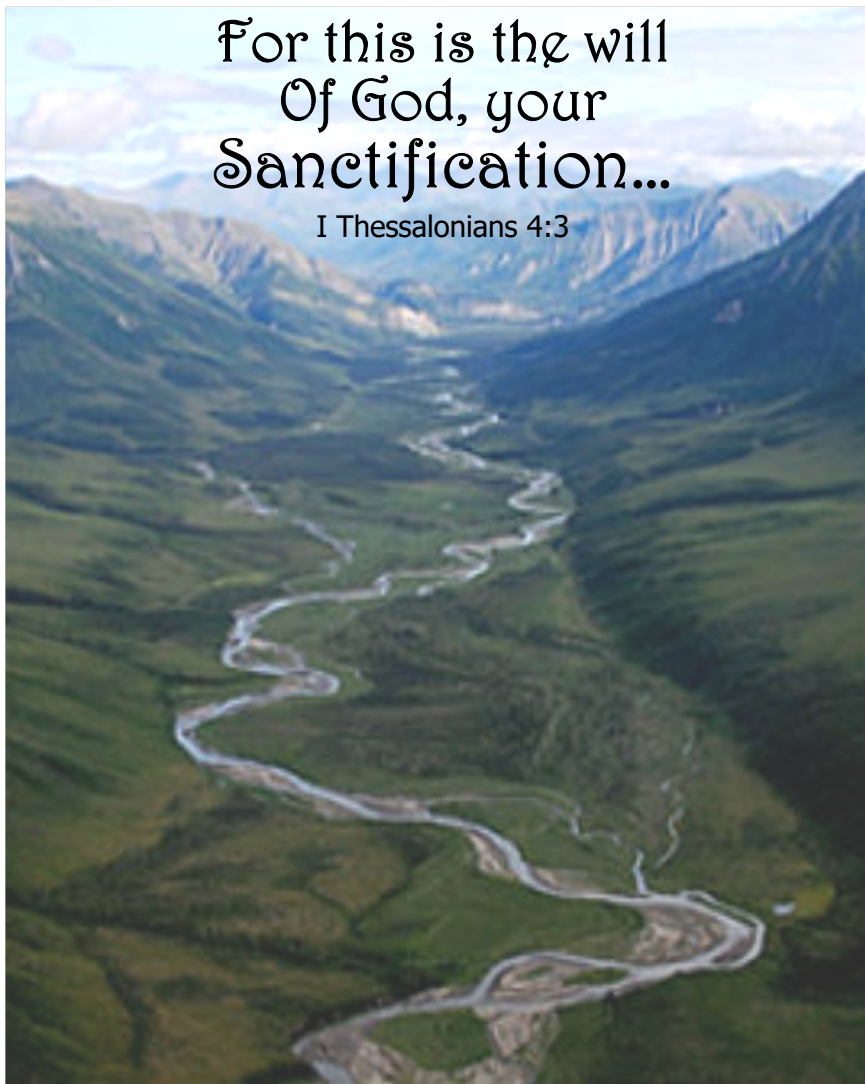


Sanctification Book 3

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 3

**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

March 2019



Foreword

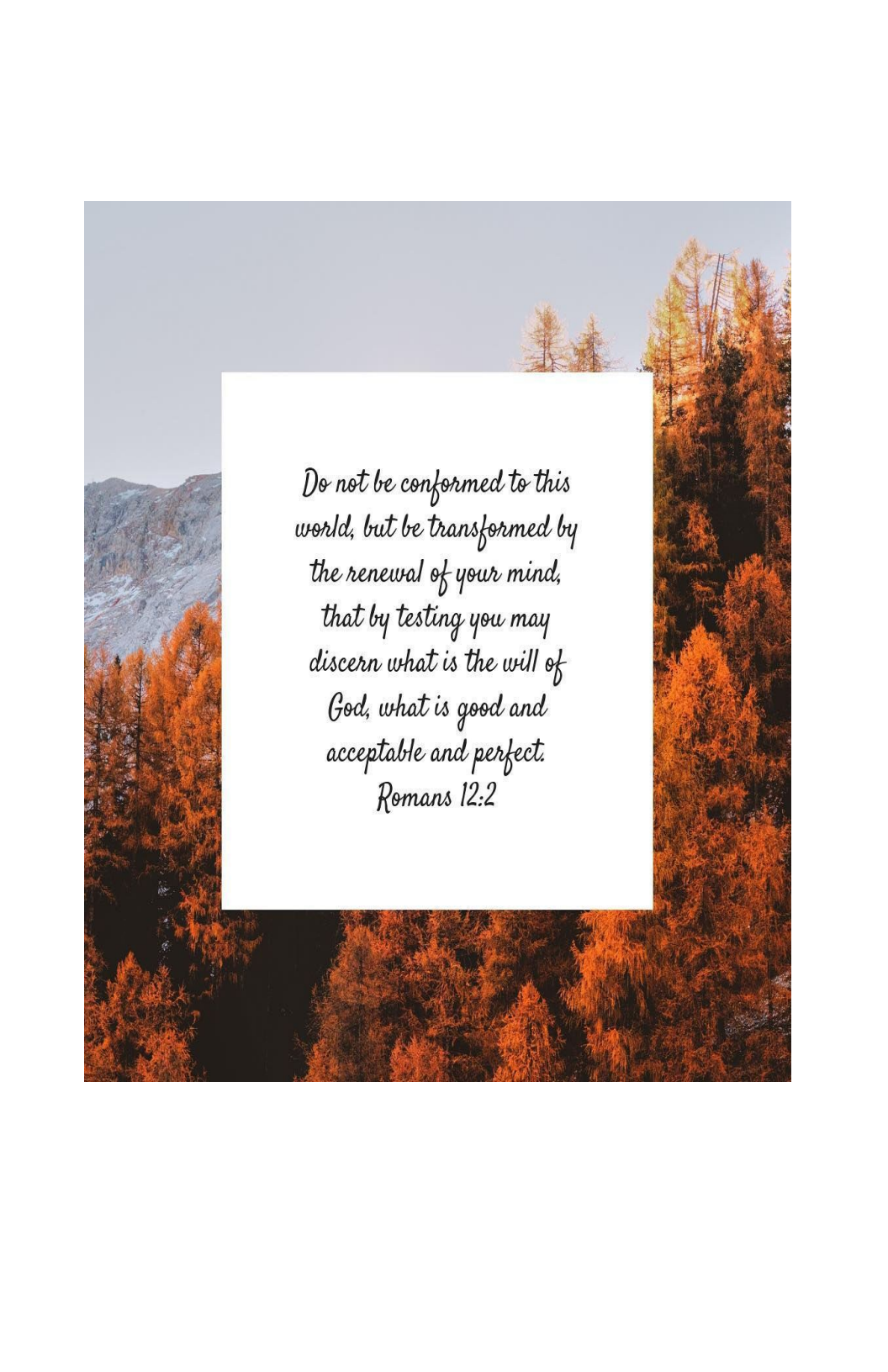
In our first book in this series of sermons on Sanctification, which included Volumes 1 and 2, we focused upon defining sanctification and describing the cause and effect of sanctification by providing a very practical Old Testament illustration. The second book in the series covered Volumes 3 and 4 that discussed 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.

