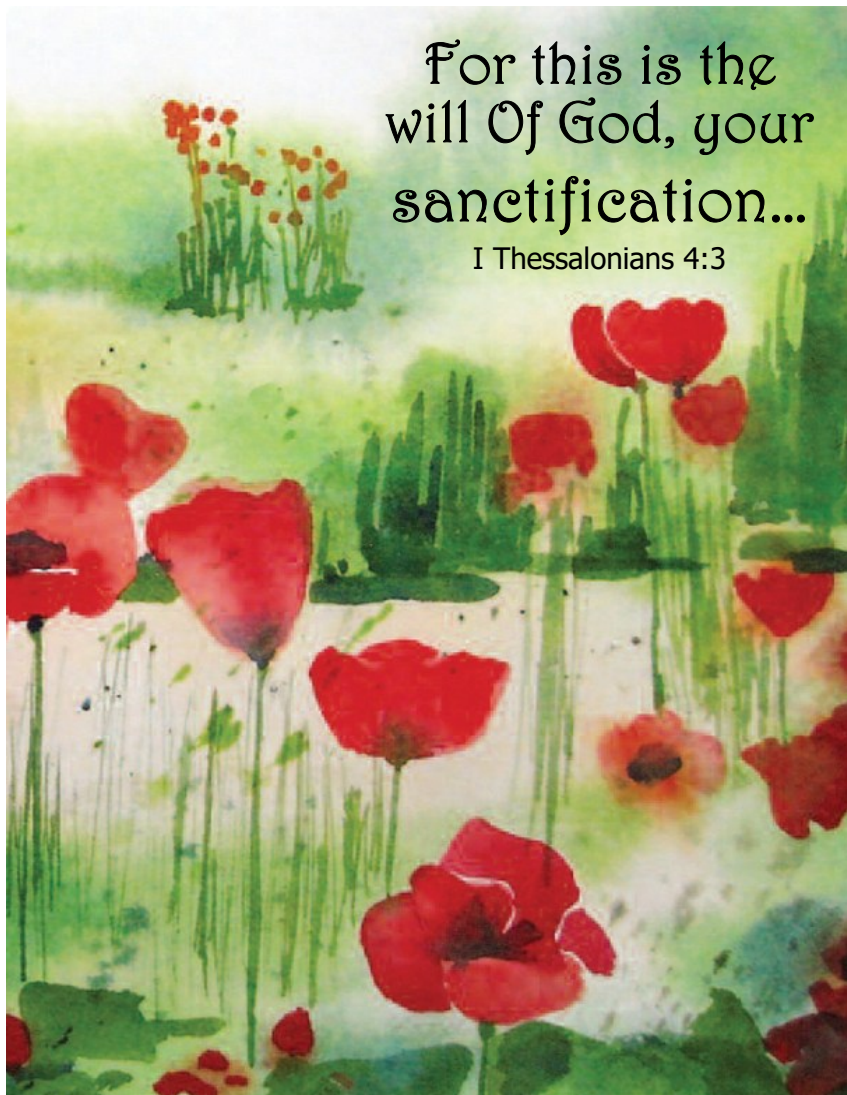


Sanctification Book 2

Putting Together the Pieces of Sanctification

For this is the
will Of God, your
sanctification...

I Thessalonians 4:3



Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Vistoso Community Church

Sermon Series

Putting Together the Pieces
of Sanctification, Book 2

**For you know what instructions we gave you
by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's
will that you should be sanctified. . .**

I Thessalonians 4:2-3

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the
NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1992 edition).

First Edition
January 2019



Foreword

In our first booklet in this series of sermons on sanctification, which included topic Volumes 1 and 2, we focused upon defining sanctification and describing the cause and effect of sanctification by providing a very practical Old Testament illustration. This second book in our sanctification series covers Volumes 3 and 4 in which we discuss our secure position from which we are to pursue sanctification and the means by which we can undergo sanctification. Part of understanding our means of sanctification includes becoming aware of the place of God's grace in setting us apart unto Him in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity.

I trust these topics will be a blessing to you as you continue to *put together the pieces* of sanctification!

In His grace,

Pastor Kevin Redig

A photograph of a field of yellow wildflowers in the foreground, with a single, dark, rounded tree standing on a hill in the background under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the image.

HE WHO PROMISED IS

faithful.

HEBREWS 10 : 23

Volume 3: The Positionally Sanctified Are Secure

Introduction

As we arrive at Volume 3, our third study on sanctification, let's assume that we have seen the Biblical truth of the believer's sanctified position, as well as God's call upon him or her to become progressively sanctified in experience. And, not only have we seen it, but we are attempting to respond to it. Now as we begin to pursue progressive sanctification, and by that I mean try to meet God's call upon our lives to be holy as He is holy, we are very shortly going to wonder about the security of our positional sanctification. Just how certain are we, by virtue of our faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, that we are going to have an eternal home with the Lord? This is the topic of eternal security. It answers the question, "Once individuals have eternal life, is there anything they can do that will cause them to lose it?"

Further, one's confidence regarding this matter is referred to as one's *assurance*. If you hope things turn out for the best when you die, you do not have much by way of assurance. If, on the other hand, you are absolutely sure, then you are said to have the assurance of eternal life—a *know-so* and not a *hope-so salvation*.

Of course, it isn't what we think that matters, the issue is what God has revealed to us in His Word. Is the child of God eternally secure, and is that child to have perfect assurance of his or her eternal destiny? That's the subject of this volume. Why would eternal security and assurance arise during a study on the subject of sanctification?

The answer is simple! The call of God to be sanctified is a very high calling indeed. As we attempt to respond to that call, we are going to experience failure. It may be a minor and nagging failure that goes on year after year. It may, at some point, be a spectacular failure known to many. This type of failure cannot help but bring to mind questions, "Has my eternity with the Lord been impacted? Has it been compromised?" It is very natural to struggle mentally with this at one time or another, so a study of sanctification is the perfect time to address the doctrine of *eternal security*.

