

# What the Scriptures Say About Salvation

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptural citations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).



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# What the Scriptures Say About Salvation

## Resources

Chapters 14-18 of *Systematic Theology* by Charles Hodge

*Redemption Accomplished and Applied* by John Murray (1955)

Chapters 28-34 of *Lectures in Systematic Theology* by Henry Thiessen  
(1979)

*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter Elwell (1984)

Chapters 42-48 of *Christian Theology* by Millard Erickson (1985)

Chapters 48-58 of *Basic Theology* by Charles Ryrie (1986)

Chapter 24 of *The Moody Handbook of Theology* by Paul Enns (1989)

*Saved by Grace* by Anthony Hoekema (1989)

*Charts of Christian Theology & Doctrine* by H. Wayne House (1992)

Chapters 31-43 of *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem (1994)

*How Can I be Sure I'm a Christian?* by Donald Whitney (1994)

*The Cross and Salvation* by Bruce Demarest (1997)

Chapter 19 of *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* by  
Robert Reymond (1998)

Chapters 37-48 of Volume 3 of *A Systematic Theology of Biblical  
Christianity* by Rolland McCune (2010)



## Lesson 1: Introduction

The study of what the Scriptures say about salvation is called “soteriology,” from the Greek word for salvation, *soteria*. Salvation is the sovereign and gracious (Acts 14:27, Romans 3:27, 11:5-6, 1 Corinthians 1:30-31, Philippians 1:29, and 2 Timothy 1:9) work (Philippians 1:6) of the triune God (Ephesians 1:3-14<sup>1</sup> and Titus 3:4-6) by which sinful men are saved (Acts 16:30-31, Romans 10:9, and 13) from the shackles of sin (John 8:34 and Romans 6:16-22) and Satan (2 Timothy 2:26).<sup>2</sup> Salvation saves the sinner from the penalty<sup>3</sup> (Romans 6:23a), power (Romans 6:18 and 22), and presence (Revelation 21:27) of sin. It restores to man the ability to once again fulfill the purpose for which he was originally created, to reflect God’s glory (Isaiah 43:7), an ability that sin took

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<sup>1</sup>Many interpreters believe that Ephesians 1:3-14 is an early Christian hymn, consisting of 3 stanzas and a chorus (vs. 3-5 being the first stanza, focusing on God the Father’s role in man’s salvation; vs. 7-11 being the second stanza, focusing on God the Son’s role in man’s salvation; and vs. 13-14b being the third stanza, focusing on God the Holy Spirit’s role in man’s salvation; each stanza ends with the chorus, found in vs. 6, 12, and 14c).

<sup>2</sup>Other definitions of salvation include: “The total work of God in bringing people from condemnation to justification, from death to eternal life, from alienation to filiation” (Ryrie, p. 277); “the application of the work of redemption to the people of God” (Hoekema, p. 3); “the application of the work of Christ to the life of the individual” (Erickson, p. 887).

<sup>3</sup>Romans 6:23a says that the penalty (“wages”) of sin is death. Death entails separation. Physical death is the separation of the material part of man, his body, from the immaterial part, his soul/spirit (James 2:26). Spiritual death is the separation of the individual from God (Ephesians 2:1). Eternal death is the permanent separation of the individual from God in hell (Revelation 20:14). Though the believer is not guaranteed of being delivered from physical death (unless raptured), he is guaranteed of being delivered from the horror that accompanies it (see John 8:51).

away (Romans 3:23). Because of salvation, man can once again reflect the image in which he was created, the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Sanctification is the process by which God, through the “mirror” of His Word (2 Corinthians 3:18), gradually restores the moral likeness to God with which man was originally created until, at the point of glorification, it is completely restored (1 John 3:2).<sup>4</sup>

The doctrine of salvation (soteriology) is built upon most of the other doctrines in systematic theology (accordingly, it is usually listed as the 8<sup>th</sup> out of the 10). It is built upon bibliology (the doctrine of the Bible), as it is only in the Bible that man learns that he is a sinner in need of a Savior (general revelation is not sufficient to save; the special revelation of God’s Word is needed); one cannot be saved without the Word (see Romans 10:17, Ephesians 1:13, 2 Timothy 3:15, James 1:18, and 1 Peter 1:23). It is built upon theology proper (the doctrine of God), Christology<sup>5</sup> (the doctrine of Christ), and pneumatology (the doctrine of

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<sup>4</sup> “One of the most grievous of the effects of sin is the deformation of the image of God reflected in the human mind, and there can be no recovery from sin which does not bring with it the correction of this deformation and the reflection in the soul of man of the whole glory of the Lord God Almighty” (B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p. 81).