This third book in our Sanctification series seeks to further our understanding of grace and solidify our recognition of experience in contrast to our position.

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



*Do not be conformed to this
world, but be transformed by
the renewal of your mind,
that by testing you may
discern what is the will of
God, what is good and
acceptable and perfect.
Romans 12:2*

Volume 5: Rightly Dividing the Word of His Grace

Introduction

In our pursuit of understanding God's call to progressive sanctification, we have:

- **Defined sanctification:** To be set apart unto God in terms of purity and in terms of priority and exclusivity, saints by virtue of position and condition!
- **Illustrated it from the Old Testament:** For we are to enlarge our territory, spiritually speaking, and drive out the inhabitants of the land (worldliness, sin, and errors in our thinking).
- **Learned we are secure:** For we are grounded in the truth that any pursuit of sanctification comes from an eternally-secure salvation in Jesus Christ.
- **Learned the means of sanctification:** For God's provision of personal, progressive sanctification is by means of our understanding and applying the *Law of the Spirit of Life*.

Volume 5, this our fifth piece of the puzzle, considers the connection between the grace of God and sanctification. Specifically, we will address the following subjects:

- The Necessity of the Grace of God in Sanctification
- Why We Should Champion the Grace of God
- How We Must *Rightly Divide* the Word of God with Respect to Grace

Now that we have an outline, let's begin.

The Necessity of the Grace of God in Sanctification

I have a quote I would like you to consider, which I am going to annotate with Scripture.

Even among those who accept grace as the only means of salvation, exclusive of any works or merit on the part of man,

. . .for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:23-24

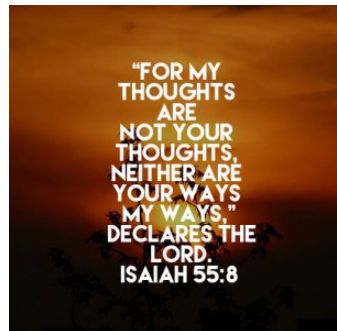
there is a regrettable neglect of emphasis on the fact that the spiritual life can be sustained, developed, and brought to perfection only by the operation of the same grace.

J.F. Strombeck

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?

Romans 8:31-32

The point is simple, but we need to be constantly reminded that the call to sanctification is so high that it is outside of our capability. Unless God provides the means, we don't have the slightest chance of achieving anything acceptable to God. No amount of commitment, surrender, sincerity, good intentions, or force of will on our part will ever measure up in the slightest to what God will, in grace, provide to the humble heart that seeks His ways and walks in them.



Why We Should Champion the Grace of God

Have you ever taken the time to systematically look at the provision of God for mankind and the relationship of that provision to the grace of God? Let me give you some examples:

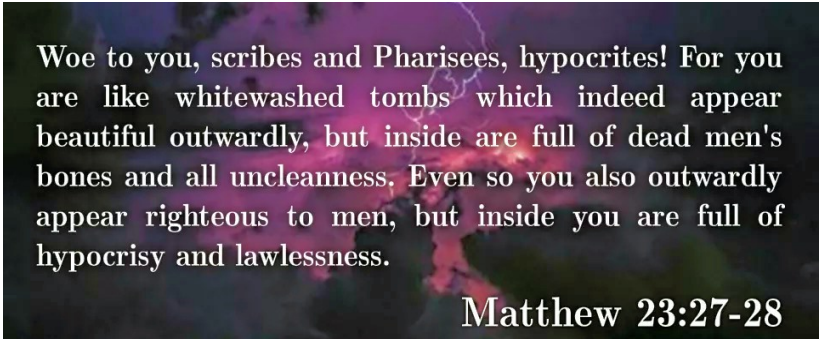
- We are saved by grace. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- We are justified by grace. (Romans 3:24)
- Our message is the Gospel of grace. (Acts 20:24)
- We have been called by the grace of Christ. (II Timothy 1:9)
- Sin is not our master for one reason—we are under grace. (Romans 6:14)
- God's plan of redemption fulfilled in us is to the glory of His grace. (Ephesians 1:6)
- God's kindness to us in Christ is to manifest the incomparable riches of His grace. (Ephesians 2:7)
- His grace is all we need. (II Corinthians 12:9)

Reflect deeply on this list, and then consider the silliness going around that says something like the following:

I believe in grace, but I do not think it should be emphasized too much, because it will lead to careless living. . . We need to emphasize personal responsibility as the greater obligation. . . And remember, as Christians, the Law is our real guide to holy living. . .

I hope by this point in our study you are having problems with these kinds of statements. I don't care what follows, when you begin by saying "We should not emphasize grace too much," you have wandered off course.

For, to set the grace of God aside is to give away our salvation, our message, our calling, and our victory over sin. And, perhaps worse, it is to refuse to give God the glory. It is to cover up His riches and refuse to be His trophy. This should be anathema to every believer who is growing. . . in grace and knowledge. (There it is again—II Peter 3:18.) If we are going to reject God's grace, we might as well sign up for the Pharisee Club and join the Sanhedrin. There have been *white-washed tombs* throughout history—right up through our day! (Matthew 23:27)



Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness; Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Matthew 23:27-28

How We Must Rightly Divide the Word of God with Respect to Grace

This section is the focal point of this particular volume. There are some things it is very important for us to get right, for our progressive sanctification hinges upon them. At the start, it is important to note that I am not saying that grace can't be abused, misused, or misunderstood. Of course, it can be. I have seen it occur. I am familiar with theological abuses, and by that I mean systems of thought which have elevated the grace of God at the expense of His attributes. I also have witnessed far too

many examples of believers who thought they could manipulate the grace of God to their own advantage without suffering the consequences for doing so.

But, rather than rejecting the grace of God because of its abuses, I want us to be on guard that we don't allow the pendulum to swing too far in the other direction. I do not want us to forsake the one thing that is absolutely necessary for us to accomplish all that God desires to do in our lives—and that one thing is the grace of God. Remember that what God desires to do includes our sanctification! For being set apart in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity is to be a trophy of His grace. There is no other way to both receive and become sanctified than learning to appropriate what He, in grace, provides. This section provides ten points that help us understand God's grace.

1. What is Grace?

Grace from God's perspective is: *His way of dealing with mankind in which He acts to provide that which we are unable and hopeless to obtain.*

Every single human being has tasted the grace of God. Did mankind provide this wonderful home called planet earth with its perfect balance of oxygen and other gases, its ability to grow food, and its rain in season? This is often called common grace, for it is something God has provided for all. And, His provision for those who will come to Him in faith is so much greater.



Grace from man's perspective is *God's abundant answer for our ever-changing need!* So then, to be grace-oriented is to repent of self-effort and to come to God, in dependent need, ready to appropriate what He has already promised to provide.

2. Grace Has a Source

Look carefully at these two Scriptures:

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.

II Corinthians 1:20

Jesus is full of grace and truth—He is the source of grace. Furthermore, the promises God has made to us are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Thus, every time He faithfully fulfills a promise, it is a disbursement of grace to us.

3. Grace Has a Breadth

From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another.