Consider our timing in addressing this subject. Because many will attack the truths of God's Word on this matter, claiming that to believe you cannot lose your salvation promotes sloppy living or an indifferent attitude toward the Christian Life. On the contrary, we are taking up the topic of eternal security in the context of sanctification, a study that focuses on living a life that is set-apart unto the Lord in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity. There is nothing sloppy or indifferent about that! Taking it one step further, assurance plays a major role in making progress in the Christian Life. For it is important that we come to grips with the truth that there is nothing that should stymie our onward progress in sanctification—not even our own failures! When we do fail, we confess any sin involved and get back to the business of responding to God's call to sanctification, from the firm foundation of a secure eternal destiny. Let me show you.

Future studies will lead us to Romans Chapters 6 through 8. Let's get a head start by looking at Romans 8:1.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. . .



*There is therefore now no condemnation
to them which are in Christ Jesus,
who walk not after the flesh, but after
the Spirit.*

Romans 8:1

The word translated condemnation literally means *according to judgment*. It is not addressing the verdict, but rather the sentence that might be passed. The verse is telling us there will be no damnatory sentence, no condemnation. It is a very big deal for an individual to know, that in their face-to-face with God, they will never hear a damnatory sentence. For:

**. . .it is appointed for men to die once, but after
this the judgment.**

Hebrews 9:27

What a blessing it is to know there will be no condemnation at that judgment. But wait, there is a very special qualifier in Romans 8:1. The only ones who can know they will never face a future condemnation are those who are "*in Christ Jesus!*" And, unfortunately, for everyone who is not *in Christ* the only option is that damnation sentence. When standing before God, there are only two options. That raises an essential question, "How is it that a person achieves the position of being *in Christ?*"

This question is answered many places in the New Testament, and perhaps none so clearly as in I Corinthians:

It is because of Him (God the Father) that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

I Corinthians 1:30

Do you see it? God has put us in Christ along with:

. . .all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. . .

I Corinthians 1:2

And if this isn't enough, consider also this verse from the Book of Ephesians:

But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ. . .And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. . .

Ephesians 2:4-6

Made alive with Christ, raised with Christ, and positionally seated with Him in the heavenlies—and all of this *in Christ Jesus*. So the answer to our question is that every child of God is placed *in Christ*, by the Father Himself, as the result of trusting in His Son for salvation. And this takes



us back to our original question, just how secure is this position *in Christ*? How certain is our *no condemnation* status? Or, asked within the context of studying sanctification, can we fix our whole being upon this upward call as we focus upon the task Paul described so well:

. . .one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13-14

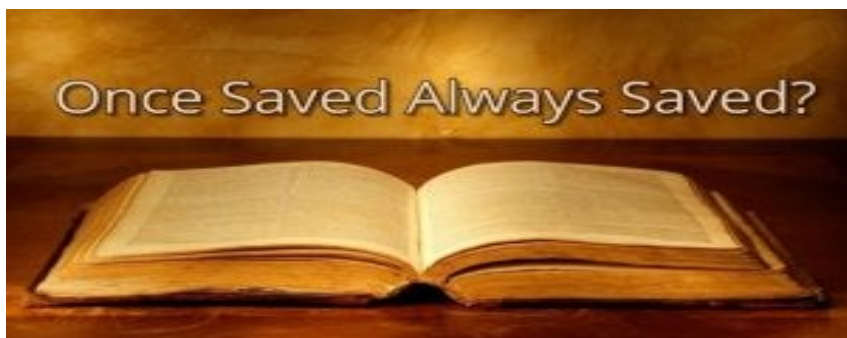
Is the issue of our eternity settled while we seek to *redeem the time* the Lord has given us on this earth? Unequivocally yes! But, I emphasize the importance of this question in helping us deal with discouragement and failure while keeping our minds firmly focused upon our daily taking up of God's calling upon our lives. So with these many related questions in mind, let's begin working our way towards a more complete understanding of the truths related to our Eternal Security.

Eternal Security

Definition

Let's begin with a definition of eternal security. If individuals have placed their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, then they have eternal life. (John 3:16) This life is irrevocably the gift of God to each one who believes. That means that every believer's eternal destiny is settled and perfectly certain and secure.

The concept of eternal security, however, is sometimes ridiculed, sometimes rejected, and very often unaddressed or misunderstood. Ridicule often comes in the form of a question something like, "You're not one of those once-saved, always-saved crowd are you?" Inherent in the form of the question is skepticism about the possibility.



Others think such a doctrine is especially dangerous for young people as it is certain to promote sin. Well, when all is said and done, the real issue is what does the Bible actually teach on the matter and, for our purposes, how does it fit into progressive sanctification?

Alternatives to Eternal Security

The following is a simple listing of the alternatives to eternal security promoted by many:

1. You can lose a salvation you once possessed as the result of sin. This is usually accompanied by a list of egregious sins that would cause the loss.
2. You can't lose your salvation for something you do, but you can choose to reject it. This is how those who are seen to walk away from Christianity are often described. Perhaps this is applied to a child who gives every indication of being saved as a teenager, but then turns his or her back on Christianity during college or early working years.
3. You can't lose your salvation if you actually have it, but the commission of certain kinds of sins is an indication that you never actually possessed salvation.

Let's see what the Bible has to say about each of these typically-identified alternatives to our eternal security.

The Claim That You Can Lose Your Salvation.

We'll address this claim at three different levels: the simple case, a more advanced case, and the big picture case. Each level is progressively more involved and at the same time more firmly establishes the truth of eternal security.

The Simple Case

What kind of life do we receive when we place our faith in the person and work of Christ? We can see the quality of this life by reviewing the well-known John 3:16:

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

Religious systems typically do not make such promises. Instead, they teach that if you do these works then you can have hope. If you do these additional things, you can have greater hope. Religion promises provisional life, God promises everlasting life. If you could lose what He gives, would He not have labeled it *temporary life* or *conditional* life? Has He not spoken truthfully with full disclosure on this matter? Of course He has! And, because our eternal life is a gracious gift from Him, we can count on Him to maintain it.

A More Advanced Case

What kinds of things would cause a person to lose their salvation if that were possible? Would a wasted life qualify? How about turning away in unbelief? The Word of God addresses both of these possibilities.