<sup>5</sup> Soteriology is especially built upon the foundation of Christology, as one must believe in the person and work of Christ in order to be saved (Romans 10:9). It is for this reason that many theologians speak of redemption in terms of accomplishment and application. For example, John Murray has divided his book, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, into two main sections: the accomplishment of redemption/the atonement of Christ and the application of redemption/the doctrine of salvation (similarly, Wayne Grudem entitles the section on soteriology in his *Systematic Theology*: “The Doctrine of the Application of Redemption”; cf. Hoekema’s and Erickson’s definitions in footnote 2).

the Holy Spirit), as all three persons of the Godhead play an active role in the sinner's salvation (see footnote 1). God the Father plans, God the Son provides, and God the Holy Spirit applies. It is built upon anthropology (the doctrine of man), as man is the object of salvation. It is built upon hamartiology (the doctrine of sin), as sin and its penalty, power, and presence are what man is saved from.

Though salvation is most often considered to be a point-in-time event (conversion), it is in reality a process<sup>6</sup>, which stretches from eternity past (Ephesians 1:4) to eternity future. Even within the confines of time, salvation is a process. The key text in this regard is Philippians 1:6, which states: "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." The One (God) who began a good work (salvation) in you (the believer) will finish or complete ("perfect") it one day ("the day of Christ Jesus"). Notice the chart entitled, "The Process of Salvation" at the conclusion of this lesson.

Salvation is particularistic, as opposed to universalistic ("universalism" is the belief that all men will wind up in heaven) in its extent. Only some, not all, will be saved (Matthew 7:13-14 and 2 Thessalonians 3:2).

Typically, the sole focus of salvation, as far as the objects of salvation are

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<sup>6</sup>Many writers speak of the "process of salvation," including Hoekema (p. 16), Demarest (p. 35), Grudem (p. 669), and Erickson (pp. 932-933).

concerned, is mankind, although the Bible does speak of a future redemption of all creation (see Romans 8:19-22).

The medium of salvation is faith. Men are saved by faith alone, not by works (Romans 11:6, Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Timothy 1:9, and Titus 3:5).

The basis of salvation is the atonement of Christ, what Christ did to make man's salvation possible, which includes His sinless life (His "active obedience") and sacrificial death (His "passive obedience").

The focus of salvation is Godward, not manward or inward. Man's fundamental problem is his separation from God due to sin (Isaiah 59:2; cf. footnote 3). Sinners are God's enemies and need to be reconciled to Him (Romans 5:10). It is only after making peace with God (vertical) that one can be at peace with others (horizontal) and with himself (internal).

There are two competing schools of thought regarding the orientation of salvation, one God-centered ("Calvinism") and one man-centered ("Arminianism"). Though these names are associated with two 17<sup>th</sup> century individuals, John Calvin<sup>7</sup> and Jacob Arminius, their roots go back much farther.

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<sup>7</sup>Sometimes, Calvinism is dismissed out-of-hand, simply because of its name (the implication being that Calvinism is not biblical because it is named after a man). Charles Spurgeon once said: "We only use the term 'Calvinism' for shortness. That doctrine which is called 'Calvinism' did not spring from Calvin; we believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth. Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine. Augustine obtained his views, without doubt, through the Spirit of God, from the diligent study of the writings of Paul, and Paul received them of the Holy Ghost, from Jesus Christ the great founder of the Christian dispensation. We use

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the same issues were debated by Luther and Erasmus.<sup>8</sup> In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, they were debated by Augustine and Pelagius.<sup>9</sup>

### “The Process of Salvation”

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the term then not because we impute any extraordinary importance to Calvin’s having taught these doctrines. We would be just as willing to call them by any other name, if we could find one which would be better understood and which, on the whole, would be as consistent with fact” (cited in “Spurgeon and the Battle for Gospel Preaching,” a workshop presented by Sam Horn at the 2002 Mid-America Conference on Preaching held at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, MI on October 17-18, 2002, p. 160). Spurgeon was a committed Calvinist, a view that he held firmly, but graciously: “A man may be evidently of God’s chosen family, and yet though elected, may not believe in the doctrine of election. I hold that there are many savingly called, who do not believe in effectual calling, and that there are a great many who persevere to the end, who do not believe in the doctrine of perseverance. We hope that the hearts of many are a great deal better than their heads. We do not set their fallacies down to any willful opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus, but simply to an error in their judgments, which we pray God to correct. We hope that if they think us mistaken too, they will reciprocate the same Christian courtesy; and when we meet around the cross, we hope that we shall ever feel that we are one in Christ Jesus” (cited in *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* by Ian Murray, pp. 111-112).