John 1:16

I love to teach on the richness of this passage. For it is saying that from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we receive one blessing *in exchange* for another—just as one wave follows another up onto the beach! That is what I mean by breadth. For the grace of God doesn't cover some narrow spiritual aspect of our lives, it is sufficient to cover every aspect, every need we will ever have.



4. Grace Has a History

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Genesis 6:8

Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; He rises to show you compassion.

Isaiah 30:18

Those who find fault with an emphasis on the grace of God often try to sell the idea that grace is an over emphasized truth of the Church. Do the above verses support or refute that claim?

God has always acted in grace toward his rebellious creation. Noah and his family were saved because of the grace of God. Then, look at how Isaiah tells the rebellious Southern Kingdom of Israel what the Lord longs for—to be gracious



to His chosen people. Grace isn't a new doctrine, it is an overlooked and misunderstood doctrine of God's Word.

5. At Times You Can See Grace

The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. . . .When he (Barnabas) arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad. . .

Acts 11:21-23

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect.

I Corinthians 15:10

How is it possible to see grace? The Scriptures tell us that when Barnabas saw saved Gentiles in Antioch, he was

seeing evidence of God's grace. And then when you look at all that Paul accomplished—church planter, author of Scripture, contender for the faith—all of these are an illustration of what the grace of God can do in the life of a saved sinner!

6. Grace Is Not License

The grace of God is not a license to sin, an excuse for sloppy living, or anything of the kind!

What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? God forbid! Romans 6:1-2

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature. . .

Galatians 5:13

Thankfully, where our salvation is concerned, the grace of God is greater than our sin. But does the term "*God forbid*" sound like license to sin? Of course not! And we already know this because, once saved, it is God's will for us to be set apart unto Him. His grace to us as Christians isn't to indulge the flesh. Instead, it is the means by which we can live pure lives where God is our first priority and we are exclusively His.

7. Grace Is Our Teacher

Rather than detract from the Christian Life, grace is the preeminent teacher!

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. . .

Titus 2:11-13



As far as the Christian Life goes, we have a teacher. The word translated *teaching* in the Titus verse means to: teach, admonish, mold character, reprove, and chastise. This is the kind of teaching that not only includes the passing on of information, but also contains correction and discipline for failure. Who or what is the teacher God has for His children? Why, it is the grace of God!

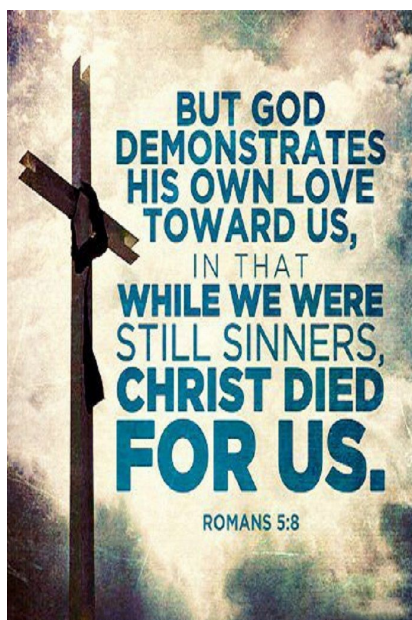
His grace certainly includes the provision of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, but this passage is making it clear that all of what He provides to meet our needs comes under the *umbrella* of His grace. Look what His grace does: It teaches us to deny ungodliness, to live upright lives, and to be expectantly waiting for His return. Do you know what this means? It means that anything that does not fit this mold—even the least bit of ungodliness, unrighteousness, or worldliness in the Christian Life—is not compatible with grace teaching.

Those who mistakenly teach that grace is a license to sin or a cover-up for a sloppy life just haven't read their Bibles! You see, we all have a choice. If you turn from

the grace of God in order to live the Christian Life, you only have Law and self as the means to do it. That is not much of an option. You go ahead and try to live the Christian Life by self and some legalistic system; I am going to do so based upon what the grace of God teaches me and enables me to do! For I know I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, and I know the Holy Spirit will teach, reprove, admonish, and, yes, even cut deeply when necessary! You will have to make your own choice, but sanctification, and, therefore, obedience to the will of God, is on the line!

8. Grace Is the Answer to a Wasted Life

Grace is the one way to meet a wasted life head on! We all know people who say, "If I darkened the door to your church, the building would collapse." What do you say to this friend or neighbor? What does Scripture say about whether a person can have done so much that is wrong or foolish that he or she cannot be saved or return to the Lord?



But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:20-21

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

What we are to do is introduce such a guilty and wounded heart to the grace of God! For the Lord Jesus Christ knew all our failures ahead of time and still died for us. The finished work of the cross is the key to the grace of God that brings eternal life to all who place their faith in the person and work of Christ. That same grace is the basis for forgiveness toward those who wander and desire to return. Is there any prodigal son that won't be welcomed back by the Father? Of course not! That's the message of grace! What a glorious message it is to share with those who have no hope or have forgotten a hope they once held.

9. Grace Can Be Frustrated

We need to learn how to stand in grace (Romans 5:2), for grace can be frustrated (Galatians 2:21).

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

Romans 5:1-2

Every new believer has been brought into a position whereby he or she is *standing* in grace. Two examples of this are contained right in the above verse—our righteous standing before God and our peace with Him. Further, there are many, many more aspects of our *standing in grace* throughout the Scriptures! But, as we take up the Christian Life and desire to pursue the process of sanctification, we are going to have to be very careful to continue to stand in the grace of God. For our wrong-headed thinking can frustrate the effectiveness of the grace of God in our lives. Look at the passage below:

I do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing.

Galatians 2:21

Trying to be saved by the Mosaic or any other system of law frustrates the grace of God when it comes to our salvation. In the same way, trying to live a sanctified life, apart from appropriating His grace to do so, results in frustrating the grace of God and compromising our growth. So *stand in the grace God provides*, lest you *frustrate* the transformation He desires to work in your life!

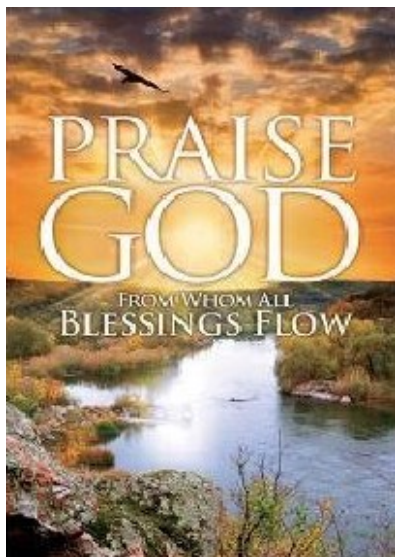
10. Grace Has a Modus Operandi!

A modus operandi is a mode of operating, a particular way of doing something. In grace, God provides, and the particular way He wants us to respond is by faith!

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring. . .

Romans 4:16

God's modus operandi is that He provides in grace, we respond in faith, and He gets the glory. Right there is everything you need to know in order to avoid ever abusing or frustrating God's grace.



For grace is not a commodity we can trade (stockpile), it is not a currency we can spend, it is not a way to achieve blessing on our terms. Grace is the way that God has chosen to meet the needs of those who turn to Him in dependent faith!