Notice what Scripture says about a believer who squanders what God has provided.

- **...the fire will test the quality of each man's work. . . .If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved. . .**

I Corinthians 3:15

- Certainly, something can be lost in eternity (reward), and we may experience discipline in time. But, notice that the verse promises that *"he himself will be saved!"* Is this an excuse for living a wasted life? Not in the middle of a study on sanctification it isn't. On the contrary, it is a reason to pursue sanctification, that we might not forfeit the rewards that God intends to be ours, so that we might one day have crowns to lay at His feet in worship! (Revelation 4:10)

But what about unbelief?

- **...if we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself.**

II Timothy 2:13

Our salvation isn't dependent upon our faithfulness, it is dependent upon God's faithfulness. To think we could lose our salvation over our fickleness is to either make our salvation dependent upon ourselves or to cast aspersions on the faithfulness of God.

The Big Picture Case.

As a final argument in support of eternal security, I want to take a big-picture look at the redemption that has been wrought by God. This will give us an appreciation for what it took for God to save mankind, and why it is not Biblical to think it can be undone by something we do or the choices we make. This will take a little longer to develop, but it should really firm things up.

First, consider what Jesus says in John 5:24:

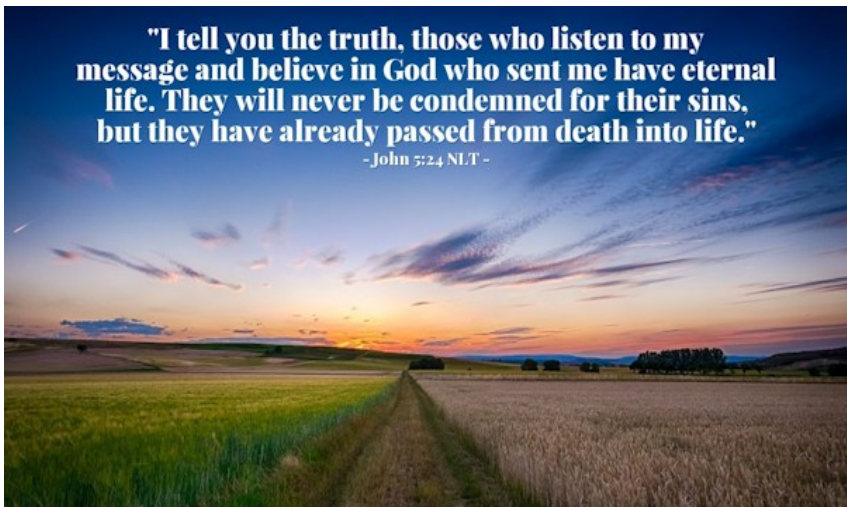
"I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

John 5:24

Belief in Jesus as both God and Messiah gives an individual eternal life. Such an individual will not be condemned—ever. Here is the reason: He or she has "*crossed over*" from death to life. This Greek verb is in the perfect tense, that means it is action that has happened in the past and the results continue right up until the present. Here is the way one Greek grammar defines the perfect tense:

. . .the perfect describes an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated.

Do you see what the Scripture so clearly presents? If you have ever passed over from death to life, it is a done deal! There is no going back, and there would never be a need to do it again.



From God's perspective, it is an accomplished fact whose results continue on into eternity. This is a precious, precious Scripture when guilt or doubts assail.

Finally, consider Matthew 12:29 where Jesus says:

“ . . . how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man?”

The context of the verse is essential. Jesus has been accused of casting out demons by the power of the prince of demons. His answer, in essence, is: “That's nonsense!”

Jesus then goes on to explain the spiritual situation with a physical analogy. Just as you cannot burglarize a strong man's house unless you first bind the strong man, neither can you cast out a demon unless the power behind the demon is first bound. Satan is the strong



man, and by casting out demons, Jesus has demonstrated that He has power to bind Satan. Now think of the ramifications for a person's salvation. This person has been:

. . . rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the Kingdom of the Son. . . Colossian 1:13

The saved person has *crossed over from death to life!* In order for that individual to lose his or her salvation, it would mean going back into Satan's dominion, crossing back over from life to death. If this were to happen,

Satan would have to bind the Lord Jesus Christ in order to take back that person that the Lord had rescued and saved. That is never going to happen! It is blasphemy even to suggest that it could happen!

The Claim You Can Turn Your Back on Your Salvation

Can you walk away from your salvation? To think that this is possible is to misunderstand divine sovereignty and human volition. There is already more than enough confusion regarding the intersection of the two. Let's explore just two errors in this claim.

Error 1: God is Responsible

To make the sovereignty of God responsible for everything is the error of many of our reformed brothers. Following the logic of their theology, rather than the truth of Scripture, they have made God ultimately responsible for the sin of Adam and the sin of Satan. Further, they assign to God the responsibility of ultimately choosing person by person who will be saved and who will be lost. This is an error easily refuted by Scripture. What did God say to Adam about the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? He said, “. . . *the day you eat. . .*” What does He say about His offer of salvation to lost mankind?

“. . . Whosoever will, let him come without cost and drink the water of life. . .”

Revelation 22:17

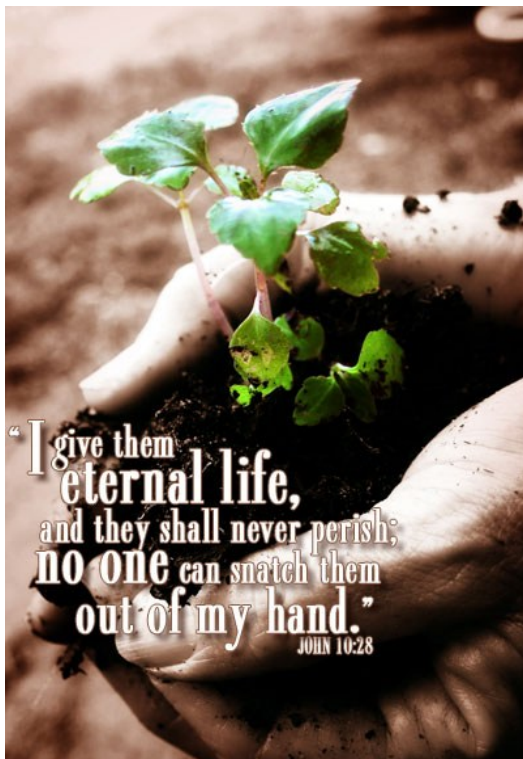
To force the sovereignty of God into these passages is to do great injury to the meaning of words. For these words are a clear appeal to the ability of man to make choices. They are an appeal to man to exercise the volition that God has given mankind as part of being made in the image and likeness of God!