<sup>8</sup>In 1524, Erasmus published his *The Freedom of the Will*. In 1525, Luther responded with the publication of his *The Bondage of the Will*.

<sup>9</sup>Pelagianism was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. Its offshoot, semi-Pelagianism, was condemned by the Synod of Orange in 529 A.D.

“began” (Philippians 1:6)	“will perfect it until” (Philippians 1:6)	“the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6)
past	present	promised (future)
have been saved (Ephesians 2:8, Titus 3:5, 2 Timothy 1:9)	are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 2:15)	will be saved (Romans 5:9-10)
commencement	continuation	completion culmination consummation
justification	sanctification	glorification
initial or positional sanctification	progressive sanctification	final, complete, or perfect sanctification
saved from the penalty of sin	being saved from the power of sin	saved from the presence of sin
point	process	point



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**Lesson 2: Calling and Regeneration**

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### What is Calling?

Some answer this question with one answer, consisting of two parts (so McCune<sup>10</sup>); others with two separate answers. Calling can be viewed as one act with two aspects or as two separate acts. Though it is perhaps best to view it as the first, historically it has been viewed as two separate acts. What are these two acts?

### The General Call

Also referred to as the “gospel call<sup>11</sup>,” the “universal call,” or the “external call,” the “general call” is the act of God by human mediums of communication by which He offers salvation indiscriminately to all men.<sup>12</sup> Every time the gospel message is communicated, by whatever human medium of communication (whether by writing or speaking), the general call goes out. Scriptures that speak of the general call include:

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<sup>10</sup>“Calling is that work of God by which He, through the Spirit, invites all men to Christ [the general aspect of the call] and actually brings sinners to salvation [the effectual aspect of the call]” (McCune, 3:37). Demarest (p. 203) also offers such an all-inclusive definition: “The theological doctrine of divine calling refers to that summons of God in time that both invites [general aspect] and draws the unconverted to Christ in a saving relationship [effectual aspect].”

<sup>11</sup>Hoekema entitles his chapter on the general call, “The Gospel Call.”

<sup>12</sup>Other definitions of the general call include: “The offering of salvation in Christ to people, together with an invitation to accept Christ in repentance and faith, in order that they may receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life” (Hoekema, p. 68); “the aspect of the call of God in which He urgently invites *all who hear the Gospel* to come and be saved” (McCune, 3:38; emphasis his); “the invitation or summons to salvation conveyed through cognitive encounter with the Gospel message” (Demarest, p. 218).

“Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 45:22a)

“Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost” (Isaiah 55:1)

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)

The parable of Matthew 22:1-14 (“many are called,” v. 14a)

The parable of Luke 14:16-24 (“Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in,” v. 23)

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink” (John 7:37)

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost (Revelation 22:17)

The general call can be resisted (see Proverbs 1:24, Isaiah 65:12, Jeremiah 7:13, 35:15, Matthew 23:37, Acts 7:51, Hebrews 4:6, and 12:25). In fact, due to the blinding (2 Corinthians 4:4), deafening (John 8:43), and deadening

(Ephesians 2:1 and 5) effects of depravity, the general call is always ultimately rejected. The Bible says whosoever will (not whosoever can); however, because of depravity whosoever naturally can't (Romans 8:7-8), nor won't (Matthew 23:37 and John 5:40).<sup>13</sup> Thus, something beyond the general call is needed if men are to become able and willing to be converted (John 6:44<sup>14</sup> and 65).<sup>15</sup> This something is what is called the "effectual call."

### The Effectual Call

The effectual call (also known as the "effective call," the "special call," or the "internal call") is the act of God by which believers are enabled to respond savingly to the general call.<sup>16</sup> Scriptures that speak of the effectual call include:

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<sup>13</sup>In trying to reconcile these truths, some have erroneously concluded that the universal offer of the gospel contained in the general call is not all it appears to be. Demarest (p. 219), however, provides the right antidote: "The universal offer of the Gospel is not a sham nor a grand deception, for the reason that all who respond affirmatively *will* receive what God has promised. Deception or fraud occurs when what is promised is not given once the terms of the agreement have been properly satisfied."

<sup>14</sup>The Greek verb translated "draws" in this verse is elsewhere used in John 21:6 and 11 to describe the dragging of a fishing net to shore and in Acts 16:19 of the dragging of Paul and Silas into the market place in Philippi by some irate slave owners (Demarest, p. 226). This is not to suggest that the sinner is converted "kicking and screaming." In conjunction with effectual calling is regeneration, whereby God supernaturally imparts to the unregenerate sinner a new nature that makes him gladly and willingly turn from his sin (repentance) and trust Christ for his soul's salvation (faith).