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

In Closing

Now that we have a fuller appreciation for the grace of God, let us move back to our larger study of sanctification. Consider these words from the writer of Hebrews:

But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. Hebrews 2:9

It is the provision of God (grace) that Jesus tasted death for everyone—but to what end? I Thessalonians 4:3 answers this question. That having achieved the first aspect of the will of God for lost mankind,

. . . My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life—

we might move immediately onto the second aspect.

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

God's will is our sanctification in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity, that we would be saints by virtue of position and condition. He desires us to be a people who understand our calling to continually enlarge our spiritual territory and constantly drive out the inhabitants of the land. He calls us to become those who reject the flesh as the means of achieving His will. He calls us to turn to Him in dependent faith to step by step appropriate by faith all that He has in grace provided. Knowing that:

. . . those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:29

The so-great salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ is such a precious thing that there is nothing even remotely comparable. And all God's people said, "Amen!"

Volume 6: God Undergirds

Our Sanctification

God's desire for His children to live set-apart lives is found in many forms and from many perspectives throughout the Scriptures. Furthermore, it applies to both the individual as well as corporately to those who gather together in a local fellowship—the Church. Thus far, we have focused primarily on the call to sanctification, and to a lesser degree on the means for being sanctified. What I would like to accomplish in this volume is to make sure we understand the work of God that undergirds our call to sanctification. For it is essential that we understand that He has first provided what we need, and then called us to respond. That's His way—the way of grace!

I want us to concentrate on four terms: justification and sanctification. I know what you are thinking, "That's only two!" Biblically, both justification and sanctification can be further split into two aspects: position and experience. Here is what I mean by these last two terms:

- **Position**—our unchanging status by virtue of imputation or identification.
- **Experience**—our moment-by-moment condition.

So, that would mean there is such a thing as positional sanctification and experiential sanctification, and the same is true for justification.

To illustrate position simply, all who have placed their faith in the person and work of Christ have been:

**. . .made alive. . .raised up. . .and seated with Christ
in the heavenly realms.**

Ephesians 2:5-7

That is our position. It is another thing altogether to manifest our new life in terms of character and daily practice. That's because our experience, even as Christians, can be quite variable. So, regarding the difference between our position and experience in terms of both justification and sanctification, it is essential to rightly divide God's heart.

Now this might seem like so much theological mumbo-jumbo, but it is actually essential to both understanding the firm foundation from which we are to live the Christian Life, as well as correctly interpreting God's call to *be sanctified*, which is the subject of our study.



Our Position

First, let's discuss our position in relation to justification and sanctification.

- Positional justification:

But now the righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed. . . even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.

Romans 3:21-22

- Position sanctification:

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

I Corinthians 1:30

To be justified is to be righteous in God's sight. Do you see the straight-forward declarative nature of the passage on the previous page from the third chapter of Romans? If you believe, you have the righteousness of God! This righteousness is not the result of right-living, it is the result of faith in Christ. If you have believed, you have the very righteousness of God imputed to you. It is your standing or position!

Likewise, if you are *in Christ* as the result of having placed your faith in Him, then the I Corinthians passage above makes it clear that not only are you righteous in God's sight but you are also sanctified! Again, this is not referring to the life lived, for the Corinthians were displaying all kinds of carnality in the church. Rather, it is a statement of fact regarding their exalted position by virtue of association with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must come to grips with the truth that, positionally, every child of God is both justified and sanctified. This is part of the so-great salvation that is ours *in Christ*. On our very worst day as Christians, we are still positionally justified and sanctified before God because we are still *in Christ* by virtue of having placed our faith in Him. Although hard to grasp, as the grace of God to us often is, there is no other foundation from which to live the Christian Life. There is no better way to leave the past behind and no better platform from which to:

. . .press on toward the upward call of God in Christ Jesus!

Philippians 3:14

Our Experience (Condition)

Now let's consider the issue of our experience, or stated another way, our moment-by-moment condition.

- Experiential justification:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us . . . we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. . .

Titus 2:11-12

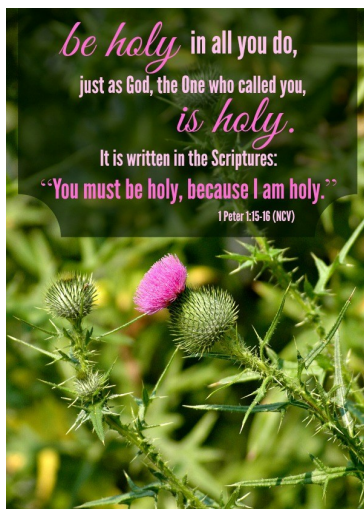
- Experiential sanctification:

But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

I Peter 1:15-16

Now look carefully at the passage from Titus and note the difference as compared to the Romans 3 passage. It is not a statement of being righteous; rather, it is a call to live righteously—and there is a world of difference. Likewise, the I Peter passage is a call to be holy, rather than a statement that the believer is holy. As we study the Word of God we must learn to distinguish between our position in Christ and God's call to undergo transformation. That is the difference between *position* and *experience*.

Before we make some application, let me note two things for you. First, as you can tell, I can't make up my mind whether or not to label our moment-by-moment status as our condition or our experience. That's because this is a challenging topic. So use whichever term you find most



helpful. The issue is simple, once you grasp it. Our position of righteousness is the truth that right now, before God, we, as believers, have the very righteousness of God. From that position, we move to the issue of whether or not our condition matches our position. Are we manifesting a moment-by-moment experience that is consistent with our position?

This example of both position and condition (experience) in the same passage of Scripture might be helpful:

...because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

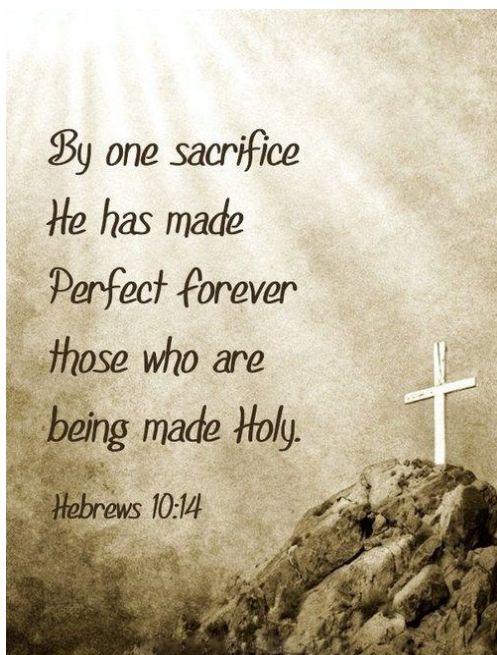
Hebrews 10:14

Do you see it? Being perfect before a holy God is a reference to the position that is the standing of every born-again child of God.

The first part of this passage is meant to be an encouragement, because this is true of

us on our very worst day as Christians. However, the second part is meant to challenge us and keep us from living a sloppy Christian Life. For we are to daily be engaged in the process of

being made holy! And, that really is the challenge of the Christian life: To conform our daily experience to who and what we are in Christ—that is, bringing our experience into alignment with our position.