Error 2: Man is Independent

Error 2 is the equally erroneous position that man's volition makes him an independent agent. This was the great error of Satan. He thought that he could establish his own kingdom, in opposition to God Almighty, and at the same time escape judgment. This is also the error of lost mankind who thinks they can reject God's offer of salvation in Christ but escape the eternal condemnation binary option of John 3:36! When man acted in disobedience in the garden, could he do anything to undo the damage? Choices have consequences! Rejection of Christ has one set of consequences; belief in Christ has another!

The choices we make following faith in Christ have many consequences of their own, but undoing a work accomplished by God is not one of them. Perhaps this amplification of John 10:28 will help firm this up in your thinking:

"And I give them eternal life, and they shall never (no way) (cause themselves to) perish (unto all eternity); neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."



The Lord Jesus gives to His sheep—those who have placed their trust in Him—eternal life. And those who have such life "***shall never!***" John uses a very, very strong negative, as if to say it is not possible. Further, the verb is in the middle voice, which refers to something that is done to one's self. In other words, no children of God can cause themselves to perish. It is impossible even should they do something which will have many other negative consequences—like walking away from the faith as a confused and disenfranchised college student.

As the verse continues, we see it is also not possible for anyone else to snatch us from the hand of the Good Shepherd—and that includes the college professor with an anti-God bias! As the clincher, there is an untranslated pair of words right before the word *perish*, which gives the statement the force of something that cannot happen now nor into all eternity. This one single verse is addressing the issue as strongly as it is possible to do so. If you are a child of God through faith, then you can not do anything to cause yourself to perish, no one else can do anything to cause you to perish, and this is the way it is from now unto all eternity.

Summary

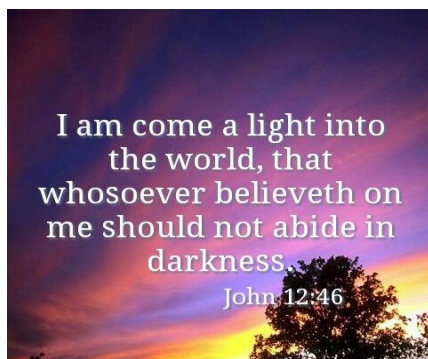
Wow! That's eternal security! Now let me be perfectly clear, I have no interest in pursuing hypotheticals about how far you can go and still be saved. My interest is in applying the Word of God to circumstances within the context of coming out of this world and living a life set-apart unto God—in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity. Because I understand what God's Word has to say about the firm foundation upon which our salvation is built, I have great confidence in God's power to draw.

Thus, when God draws that wayward believer and that wandering college student back to Himself, through whatever means it takes, and they understand their secure position in Christ Jesus, that will get them back into the pursuit of progressive sanctification far more quickly than all the doubt, guilt, and conditional acceptance that comes from so many other sources.

The Claim That You Never Had Salvation

This claim has become a very popular form of theology in our day. However, does the Bible make the lack of carnality the criterion for salvation? No! Over and over salvation is established upon belief:

"...whosoever believeth on Me." John 12:46



It is very simple. If we start with individuals who are carnal in behavior, there are two possible ways forward:

1. If they have already placed their faith in the person and work of Christ, then they are saved, but carnal. What is God's will for them? That they confess their sin and then begin the process of sanctification!
2. If they have not yet trusted in Christ, then they need to do so in order to get saved. Once saved, it is God's will that they immediately begin the process of setting apart their lives unto their Savior—sanctification.

First is the call to come to Christ for salvation, and then the call upon the saved individual to be sanctified.

There is a proper order, and things can, and often do, break down along the way. The greatest need for saved persons who are mired in carnality is not to get saved again, it is to confess their sins and begin to appropriate the grace of God to begin living set-apart lives from a foundation of eternal security! To make carnality the proof of a person never having been saved is to provide evidence not related to the proof. It is like saying that, if you are out of shape, you have no athletic ability. The truth is that there are many 75-year-old, out of shape, former athletes. What happened? They gave up on the disciplines of training, eating right, rest, and so on. The same is true of carnal Christians, they have either given up on the disciplines of the Christian Life or never developed them at all. Like the Israelites, they failed to enlarge their territory and drive out the inhabitants of the Land! (Exodus 34:24)

There is so much confusion regarding this topic because man and various denominational theologies have so muddied the waters. If we go directly to the Word, this is what we will find: *Every* writer to New Testament churches—that means they are writing to saved individuals—cautions believers about living in carnality, every one of them. The reason for such cautionary emphasis is that it is entirely possible for Christians to be carnal. See for yourself!

The Apostle Paul Wrote

Brethren, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I Corinthians 3:1

Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit. . . Ephesians 5:18

I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. Ephesians 4:17

Note that in the first passage, Paul's Christian audience clearly is carnal. In the second and third they are being warned to avoid carnality. Why warn them? Because it is entirely possible for a Christian to get tangled up in sin!

The Apostle Peter Wrote

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

I Peter 2:1-3

Peter's audience tasted that the Lord was good at the point they placed their faith in Him for eternal life. Once saved, some things in the life need to go, and, as the passage makes clear, growth takes time and the input of the Word of God.

James Wrote

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?

