

## **VICTORY OVER SIN – Progressive Sanctification: A Process of Renewal (Part 14 in a 16 part study)**

Linguistically, the New Testament concept of renewal is exclusive to Paul. He uses it on five occasions in his epistles. It occurs grammatically in a compound structure (ana-kainos); with the idea of something that is moving upward, as it becomes new and fresh. In each instance where the responsibility of the believer is in view, the present tense is used, confirming the perspective of an incremental spiritual growth, producing changes for the better in the behavior of the believer. In the one exception, Titus 3:5, where the Christian's responsibility is not in view, the Holy Spirit is presented as the agent responsible, first, for regeneration, and then renewal. But let's consider where the believer's responsibility is clearly revealed, in Romans 12:2 –

**“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”**

The transformative renewal that God desires to see in us is rendered in the present imperative passive mode. The passive voice indicates that we can neither transform nor renew ourselves. That must occur by the power of the Holy Spirit. But the present imperative means that we have an ongoing/daily responsibility to fulfill in this transformative process of renewal, carried out by the Holy Spirit. We must yield to His control, moment by moment, day by day (cf. Ephesians 5:18). Isn't it ironic that Paul follows up Romans 6-8 with this admonition in Romans 12:1-2? But it makes perfect sense when we realize that the implementation of Romans 6-8 does not put our Christian life on automatic pilot. Our need for a daily Romans 6:11 reckoning is ongoing. Our responsibility for living by the power of the Holy Spirit is continuous and never-ending. This is why we have this additional emphasis by the apostle, regarding the responsibility of the believer, in that process of renewal which progressively conforms the Christian into the image of our Savior. Speaking of such conformance, Colossians 3:10 clearly makes that connection, where we read this –

**“. . . and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him –”**

In this passage, the present passive participle (“being renewed”) is used to reveal the role of the Christian in the process of renewal. The image of God in man has been marred and scarred by sin. But now that a conversion to Christ has taken place, Paul reminds us that such damage is not permanent and can be reversed. Ephesians 4:23 serves as a parallel to Colossians 3:10 –

**“. . . and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind . . .”**

Here, (“be renewed”) is rendered in the present passive infinitive, only with a slightly different compound structure (ananeo), which literally means “to make young again,” with the present tense emphasizing the continual spiritual renewal of the Christian. The parallel between Colossian 3:10 and Ephesians 4:23 doesn't end there. In both passages, Paul uses the metaphor of “laying aside” the old and “putting on” the new in each exhortation, with both occurring in the aorist tense. Does Paul's use of the aorist tense indicate that victory over sin can be experienced on some sort of spiritualized automatic pilot, only once, with no need of being repeated? We will provide a detailed answer to that question, based on the specific context of each passage, next.

But in closing this segment on a point of practical application, can we all agree that the spiritual renewal that God desires for each of us, as indicated in the passages above, is ongoing and never-ending, during the course of our earthly life? If it is to occur to the fullest extent possible, this spiritual renewal must become our desire as well, in the forefront of our minds, every day. As I am sure you have discovered by now, maintaining such a mindset is anything but automatic.