Let me be clear, there is not a chance we will ever do any such thing apart from the grace and means that God provides to do so!

Understanding Justification and Sanctification

So now let's clarify the above as much as possible.

1. Positional Truth

There is no moving forward in the Christian Life apart from understanding and functioning in light of positional truth:

- Justification, which refers to the very righteousness of God imputed to us, is the one and only way any human being will ever be able to stand before a holy God. And this isn't a righteousness that we obtain through upright living, it is a reference to the position we have *in Christ*. This exalted position is part of God's plan of salvation and solely by His grace.
- Likewise, our positional sanctification—the way in which we are set apart unto God, once again as a result of our being *in Christ*—is most certainly not based upon what we do or achieve. On the contrary, it is based upon what Christ has done and achieved. That, by the way, is the reason it is something that we cannot lose!
- Here is a bold statement for you to ponder—I would suggest that every breakdown in the Christian Life can be traced back to a failure to stand upon our position in Christ in the face of difficult or challenging circumstances. When we get discouraged or depressed by circumstances and our own failures, we need to ask

ourselves whether we are living in light of our position in Christ. That's why the constant admonition of Scripture is to:

Set your minds on things above. . . Colossians 3:2

. . .walk by faith and not outward appearance.

II Corinthians 5:7

Let us labor to enter His rest. . .

Hebrews 4:11

I would suggest that a part of what is intended by all three of these passages is to keep our position in Christ, with respect to both our justification and sanctification, clearly in mind. If we do, we will not spend time in the pity parlor as a result of our failures or be overwhelmed by circumstances. On the contrary, we will allow God to pick up the pieces and:

. . .carry on to completion the work that He began in us at the moment of our salvation, until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:6

2. The Connection

Romans 6:1-2 makes an absolute and unequivocal connection between our position and our experience.

What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Paul has just spent parts of three chapters developing the concept of our positional righteousness in Christ. Now in Romans 6 arises the age old issue: If we have the righteousness of Christ, then does it matter how we live? Of course it does! Christ didn't save us so that we could stay mired in the muck of this world; rather, we have been:

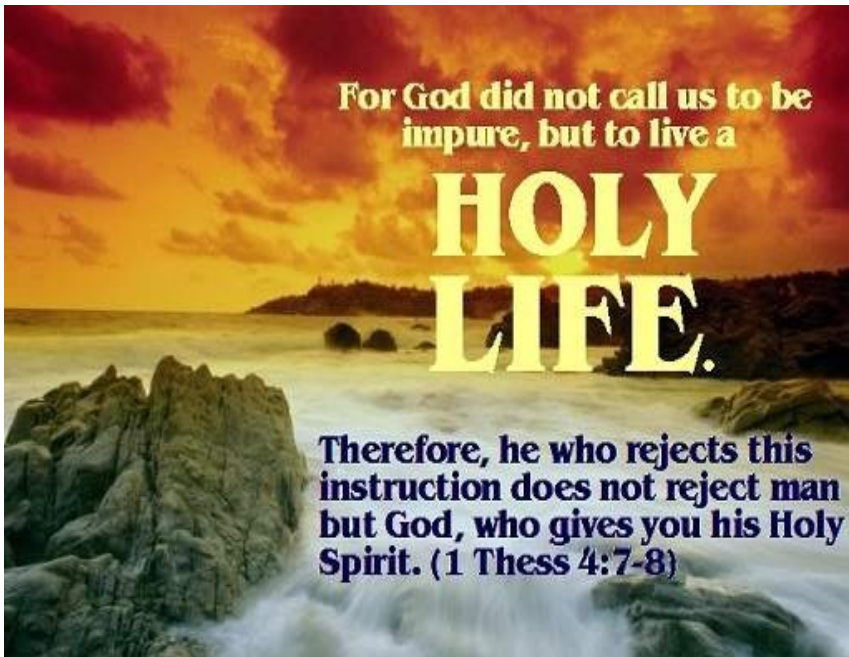
. . .created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:24

We are to be a people enamored with the grace of God toward us. It is for that very reason that we need to be very careful. For we are not to be a people who talk about grace and then let our experience compromise our witness. On the contrary:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification. . .For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

I Thessalonians 4:3,7



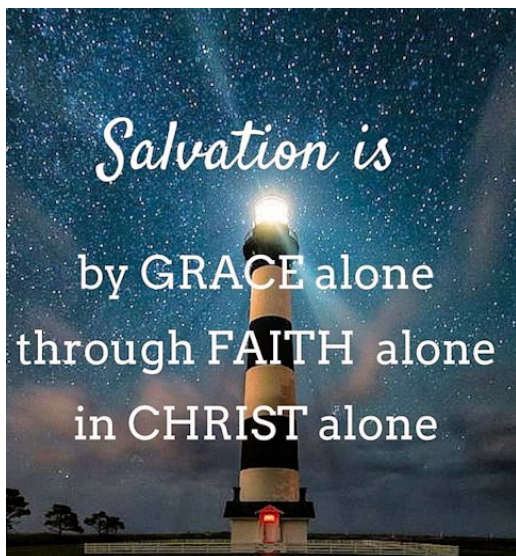
These verses are a call to experiential sanctification, and on this point we can give no quarter. For it is stated as clearly as it can be: It is God's will that our experience be brought into conformity with our position. Most assuredly, we are to bring our lives up to the light of who He is, not attempt to drag Him down to where we were.

Someone has to change, and it is not the Holy One!

3. God's Plan

God's plan of redemption is very much about what He has done and provided (His works), very much about His way (in terms of sequence), and very much about His glory!

- As soon as you hear someone start talking about what we need to do in order to receive salvation, that individual has detracted from the sufficiency of Christ's finished work and, in doing so, stolen His glory. And this should be anathema to us!
- The biggest single point of confusion is the placement of sanctification. If we could clear this up, we would straighten out three quarters of the confusion in much of Christianity. It is clear from our investigation that sanctification is the will of God—but when? Many are erroneously teaching that it is part of receiving God's gift of salvation, but is this the picture developed by Scripture?

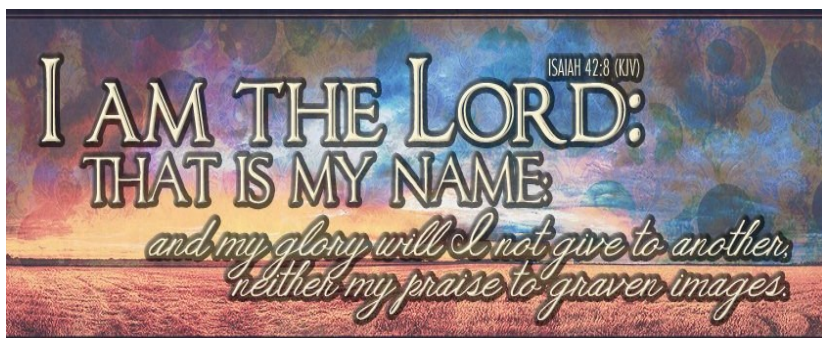


Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

I Peter 2:1-3

- Study this passage in I Peter carefully, and see if you can discern the sequence of events. Is sanctification part of salvation or does it follow it? Straightening up the life—experiential sanctification—is not commanded by Peter until after tasting that the Lord is good. Tasting is a reference to believing, not changing one's behavior. For we become new creatures in Christ through faith alone in Christ alone. Then after, and only after, we are new creatures in Christ does sanctification become an issue. Why? Because God's calling to come out and be separate in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity is a supernatural kind of life that can only be lived by supernatural means! It is far beyond the capability of the unbeliever, but part of God's grace provision for the saved child of God.