James 4:4

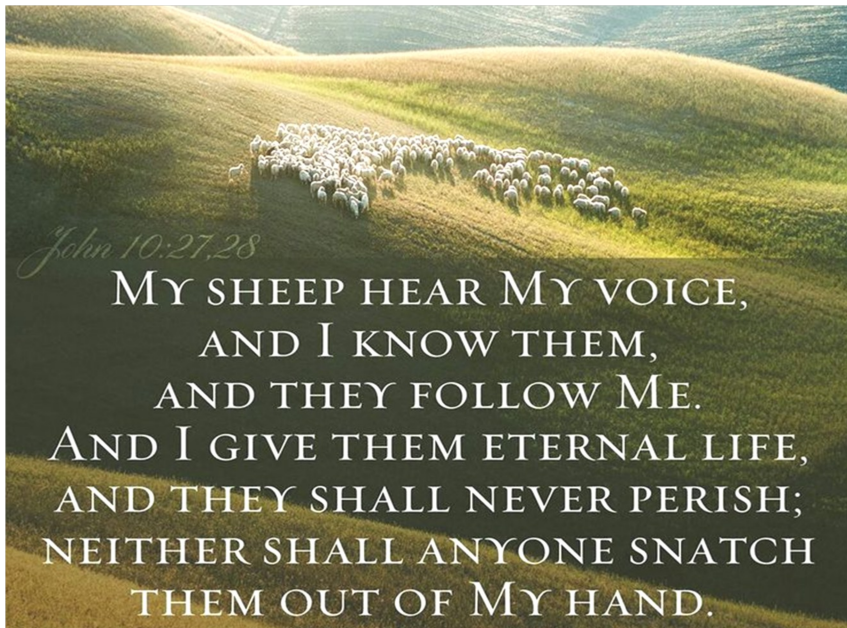
To teach that James is writing to unbelievers at this point, and some do, is to defy the clear language of the book at a dozen points. Because he is clearly writing to believers, then it is possible for believers to be *adulterous people!* Yes, terrible—but possible. This happens every time we forsake the Lord's call to live a sanctified life and instead get tangled up in worldliness. James is warning us off of this disastrous course in terms of the Christian Life.

The Apostle John Wrote

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

I John 1:8

As we close out this volume, I trust you have realized we have accomplished something basic, yet very necessary,



in our study of sanctification. God's call upon every child of God to be sanctified is made upon an eternally secure starting point. It is not a starting point that we have established! Instead the starting point is the salvation that God has graciously given to all who will place their faith in the person and work of Christ for eternal life.

In Closing

You see, in the same way that it is God's will that we be sanctified, it is equally His will that we know that we have salvation. It is His will that we have assurance of that salvation. The Scriptures speak so clearly on this matter:

God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life. . . These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know you have eternal life. . .

I John 5:12-13

Eternal life is found in one place, and one place only—the Son. Belief in who the Son is and what He has accomplished brings eternal life to all who believe. And those who believe are to know it! For we do not have a *hope-so* salvation, but a *know-so* salvation! When all is said and done, it comes down to the object of our trust. Do we look to the kind of life we live for eternal life and assurance? On the contrary, our eternal salvation is secure because it is a work that God has accomplished and He is both able and willing to maintain it:

. . . he who hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death to life.

John 5:24

In keeping with our subject matter, this secure salvation is not a foundation from which to live lazy, apathetic, or self-centered lives. Rather, it is the means that God has provided to pursue the upward call in Christ Jesus of ongoing and progressive salvation. For God has seen fit to deal with our discouragements along the way by giving us a certain and secure foundation from which to proceed.
Praise God from whom all blessings flow!



Volume 4: The Means of Sanctification!

We know it is God's will for each and every believer in Jesus Christ to be sanctified. We have learned this is a call to be set apart unto God in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity. Furthermore, it is a call to transformation. For, although we are sanctified positionally at the moment of our salvation, the call to ongoing progressive sanctification—that which we manifest in our experience—is a life-long call upon each of us. It is a good thing we are called to this process from a certain and secure foundation of eternal life, for there is bound to be failure and discouragement along the way.

By now, I suspect everyone who has made it to this point in our study is asking questions such as these: "How are we supposed to do this?" "Why am I having trouble making the progress I desire?" "I had more peace in my life before I understood God's call to sanctification, is this too hard?" If any of these thoughts have crossed your mind, then you have joined the company of every saved individual who has tried to respond to the call to sanctification. Here is the short answer: If God calls you to do something, then He will provide the means to do it!

Consider it from this perspective: God is calling us to a supernatural quality of life! Do you think being holy as God is holy is something that you can do in your own strength or from the energy of the flesh? Of course not! The calling to a supernatural quality of life requires supernatural enablement, and that is exactly what God has provided. The purpose of this volume is to begin to unfold, from God's Word, just what enablement He has provided!

Understanding the Call

Before we begin with the details, let me point out why I think it is so important for a body of believers, a local church, to understand the call to sanctification. You see, it is not just an individual, but also a corporate, matter.

Take the case of a hypothetical local church that is doing an excellent job of evangelism. The individuals that make up the body have a clear understanding of the Gospel, and, as the Lord opens doors, they take every opportunity to share it. Furthermore, the loving fellowship within this particular body constitutes an additional and powerful witness. Not surprisingly, from time to time the lost respond to the Gospel and are added to the fellowship. Now here is an important question for you: "What kind of picture of the Christian life should be in the mind of these new believers?" After all, they would have picked up something from observing the very same group of believers from whom they heard the Gospel.

As the result of watching and hearing from us, should new Christians be thinking, "Now that I am saved, my eternal destiny is secure and I can live any way I want to?" or how about, "I'm saved, it is going to be smooth sailing from here on—happiness and blessings!" We instinctively know something is wrong with either of these approaches. In reality, if our newly-saved individual had been evangelized by a church that was not only engaged in the work of bearing witness to Christ but also responding to His call to sanctification, then they would enter the Christian Life with a clear understanding—and expectation—of what is to come next. They would have heard of God's free gift of salvation, but also would have observed a body of believers fully engaged in setting their lives apart unto Him.



They would have placed their faith in the person and work of Christ for their eternal life with a clear picture in their minds that saved people follow after their Savior—and they do so from denying self and taking up God’s calling upon their lives. This is a very healthy situation from which to conduct evangelism, and should be understood to be an essential part of our witness. For the grace of God is not a selfish thing that we manipulate to our own ends. It is the provision of God to make spiritually dead people alive, and then the provision for those who are alive to live a supernatural kind of life in time and eternity.

