

May 1999 Overcoming

by Aaron Greenway

Over the last several months, I have poured my heart out in the monthly e-mailings that have been sent to you. What you have seen is the Holy Spirit's work in my life as I have wrestled with issues of sin, holiness, purity, a heart for the lost, etc. This e-mail is no exception. Several months ago, I was sitting in a class hosted and taught by a dear brother in Christ, Joe Sahl, who was the chaplain of the San Antonio Spurs professional basketball team. Professor/Pastor Sahl is quickly becoming a deep, personal friend and mentor. This is a man whose heart is sensitive to the things of God and has many precious insights into Scripture.

One of the things that he has said is, "We are justified BY FAITH and we are sanctified by how? BY FAITH!" I can just hear his baritone voice giving that emphatic "BY FAITH!" These words didn't hit me until just recently. Of course I knew that we are saved by grace through faith, but I didn't realize the impact of this concept into the Christian walk itself. Let me explain...

For years and years, I had struggled with a certain area in my life that I know has displeased God. I have surrounded myself with accountability on this. I have stumbled so many times and have repented each time only to go back to it. Quite frankly, it has brought me to the point of spiritual exhaustion. I had come to discouragement wondering if I would ever be worthy enough to really be used of God. I understood that my heart needed to be changed, but I felt that God wasn't making the effort to change it. And so I was frustrated with God as well. All of this was going on until Prof. Sahl's words came back to me.

**"We are justified
BY FAITH
and we are sanctified
by how? BY FAITH!"**

For the first time, I felt like I had a weapon to fight my sin...FAITH. This means that I am trusting the Lord Jesus Christ to do in me what I cannot do in myself. It is depending on Him instead of trying not to sin. It is living and walking by faith and the pursuit of the heart of God instead of putting myself in a legalistic straight jacket. By trying to live up to the law is a sure failure. The only way now that I am able to please my Father's heart is by faith, not by any

effort or intrinsic goodness of my own.

Most of my contention with the church in America has not just been the sin, it is the attitude behind it. It is the complacency and the contentment of staying right where we are. Our major problem has not just been in our moral failure, it is that we have lost our "First Love." Our problem has been that we have lost sight of what it is all about, loving and seeking the heart of our glorious Heavenly Father, which we do all by faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Undoubtedly, my biggest struggle has been staying in love with Jesus, but love of God and dependency on the Lord is the key to the carrying through of what He began in us. How do we overcome? How do the just walk? Do we do spiritual warfare? Of course. Do we set boundaries for ourselves? Absolutely. Do we get spiritual accountability? Without a doubt. But the only way we will ever truly overcome is by faith, because the battle has to be won in our hearts condition before it shows itself in the externals. The problem has always been the rebellion of our hearts. The heart needs to be broken first before anything else can be accomplished.

So how does this apply to all of us? How many of us have been struggling to please God and feel like we keep coming up short? How many of us have sin that we can't seem to get rid of? The answer lies with trusting the Lord Jesus to accomplish in us what we have failed to do. For the just shall live by faith....