It is absolutely essential that we get this right lest we promote a salvation that is obtained by straightening up one's life by personal will power, rather than one that is dependent upon the finished and all-sufficient work of Christ! There is a world of difference between the two. In the former, we have set ourselves up to be a competitor with the glory of God—and He will not share! In the latter, He is more than willing to share His glory with those who put their trust in Him.



Positional and Experiential Sanctification Applied

So, where do we go from here? Let's move straight to some application.

1. Our Position Is Unchanging

Throughout the vagaries of life—every single up and down, victory and failure—what happens to our positional sanctification and positional justification? The answer is absolutely nothing! They go on and on. For our righteous standing in the Lord and our *set-apartness* unto Him are His doing and not ours.

2. Our Experience Varies

How about our actual experience, what should it look like? I hope as the result of our study that you realize it should



look something like the diagram on the left. In other words, the diagram is showing our lives becoming ever more set apart to the Lord in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity!

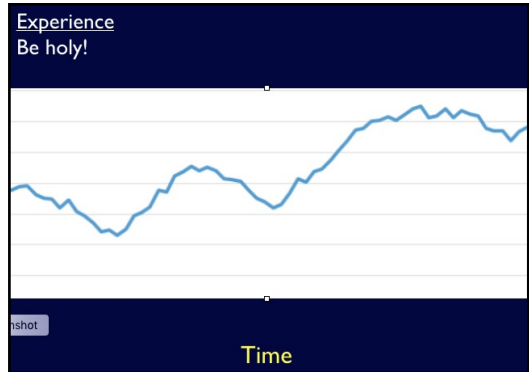
For this is the will of God—our sanctification. . .

I Thessalonians 4:3

But now let me ask a question—is this what our lives really look like? What happens

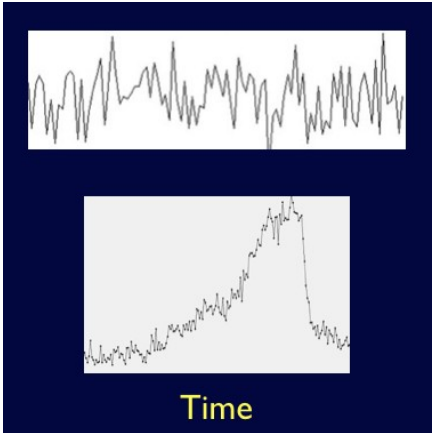
as we face trials and temptation? Isn't it likely that we are going to have some failures along the way? Shouldn't we expect some days where little or no progress is made?

What does failure look like on the diagram we are using? I would suggest that even for the saint making the best of progress, their life really looks something more like the diagram at right. We all have our ups and downs, none of us make perfect progress. I would suggest the real issue is this: When we come before the Lord and quiet our hearts, can we see the progress He is making in our lives?



3. Our Progress Can Stall

I hope you are understanding the basic message of the two diagrams at right, for there are two specific cases I would like you to consider. First, these two diagrams are problematic. The position of these individuals in Christ hasn't changed. But, these two graphics show lives in which either there is little to no growth or a life that has *fallen off the cliff* when it comes to spiritual growth. So, second, let's ask and answer the following questions:



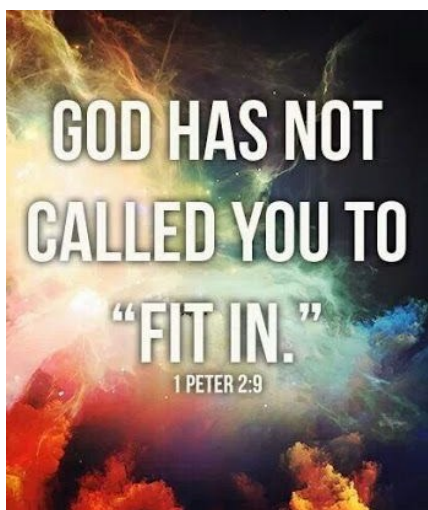
- What is going on? (The Situation)
- How do we fix it? (The Fix)

4. The Situation

As to what is going on, we can clearly see what is at issue by looking once more at Hebrews:

By one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. Hebrews 10:14

The individual's perfection in Christ (position) hasn't changed! Rather, the process of "*being made holy*" has either stalled or actually gone in reverse. How does this happen? There are a wide variety of answers to that question, but let me cover the majority of them by suggesting two causes.



First, the individual has stopped pursuing the disciplines of the Christian Life, and/or allowed the things of this world to capture far too much of his or her attention. By disciplines of the Christian Life, I refer to, as a minimum, time in God's Word, sitting under the teaching of the Word, gathering together with other believers for the purpose of worship, and gathering with others in

Christian fellowship.

If you or I neglect these things, we are not going to make spiritual progress. Furthermore, none of us lives in a vacuum. If we neglect these things, we are going to turn our attention somewhere else and the world is the only other option. How does that fit in with God's call to an experientially sanctified life? His answer should convict the

hearts of those who have so wandered:

"Come out from among them and be separate," says the Lord. "Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you."
II Corinthians 6:17

The second reason for the stall or decline of the Christian Life can be summarized in one word—sin! Perhaps it is a pattern of sin that compromises fellowship. This can include things of which the individual is not even fully aware. Take, for example, gossip and/or slander. For many, building themselves up at the expense of verbal attacks on others is a habit they bring into the Christian Life. This behavior most definitely does not affect the believer's position in Christ, but at the same time it will certainly grieve the Spirit of God within and stymie spiritual progress.

It is also possible that after a time of growth, the individual gives in to some area of temptation: materialism, the lust of the eyes, or pride of life. This is equivalent to turning his or her back on the Holy One (Isaiah 1:4) and, of course, leads to decline in the Christian Life.

5. The Fix

Now let's consider the second question: "How do we *fix* this?" Perhaps a better question is: "What has God provided as the means to remedy and/or avoid this?" We should always remind ourselves of this principle: If we have a problem, then the grace of God has a solution. And He most certainly does!

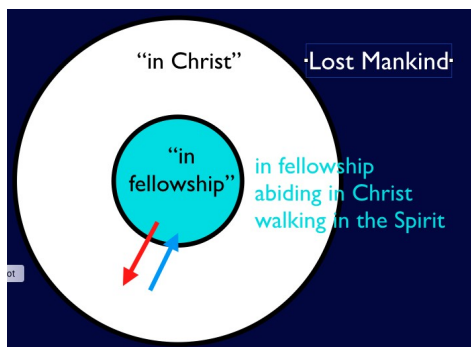
Two things that are helpful to understand when seeking solutions: fellowship and forgiveness.