Two Approaches

So back to the question of *the how* of sanctification! How do we become progressively set apart unto the Lord? How do we become conformed to the image and likeness of Christ? And, how do we become holy as He is holy?

First, let’s acknowledge this to be a daunting task. In fact, the bar has been raised so high, it doesn’t really seem possible. Still, we need to try! So let me walk you through two approaches, which ultimately sum up all the possibilities.

The Try Your Hardest Approach

The first approach has many variations, but basically goes like this: God did so much in saving me, the least I can do is to get out there and try my hardest to live the way He wants me to live! This approach sounds eminently reasonable, doesn't it? Thankfully, the Bible gives us a clear picture of what it looks like when we approach sanctification from what I am going to call the *try your hardest approach*. It is an abysmal failure.

You can see this for yourself by reading the seventh chapter of Romans. Here are a few excerpts:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do. . . I know that nothing good lives in me, this is in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. . . So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

Romans 7:15-23

Then Romans 7:24 tells us everything we need to know about the *try your hardest approach*:

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Some try to dismiss this passage by telling us Paul is having a flashback to his life as an unbeliever. Nonsense! By the seventh chapter of Romans, Paul is deep into doctrine on how the Christian is to walk in the new life God has provided. Furthermore, in his self-righteous persecution of the church, he had no such struggles. This is not the struggle of the lost, but the struggle of every born-again child of God who is trying to respond to the call to live a sanctified life!

For, although believers have the life of Christ within, they also continue on in a body that contains a sin nature—and this sin nature constantly seeks to dominate the life of the believer. Do you see it? Paul's cry in Romans 7:24 was:

Who will rescue me from this body of death?

There is a struggle going on in the Apostle Paul's life between who He now is in Christ, and the sinful nature that remains!

The Law of the Spirit of Life Approach

Thank goodness Paul's voice of despair found in Romans 7:24 is followed by this spiritual truth:

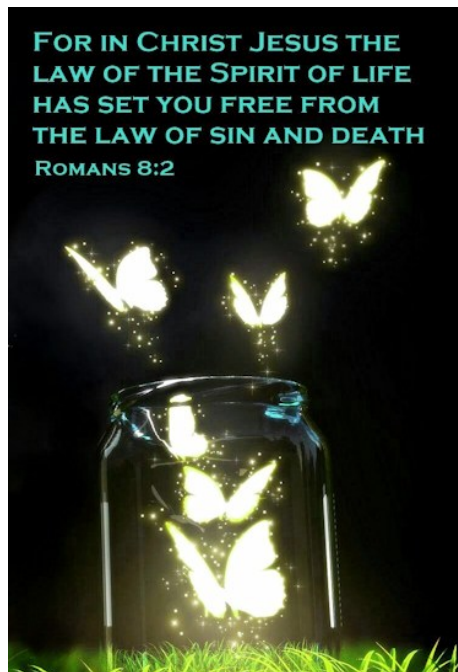
Thanks be to Jesus Christ our Lord!

Romans 7:25

You see, God has an answer for our every need, even that of the sin nature baggage that we carry into the Christian Life. The answer is found in the person of our Savior! So how does God provide a means by which we can become progressively more like our Savior, progressively more set-apart unto Him? Paul gives us the summary answer two verses later:

Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of Life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:2



Depending upon what Bible translation you are using, you may find some variance in the way that Romans 8:1-2 is translated. It is beyond the scope of this publication to go into the details of the textual criticism associated with this verse. Instead, let me simply direct you to the footnotes associated with any good study Bible. They should have a good explanation of current Biblical scholarship on these verses.

The Law of the Spirit of Life

As we begin to *unpack* what is meant by the phrase the Law of the Spirit of Life, let's make sure we have a few things straight in our thinking.

First, God is the Great Provider. That's what Jehovah-Jireh means—the Lord will provide! (Genesis 22:14) He hasn't left us to live the Christian Life on our own. On the contrary, He has provided everything we need for life and godliness, which is clearly stated in the verses below. Equally clear is that His provision is contained in the great truths preserved in His Word and nowhere else!

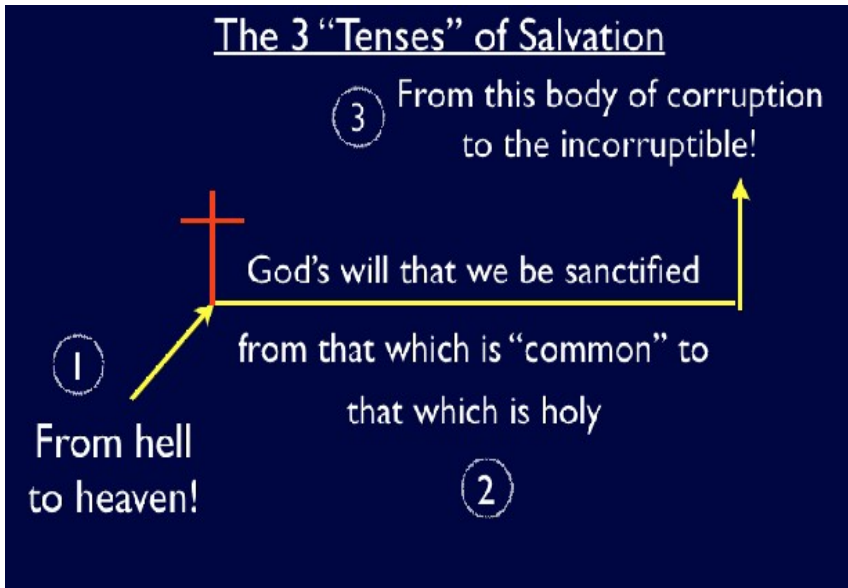
. . .His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. . .through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them we may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

II Peter 1:3-4

Second, there is only one foundation from which to pursue a sanctified life:

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 3:12

I mention this because often religion will apply pressure to live the sanctified Christian Life before there is any born-again life from which to live it. As the diagram below depicts, God's order is, first, salvation from an eternal destiny in hell to one in heaven through the faith in the person and work of Christ.