<sup>15</sup>"No one is capable of calling on Christ until God through the Spirit calls him or her first" (Demarest, p. 223). "The preacher's word in the general call is made effective by the Spirit's work in the special call" (Demarest, p. 211).

<sup>16</sup>Other definitions of the effectual call include: "An act of God the Father, speaking through the human proclamation of the gospel, in which he summons people to himself in such a way that they respond in saving faith" (Grudem, p. 693); "the gospel call made effective to salvation in the hearts and lives of God's people" (Hoekema, p. 86); "that sovereign action of God through the Holy

“For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself” (Acts 2:39)

among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints . . . (Romans 1:6-7a; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2a and Jude 1)

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)

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Spirit whereby he enables the hearers of the gospel to respond to his summons with repentance, faith, and obedience” (Hoekema, p. 86); “that act of divine power, mediated through the proclaimed Word, by which the Spirit illumines darkened minds, softens stubborn wills, and inclines contrary affections toward the living God, thus leading the unregenerate to trust Christ in a saving relation” (Demarest, p. 221); “the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, quoted in Demarest, p. 214). The following is not a formal definition per se, but captures the essence of effectual calling: “Some believe, some believe not; but they who believe at the voice of the preacher from without, hear of the Father from within, and learn; while they who do not believe, hear outwardly but inwardly do not hear or learn” (Augustine, quoted in Demarest, p. 212). John Piper (in a June 23, 2002 sermon on Romans 8:28-32 entitled, “All Things for Good: Part 3”) emphasis his distinguishes between the general call and the effectual call: “God’s almighty call [the effectual call] and my call on his behalf [the general call] are not identical. When I preach, I call you all to hear the gospel as true and beautiful and embrace Christ as your treasure. But at that moment not all are ‘called’ the way Paul is using the word in this verse [Romans 8:28]. My call is *general*. God’s call, in and through mine, is *specific*. My call *offers* hope. God’s call, in and through mine, *creates* hope. My call *offers* life. God’s call, in and through mine, *gives* life. My call *commands* that you love God. God’s call, in and through mine, *grants* what it commands.”

and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified (Romans 8:30)

for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls (Romans 9:11)

even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles (Romans 9:24)

God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:9)

but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24)

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble (1 Corinthians 1:26)

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel (Galatians 1:6)

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called (Ephesians 4:1)



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There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling (Ephesians 4:4)

so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2:12)

Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:14)

Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called . . . (1 Timothy 6:12a)

who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity (2 Timothy 1:9)

but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior (1 Peter 1:15)

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light

(1 Peter 2:9)

After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you (1 Peter 5:10)

seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence (2 Peter 1:3)

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you . . . (2 Peter 1:10a)

“These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful” (Revelation 17:14)

Unlike the general call, which can be and always is (ultimately) resisted, the effectual call cannot be resisted; all those whom God effectually calls will infallibly come to Christ. That the effectual call is indeed effectual/effective/efficacious is seen by such Scriptural passages as Romans 8:30 (the chain of salvation that cannot be broken), 11:29 (God’s calling is “irrevocable”), and 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (the God who calls will completely sanctify).



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Like the general call, the effectual call is given in conjunction with the communication of God's Word (see especially 2 Thessalonians 2:14 in this regard; cf. John 5:25, 10:27, and 1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

### What is Regeneration?

Regeneration is the act of God by which He makes the spiritually dead sinner spiritually alive.<sup>17</sup> It is a spiritual resurrection. In regeneration, God instantaneously<sup>18</sup> imparts to and implants within the unregenerate the quality of

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<sup>17</sup>Other definitions of regeneration include: "That work of the Holy Spirit whereby he initially brings persons into living union with Christ, changing their hearts so that they who were spiritually dead become spiritually alive, now able and willing to repent of sin, believe the gospel, and serve the Lord" (Hoekema, p. 94); "a secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us" (Grudem, p. 699); "the act of God by which the governing disposition of the soul is made holy, and by which, through the truth as a means, the first holy exercise of this disposition is secured" (A. H. Strong, quoted in McCune, 3:49); "the instantaneous, supernatural impartation of spiritual life to the spiritually dead" (McCune, 3:49); "the instantaneous change from spiritual death to spiritual life" (Hodge, 3:5); "that work of the Spirit at conversion that renews the heart and life (the inner self), thus restoring the person's intellectual, volitional, moral, emotional, and relational capacities to know, love, and serve God" (Demarest, p. 293); "the work of God which gives new life to the one who believes" (Ryrie, p. 326); "God's transformation of individual believers, his giving a new spiritual vitality and direction to their lives when they accept Christ" (Erickson, p. 942); "that act of God by which the principle of the new life is implanted in man, the governing disposition of the soul is made holy, and the first holy exercise of this new disposition is secured" (Louis Berkhof, cited in William Hendriksen, "Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles," in the *New Testament Commentary*, p. 391).

