

Ezekiel 36:24-36

I will put my Spirit in you and move you to ... be careful to keep my laws. □ Ezekiel 36:27

Books about gardening can describe various vegetables, but you can't grow vegetables just by reading aloud to a garden plot. Dirt can't grow corn just by being told what corn is like. It takes living seeds, not just words. In the same way, you can't grow in obedience to God's law simply by hearing words. The reality described in those words must be planted and nurtured inside you by the Holy Spirit.

This Spirit-driven growth in holiness--called sanctification--is a process, not a once for all event. We saw yesterday that when we are justified by faith, God gives us a new standing and credits Jesus' perfection to us. Despite our sin, he declares us not guilty and adopts us as his children, freely and forever. Justification is a once for all declaration which completely changes our standing. Sanctification, by contrast, is an ongoing process which gradually changes our character. In this process, the Spirit's life is stronger than the old sinful nature, just as newly planted seedlings are stronger than weeds that have been plowed under. Still, more weeds do spring up, and the seedlings still have a lot of growing to do. Once the Spirit's seedlings of holiness are growing in us, we also need his "weed and feed": the Spirit shrivels sinful weeds and feeds the good plants of obedience to God's will. The plants will be mature, full of ripe, Christlike fruit, when God's new creation reaches perfection.

PRAYER--Father, you have already given me a new status in Jesus. Now grow in me a new character of Christlike obedience to your Word. Increase my holiness by your Holy Spirit. Amen.