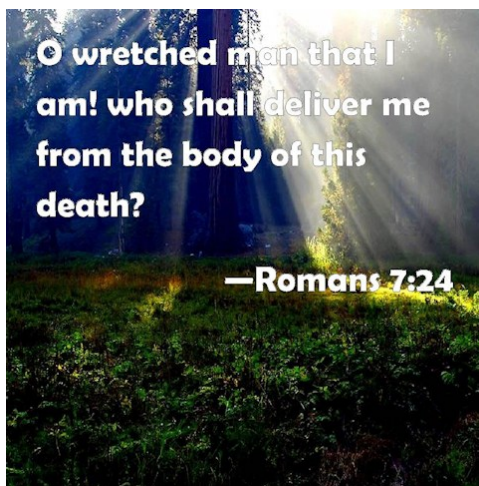


Our secure salvation, our position *in Christ*, is the *only* foundation from which we can build the sanctified life. Once we are eternally saved and secure, the clear call of God is to set apart the new life we have in Him to His purposes and glory. This is the second tense of salvation. During the days we have between our salvation and the time God takes us home to be with Him, the call upon each Christian is to *redeem the time*, to set apart the days He has given us on this earth. Now we are ready for the details regarding this cryptic phrase, the Law of the Spirit of Life. Let's break it down into manageable pieces.

The Law of the Spirit of Life—in Detail

There are actually two laws in view in Romans 8:1-2: the Law of the Spirit of Life in contrast to the Law of Sin and Death. To begin, we need to understand the concept of law. In a secular context, a law is a statement of how things really work. It is a firm statement about reality, something of which we are absolutely certain. God is telling us, in no uncertain terms, that a person operates either under the Law of Sin and Death or the Law of the Spirit of Life. Furthermore, His provision for the Christian to be free of the Law of Sin and Death is the Law of the Spirit of Life. This is the means by which we can escape the domination of the sin nature. To operate under any other means will bring you right to the wretched man condition of Romans 7:24.

The phrase, the Law of the Spirit of Life, is not in and of itself explanatory. Instead, it is meant to encapsulate what Paul has been teaching in Romans Chapters 6 and 7, and what he is going to cover in the first half of Romans 8. The details are found in the nuts and bolts of these two and a half chapters. So what do we learn in Romans Chapter 6? To answer that, we have to go back to Romans Chapters 3-5. These chapters clearly address how God has dealt with the penalty of our sin, and after having wiped it away, justified us in His sight.



You see the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has been:

. . . justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood.

Romans 3:24-25

It is the *blood of Christ* that wiped away our sin debt and provided our righteous standing (justification) before God. By the *blood of Christ*, the Scriptures mean the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross as He bore our sins and received upon Himself the wrath of God. By Christ's work on the cross, the penalty for sin has been *paid in full*.

As a follow-up, Romans Chapter 6 deals with an entirely different matter—not the sins we have committed, but our nature to sin! How often have we as believers desired to just be stronger so that we might keep the sin nature in check, to keep it from wreaking havoc in our lives. God's way is exactly the opposite of our natural inclination? For His way is not to make us stronger, but to break the power of sin in our lives through death—our identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Follow along with me in Romans 6.

- In Romans 6:1, Paul asks a hypothetical question:

Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

This verse connects directly with our study of sanctification. As believers in Christ, should we continue in sin? Of course not! It is God's will that we be sanctified. That's the goal!

- Romans 6 describes the means of sanctification—God's means. Verse 2 proclaims a startling truth:

We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

- How and when did we die? Romans 6:3-10 lay out the details. In summary, every believer is identified with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It is our identification with His death that breaks the power of the sin nature;

...because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Romans 6:7

Not only that, but we have been identified with His resurrection! This is the foundation for the new life that is ours in Christ.

- So then, Verse 11 summarizes the first component of the Law of the Spirit of Life. We are to:

...reckon ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

To reckon is to stand firmly upon something because it is true. It is a fact that we died to sin because God identified us with the death and burial of Christ. It is also a fact that we are alive as new creatures in Christ because God also identified every believer with the resurrection of His Son. There is no progressive sanctification in one's life apart from breaking the dominion of the sin nature through the means God has provided—death, burial, and resurrection.

- The next step in the Law of the Spirit of Life is found in Romans 6:13:

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

The key is the phrase: "*present yourselves to God.*" The word translated *present* means to submit to or put at one's disposal.

These verses are telling us to take that new life, that is ours by virtue of sharing in Christ's resurrection life, and put it at God's disposal. We must be clear that God is not seeking the old life which manifests the sin nature, but only the new life that is ours in Christ. But before we can present this new life, we must reckon ourselves dead (separated from the power of) to our sin nature and alive unto God. Then, and only then, can we put that new life at God's disposal for His purposes.

The last aspect of the Law of the Spirit of Life that we can extract from Romans 6 and 8 is first mentioned in Romans 8:4. In order to see the context, let's look at the first four verses of Chapter 8 in detail:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (those in Christ by virtue of the new birth will not be condemned in eternity and do not have to know enslavement to the sinful nature in time), **because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.** (God has made a provision—it's summary name is the Law of the Spirit of Life. It is God's means of setting us free from the repeated failure of Romans 7.) **For what the Law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature,** (no one will ever be declared righteous by means of law-keeping, see Galatians 2:16.) **God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law** (God does want a righteous, sanctified life. We just can't do it apart from the provision of God) **might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature** (It is very possible for the Christian to live under the dominion of the sinful nature—no sanctified life there. But it does not have to be that way because there is an alternative!) **but according to the Spirit.**

Right at the end we have the third component of the Law of the Spirit of Life: living (walking according) to the Spirit. This is the often used Greek word *peripateo*. It tells us that wherever our footsteps take us from the moment we get up in the morning until we lay our head down on the pillow at night, we are to walk filled and enabled by the provision of the Spirit of God.

