certain level. They know they are forgiven, but it is as if they are “continuing to sin that grace may increase,” and they hate living that way. They see the abundant life in holiness but they can’t grasp it. You might say to them, “Count yourself dead to sin and alive to God!” They say, “I can’t.” You might say, “Celebrate your identity in Christ!” They reply, “Yes, I’ve heard that and I tried it, but I still give in to temptation when it comes. My besetting sins have a grip on me I cannot break.”

No, save those instructions for later. First say to them, “So you are going to give up, is that right?” They will reply, “Yes I quit!” Then you say, “Good. Because you are right; you can’t do it.” Then open your bible to Romans 7 and ask them to read it. After they have read it, ask them, “Sound familiar?” “Yes,” they will reply. Comment to them, “Isn’t it significant God had a graphic description of your struggle written in the scriptures?” And then take them to 7:24 and beyond to 8:11-14, and Romans 12:1-2. Guide them in a prayer of death to self and life in Christ. Teach them to confess their sin, cry out to God, and step out in life and death faith daily for the rest of their lives. Walk them through the prayers of Luke 11:11-13 and Ephesians 5:18. Teach them the Spirit filled life, the deeper life.

Teach them this wonderful provision of God for their holiness and for their effectiveness in ministry. Their ministry will be as parents, children, siblings and family in general. It will also be

as neighbor, community member extending his kingdom in the world. And most gloriously it will be as a member of his body, the church, which he founded, guaranteed, died for and loves and will call unto himself for the great wedding feast.

So, how do you minister this? You engage in the lives of strugglers, pray for God to show them their need, observe them in their need, be available in terms of time and heart, and minister the Word and the Spirit to them. Tell your own Romans 7 and 8 story openly and honestly. That might be in a pastoral counseling session, teaching a class, sharing in a small group, discipling someone, or preaching a sermon.

What of people and groups who do not have this doctrine?

This doctrine of sanctification is not unique to the Alliance. Other denominations and movements teach it too with slight variations. The Pentecostals teach the crisis experience subsequent to conversion and say it is always accompanied with speaking in an unknown language as a sign of “the baptism.” The Nazarenes teach this doctrine too, and they add you can be totally sanctified, unable to sin. The Alliance doesn’t go either of those directions.

The Reformed and Baptist groups teach that this doctrine is false. So, are they not being sanctified? Like people in the Alliance some of them are and some of them are not. The ones who are call it something different than we do. They talk about becoming Christians, backsliding and then rededicating, or reconsecrating their lives to Christ. Some of them talk about moving from Jesus being merely their savior to being their Lord. So they are experiencing a crisis subsequent to conversion, but the language they use to describe it is different than ours.

So are we who teach the deeper life any better off? It may be compared to the doctrine of spiritual gifts. Back in the 40s, 50s, and early 60s spiritual gifts were the sole property of the Pentecostals. They were seen as weird “holy rollers,” so named for their bizarre behaviors in worship services. The rest of the evangelical world avoided them and spiritual gifts like a plague. One never heard of spiritual gifts in most evangelical churches, except in a bad light. Then spiritual gifts came into the mainstream through the Episcopal Church and became respectable. Now every healthy evangelical church teaches people about spiritual gifts and encourages them to identify theirs and put them to use. Are we any better off than the Christians in the mainstream evangelical churches in the 50s because we teach the gifts? They were using their gifts back then. They were not as aware of it, but they were. So are we any better off? We probably are. It is a helpful thing to put a handle on the provision of spiritual gifts thus helping people into more effective service.

In the same way to know, live and teach the deeper life with the crisis experience will increase awareness and readiness to live it. It puts a handle on a huge reality in the Christian life. It helps create an awareness of what people are going through and how Christ is the answer to their need as Christians. A preacher may preach the crisis of the deeper life and ask his people, “Do you need the crisis? Or, if you have been through the crisis, do you need another one?!”

No, the Alliance does not have a corner on the sanctification market. We do have a wonderful Sanctifier to introduce people to.

Now, we do not believe it to be appropriate for people to seek an experience, whether it is speaking in tongues or a crisis. When you preach on the crisis experience as the beginning of the Spirit-filled life some people will ask you whether they are Spirit-filled or not. They will be wondering whether they have had the crisis experience. To discern whether they are Spirit filled or not does not require them to tell you their stories. You don't pry and ask probing questions of them until you find out whether they have had a crisis experience. What you do is find out whether the power of the Spirit is in them giving them victory over sin and effectiveness in ministry. If they are enslaved to a besetting sin, they need to experience the crisis of hitting bottom, crying out to God and being filled with the Spirit. If they are not a slave to sin you and they may be assured they are filled with the Spirit. The world, flesh or devil has not produced that holiness in them; The Spirit has.

If the seeker having heard your sermon on sanctification sees the sense of the message but still has not experienced the crisis leading to the desperate cry of verse 24 and wants to know what to do, advise them to pray that God will reveal to them the utter sinfulness, the deadliness of their sin. Without that revelation they will not cry out to him for the Spirit to fill them. And pray with them and for them that they would hit bottom and turn to him.

If you give an altar call inviting people to come to be filled with the Spirit, instruct them carefully that the prayer they must pray is not a mechanical one done "by faith" without emotion, but one that is desperate. Now, you might invite them to come for prayer because they don't have that sense of desperation to ask God for it. We must not immunize people concerning being filled with the Spirit. We must not convey to them that they are Spirit filled when they are not.

Once they experience Romans 7:24 and 8:11, then disciple them to practice that prayer every day. It is to be a paradigm for the rest of their lives, not a one time event. Paul lived this way: "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body." (II Cor 4:10-11)

This is the deeper Christian life: To die daily to self and to live to Christ. This is sanctification crisis and process. This is the way to experience life eternal now and forever.

May we join with Paul in his ministry: "I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col 1:25-27)

Fellow servants of Jesus Christ, let us present to them the word of God in its fullness. There is way too much empty gospel out there: "Gospel lite!" Let us live and thereby offer to the dying world the full gospel. We need it. They need it. God is glorified in it. By it we live.

I leave you with the sanctification benediction: And now, "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the

coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.” (I Thess 5:23-24)

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