Fellowship. We begin with the issue of fellowship. As we have seen, every born-again child of God has a position *in Christ*, which, of course, sets him or her apart from

lost mankind. This is reflected in the diagram at right. Again, the individual *in Christ* can either be making progress on progressive sanctification or going backwards. This, in turn, has a direct bearing on the extent of that person's relationship with God. In the words of John, *fellowship* is at stake. In the words of Jesus, it affects *abiding in the true vine*. As Paul would say, our progress may help or hinder our *walk in the Spirit*. Fellowship, abiding in the true vine, and walking in the spirit are all necessary for us to live an ever more *set-apart-as-unto-the-Lord* kind of life.



So, understanding that, we can refine our diagram. When it comes to making progress in the Christian Life, the question isn't just, "Are we saved?" We also need to ask: "Are we in fellowship, abiding in Christ, and walking in the Spirit He provides?" For the purposes of the diagram,



I have chosen the concept from I John 1:4 of being in fellowship with God—but all three concepts are very closely related.

Notice the red arrow—it highlights the potential for the believer to get out of fellowship. If

that happens, note that the individual is still *in Christ* and, therefore, still saved, but no longer in fellowship, no longer abiding in Christ, and no longer walking in the Spirit.

How does this happen? Allowing sin in the life will do it. Whenever we allow the passions of the flesh to gain control or we begin to think after the pattern of this world, we break our fellowship with God!

So what's the blue arrow on our diagram all about? How does a believer who has sinned get back into fellowship? The answer to that question is forgiveness, which restores fellowship with God. For abiding in Christ guarantees that we will make steady progress in the Christian Life.

Forgiveness. The second thing we need to understand is the issue of forgiveness. A very nice summary of the way in which a Christian can be cleansed of sin, and at the same time be brought back into fellowship with God, is provided in I John:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

I John 1:9

Let's walk through this passage in some detail:

- The word *if* is in a form in the Greek language that carries uncertainty. In other words, this is something we may choose to do or not do. However, the one who rejects this provision will never make progress in the Christian Life.
- *Confess* is a key word in this passage. It carries the idea of *to speak the same thing*. In short, it is to call some thought, word, or deed what God would call it. In context, it is to name sin what God would call sin.
- If we align ourselves with God's view of our behavior by confessing our sin to Him, then He is *faithful*. That means He will do the same thing every time because He is *just*—because our sin has already been paid for by the finished work of the cross.

- If we confess, God will *forgive!* In this case forgiveness refers to restoring our relationship with God and not the original remission of our sins. For the work of payment for the sins of mankind was *finished* at the cross. But sin in the life of a Christian can grieve and quench the Spirit of God. When we agree with God about our behavior and call it what it is—sin, then He will bring us back into fellowship with Himself. Once more we will be abiding in the True Vine that is none other than Jesus Christ.
- God not only provides forgiveness, He will also *purify us from all unrighteousness!* I believe this is a reference to any contamination in the form of unknown sin that we may have brought along with our confessed sin.

This concept of forgiveness may not be clear to you, but let me show a very simple illustration to explain it further. In John 13, Jesus washes His disciples' feet—a simple physical action from which Jesus wishes to teach a number of spiritual principles. At first, Peter resists.

But the Lord tells him:

"Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me."

John 13:8

Peter, misunderstanding the spiritual lesson, expresses his desire to have not just his feet, but his whole body washed. Now consider Jesus' response very carefully:

"A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."

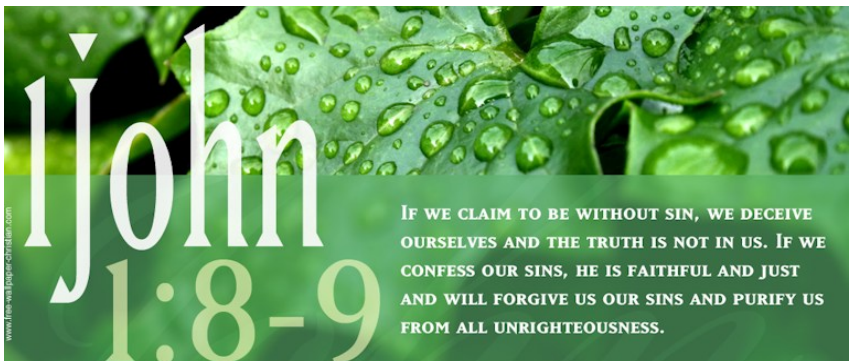
John 13:10



Many have taught that this interchange in John 13:8 refers to a person's salvation. Specifically, the teaching says that if you are not washed by Jesus (saved), you have no part in Him! That cannot be the spiritual lesson if the entire context is read. For in Verse 10, Jesus makes it clear that Peter, and the other ten disciples are already clean, they just need to have their feet washed. Of course, the one disciple who was not already clean was Judas. He didn't need his feet washed, he needed his life saved.

Let me lay it out for you. How often do you suppose you needed your feet washed in the ancient world—wearing open sandals in the dirty and dusty streets? Why every day! Not necessarily the whole body—just the feet. In the same way, the Christian is most certainly going to pick up spiritual grime as the result of living in a fallen world. If we do not clean away the spiritual grime through confession of sin, then we are going to have no part in Christ—no fellowship with Him.

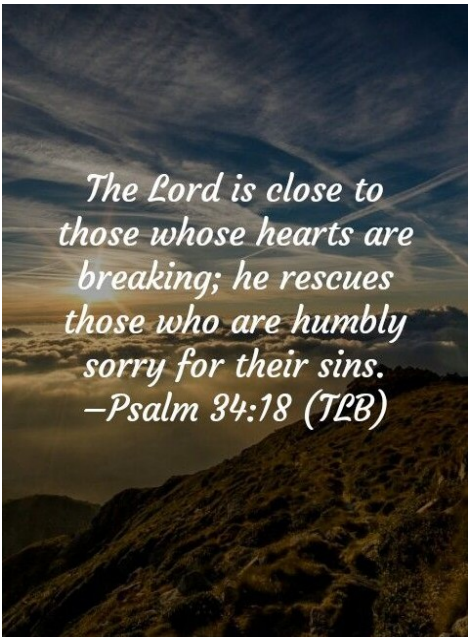
Of course, if you are a lost person like Judas, confession is not the issue, but rather the issue is faith in the person and work of Christ! In this marvelously pictorial manner, Jesus has laid the groundwork for the doctrinal truth we read in I John 1:9.