The Law of the Spirit of Life—in Summary

Step back for just a moment in awe of what God has provided as the means to live a life set apart unto Him, a life that is holy as He is holy, a life that will bear a resemblance to the life of His Son! This life is called the Law of the Spirit of Life and consists of:

1. God's work in identifying us with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. As we reckon this to be so, the Spirit of God works in our lives that we might become dead to the sin nature and alive unto God.
2. We are to put the new life we have in Christ at God's disposal. As we do, He will work out the transformation in our lives that is the work of sanctification.
3. We are to do all of this not by our strength, willpower, or force of personality, but by the filling and enabling ministry of the Holy Spirit. From start to finish we are to be a people who know and depend upon the provision of God to live the kind of life to which He has called us—a set-apart, sanctified life!

If the longer version of God's provision is found in Romans Chapters 6-8, then look at the condensed version in Galatians 2:20-21:

I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live; nevertheless, Christ lives in me. . .

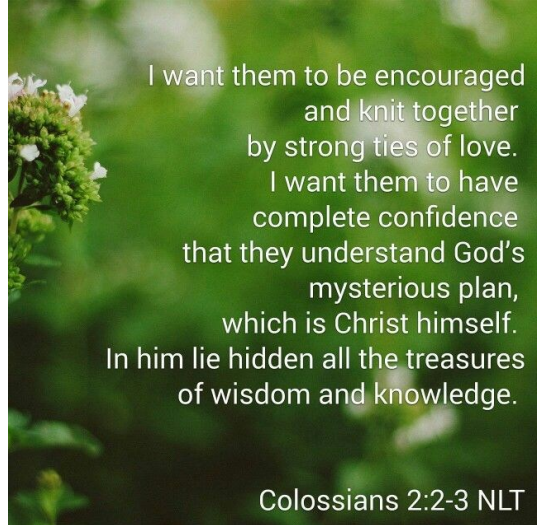
This is not a buckle-down and try harder message. This is a come to Me and do things My way message from the Lord. For, as always, we are:

...to take His yoke upon us and learn from Him, for He is gentle and lowly in heart and we will find rest for our souls in His ways.

Matthew 11:29-30

For in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!

Colossians 2:3



I want them to be encouraged
and knit together
by strong ties of love.
I want them to have
complete confidence
that they understand God's
mysterious plan,
which is Christ himself.
In him lie hidden all the treasures
of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 2:2-3 NLT

As Christians, seeking to pursue sanctification, our emphasis must be on the Law of the Spirit of Life. But we must also be able to recognize the Law of Sin and Death, for it must be rejected as a means of life at every step.

- It is simple in terms of the lost.

For the wages of sin is death.

Romans 3:23

This is all lost mankind knows. Every one of us was born dead in trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1) and on the Broad Road headed to destruction (Matthew 7:13). That is why Jesus says:

"...if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."

John 8:24

In short, the Law of Sin and Death is the rule of life for the lost individual!

- Is it different for the person who has responded in faith to the person and work of Christ?

God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son

I John 5:11

The receipt of eternal life causes a transfer of kingdoms. The one who trusts in Christ is transferred from the dominion of darkness (Satan's kingdom) to the kingdom of the Son. (Colossians 1:13)

But at that point, the point of salvation, we come to the subject of our study. For each one who has transferred kingdoms, there is a call on his or her life to be sanctified. Romans Chapters 6-8 are not about the lost, but instead are about the saved. For the saved, transferred, eternally secure child of God can still operate under the Law of Sin and Death. Impossible you say! Read Romans 7 again. That's what that chapter is all about, and why it has been placed between Romans Chapters 6 and 8.

Further, if we attempt to live the Christian Life and pursue sanctification in our own strength and apart from the provision of God, like the Apostle Paul, what wretches we will be. Like Paul, most of us need a taste of this worldly cycle of having the desire to do good but being unable to carry it out before we are ready to come to God and see what He has provided.

What God has provided is summed up in the phrase, the Law of the Spirit of Life, which takes us to the great promise of Romans 6:14:

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under Law, but under grace.



1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace
Himself sanctify you completely;
and may your whole spirit, soul, and
body be preserved blameless at the
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Law of the Spirit of Life is the grace provision of God for becoming progressively sanctified. It is the enablement to be set apart unto Him in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity!

Might this be our prayer:

Lord, I am not going to try and sanctify myself. I am going to trust in You, in the finished work of the cross, in the new life that is mine in Christ. As I present this new life to You, I will trust in the power of Your Spirit to conform me to the image and likeness of Your Son. For I desire to set myself apart unto You, that You would be the overriding priority in my life and that I would see myself as exclusively Yours so that I might point the way to Your glory!

In Closing

Perhaps you have seen it by now, but let me state it clearly: God's provision for living the sanctified life is, in essence, an indirect approach. It is a matter of faith and not of willpower.

You see, we don't need to pray for strength and then resolve to be more worthy. We need to reckon ourselves dead to the power of the sin nature and alive unto God as the result of the Father's positionally identifying us with Christ's work on the cross. As new creatures in Christ, we need to walk by the power of His Spirit and not in our own strength.

Here is a fundamental question for you: "Do you see the Christian Way of Life primarily as all about *trying* or all about *trusting*?" There is a world of difference between the two, and only one of those options is in keeping with the will of God as revealed in His Word! Trusting in the provision of God puts the emphasis right where it belongs—not on our talents, personalities or gifting, but instead upon the sufficiency of the plan of God. This leads to a thoroughly Christ-centered people, which is exactly what God wants.

As lost sinners we were prepared by the Spirit to see and accept the Lord Jesus as our substitute; as defeated believers we have to be prepared by the (same) Spirit to see and abide in the Lord Jesus as our life.

Miles J. Stanford

Let me close this volume by means of a short summary:

Holiness (sanctification) is the result of the Law of the Spirit of Life replacing the Law of Sin and Death in the life of the Christian. It is not meant to be an end in itself. We don't make ourselves set apart experientially. Rather, as we know Christ more fully, we will be set apart unto Him.

**Just as there is a world of difference between
an ordinary person and a saved person,
there is a world of difference between an
ordinary Christian and a sanctified Christian!**



Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And
lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him, And
He shall direct your paths.

PROVERBS 3:5,6



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