6. The Role of Confession of Sin

Confession of sin has such an essential role in the life of a believer, I would like to give you some further points to consider:

- Confession recognizes the *no condemnation* status of every child of God (Romans 8:1), while addressing the need for ongoing communion and cleansing.
- Confession recognizes our secure position in Christ, while at the same time addressing our failure in terms of experience. Confession recognizes that we can fail to walk worthy of our position *in Christ*. In doing so, confession brings us back into a right relationship with our Savior. This is a relationship, as we have seen, that is addressed in Scripture from many different angles: fellowship, abiding, communion, and so on.
- God's provision of confession is anything but a license to sin, which is the most common critique of our interpretation of the passage. There will always be works-focused individuals who want you to somehow first make it up to God before He forgives you. You see confession allows us to break the *chain of sinning* at any point that we will



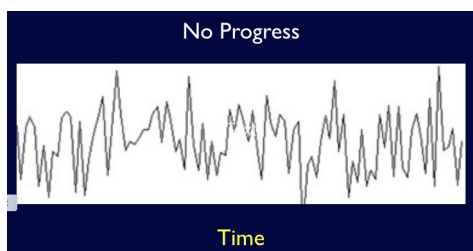
*The Lord is close to
those whose hearts are
breaking; he rescues
those who are humbly
sorry for their sins.
—Psalm 34:18 (TLB)*

come before God and agree with Him about our sinful behavior. This brings us back into fellowship with God and abiding in His Son. And, being in fellowship and filled with the Spirit is the one and only platform from which we can make progress in the Christian Life. The amount of time and energy that has been squandered trying to *make it up to God* is immense. Instead, let's see confession as the God-ordained means to get back to the pursuit of sanctification, until we are mature enough to deal with trials and temptations without falling into sin that requires confession.

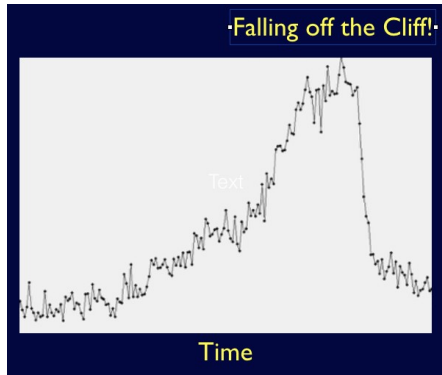
7. Consider These Situations

Now, let's explore some specific situations.

The "No Progress" Life. In the world of electronics, the signal in this diagram would often be said to have a lot of *noise*. In terms of becoming progressively sanctified, that's an apt term. For when sin fills the life, there is a lot of *noise* but no real progress. Now, we all go through what feels like dry spells. But, if that goes on too long, we should begin to realize that something is wrong. What could it be? I would suggest this is an individual who is still making use of God's grace with respect to confession of sin, but not appropriating much else. This is the person who tries to live with a foot in the world and a foot in the Kingdom of God—not going backwards but making no progress. This condition can go on for a while, but unless changes are made, the joy of salvation in Jesus Christ is going to steadily erode.



The Downturn. If the no-progress situation exists for too long, it is very likely that the next step may look like the right portion of this diagram. As you can see, there were initially plenty of ups and downs in this life. But despite those ups and downs, steady upward progress was being made. But the right side of the plot is a terrible situation for any believer. This type of downturn can be the re-



sult of giving too much attention to the things of this world and forsaking the disciplines of the Christian Life: worship, Bible study, sitting under teaching, and rubbing shoulders with other like-minded believers. It can also be caused by the individual getting tangled in sin as the result of succumbing to some temptation.

The Solution. So what is the solution to both of these out-of-fellowship situations? Well, of course, Bible study, gathering with other believers for the teaching of the Word, worship, and fellowship are essential in order to grow spiritually. But before any spiritual progress can actually be made, let me suggest that the individual needs to come before the Lord and confess his or her sin!

It might be the sin of apathy toward spiritual things (lukewarmness) or worldly sin that has become prevalent in the life. Regardless of the type or source of the sin, the first step is to regain fellowship with God and, once again, begin to abide in Christ and walk by the Spirit. Then, from this condition of forgiveness and cleansing, the individual can get back to the disciplines of the Christian Life.

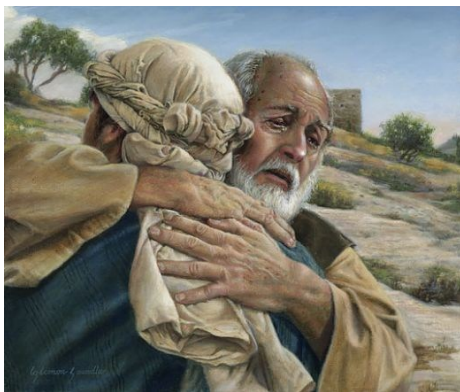
8. Costly, But Straightforward

Now I know you are thinking, “Can it really be that easy, is it really that straightforward?” As for easy, it was necessary for Christ to die for those sins in order to provide both forgiveness and the means of restoration. As for straightforward, that’s exactly what it is. For, as sinners out of fellowship, we can hardly do anything more than respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit through confession of sin.

You can find excellent support for the correctness of this understanding in the narrative often referred to as the *Prodigal Son*. (Luke 15:11-31) We will not take the time to thoroughly analyze this parable, but let me point out two things:

1. What, if any, work is performed by the son in order to come back into fellowship with his father? He does come up with a plan to make up for his behavior, but his father (our heavenly Father) cuts him off right after he says:

“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you (confession). I am no longer worthy to be called your son (something that is always true of the Christian).” Luke 15:21



2. And, here is my favorite part of the narrative—the response of the father to the son. For often, when we sin, we start to worry about the following: “I wonder how God feels about me now?” The parable tells us

the answer in a marvelous and graphic way:

But while he (the repentant son) **was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. . .the father said to his servant, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate."**

Luke 15:20, 22-23

These things speak of being welcomed back into the fellowship of the father's household with full blessing.

9. Settled, Once and For All

The topic of confession and forgiveness is such a big issue that I want to try to settle it in your mind. Can we really be forgiven, purified, and cleansed from all unrighteousness—multiple times, even for the same sin—simply through confession of our sin? Consider the following:

- Jesus bore our sin.

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree. . .

I Peter 2:24



- Jesus took away our sins, nailing them to the cross.

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature. . .He forgave us all our sins. . .He took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Colossians 2:13-15

- Our sin debt was paid in full by our Savior.

He said, "It is finished."

John 19:30



- The absolute sufficiency of Christ's work is seen in His current exalted position.

Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name. . .

Philippians 2:9-11

- Forgiveness of sin is part of the *complete* salvation provided by our Eternal Intercessor.

. . .He has a permanent priesthood. Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.

Hebrews 7:24-25

- If Jesus is your advocate in the face of accusation, what more do you need?

. . .I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the righteous One! I John 2:1

- And so, even now, after many years of failure and confession, we can have confidence:

. . .the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all (every) sin. I John 1:7

- With all this in mind, we can be assured that if we will just choose to confess our sins:

. . .He is faithful and just to forgive. . . I John 1:9

What it really boils down to is this: Which looms larger in our thinking, our sins or the finished work of the cross where Jesus paid for our sins? The gates of Hades will not prevail against a church that carries forward the message of forgiveness—first for the lost and then for the saved—a message that is based solely upon the finished work of Christ.

This concludes our study of God's will for each of us, even our sanctification. And remember:

It is God's will that we be set apart unto Him: in terms of purity, in terms of priority, and exclusivity; saints by virtue of position and condition!

So, in closing, let me remind you:

Just as there is a world of difference between an ordinary person and a saved person; so too, there is a world of difference between a sanctified Christian and an ordinary one! Choose wisely.



If we confess our sins,
he is faithful and just to
forgive us our sins, and
to cleanse us from all
unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9



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