<sup>18</sup>That regeneration is instantaneous is seen by the use of the Greek aorist tense with the following verbs in the following passages: "born" in John 1:13, "opened" in Acts 16:14, "made alive" in Ephesians 2:5, and "made alive" in Colossians 2:13, as well as by the use of the Greek perfect tense with the following verbs in the following passages: "is born" in 1 John 2:29, "is born" in 1 John 3:9, "is born" in 1 John 4:7, "is born" and "born" in 1 John 5:1, "is born" in 1 John 5:4, and "is born" in 1 John 5:18. The aorist tense signifies a past, point-in-time event, while the perfect tense signifies a past, point-in-time event with ongoing effects.

life called eternal life. In regeneration a new nature is imparted and implanted, giving one spiritual desires, affections, inclinations, etc. that he did not previously possess. The Bible speaks of regeneration in terms of a spiritual resurrection (John 5:25, Romans 4:17, Ephesians 2:1, 5, and Colossians 2:13), a spiritual creation (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, and Ephesians 2:10), a spiritual heart transplant (Jeremiah 24:7, Ezekiel 11:19, and 36:26; cf. Deuteronomy 30:6 and Zephaniah 3:9), a spiritual rebirth (John 3:1-8, 1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4, and 18), and a washing (Titus 3:5). It is the prodigal son coming to his senses (Luke 15:17).

Regeneration is solely God's doing (see Acts 16:14, John 1:13, 3:8, 10:28a, James 1:18, and 1 Peter 1:3; see also 1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4, and 18<sup>19</sup>, where "of God"/"of Him" in "born of God"/"born of Him" is to be viewed as a "genitive of source," meaning that God is the source of regeneration); man can in no way regenerate himself because He is spiritually blind (2 Corinthians 4:4), deaf (John 8:43), and dead (Ephesians 2:1 and 5).<sup>20</sup> What Murray (p. 89) says regarding the effectual call applies with equal force to regeneration: "Calling is an act of God and of God alone. This fact should make us keenly aware how dependent we are upon the sovereign grace of God in the application of redemption. If calling is the initial step in our

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<sup>19</sup>As further evidence that regeneration is God's doing, the Greek verbs for regeneration in John 1:13, 3:1-8, 1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4, and 18 are in the passive voice, indicative of the fact that the subject is being acted upon by an outside agent. The concept of birth in and of itself communicates this idea, as no one has a say in his or her own physical birth.

<sup>20</sup>"To ask people who are by nature spiritually dead . . . to respond favorably to his invitation to repent of sin and believe in Christ is like asking a totally deaf woman to answer your question or a totally blind man to read a note you have written" (Hoekema, p. 82).

becoming actual partakers of salvation, the fact that God is its author forcefully reminds us that the pure sovereignty of God's work of salvation is not suspended at the point of application any more than at the point of design and objective accomplishment. We may not like this doctrine. But, if so, it is because we are averse to the grace of God and wish to arrogate to ourselves the prerogative that belongs to God. And we know where that disposition had its origin."

Regeneration takes place in conjunction with the communication (whether written or spoken) of God's Word (see Acts 16:13-14, James 1:18, and 1 Peter 1:23). The Holy Spirit's supernatural work of initial illumination, convincing the unbeliever of the truth and significance of God's Word, works concurrently with regeneration (see Acts 16:14<sup>21</sup> and 2 Corinthians 4:6).

Regeneration, though it precedes conversion theologically (see John 1:12-13, 6:44, 65, Acts 16:14, 26:18, and 1 John 5:1), is virtually concurrent with it chronologically.<sup>22</sup>

## **Lesson 3: Conversion: Repentance**

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<sup>21</sup>The Greek verb translated "opened" in this verse is the same verb used in Luke 24:45: "Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."

<sup>22</sup>To illustrate the infinitesimal amount of time that elapses between regeneration and conversion, Hoekema gives two excellent analogies: "The relationship between regeneration and, let us say, faith is like that between turning on the light switch and flooding a room with light—the two actions are simultaneous" (p. 14); "The situation can be compared to what happens when we turn on the faucet and the water starts running: the turning on of the faucet and the running of the water are simultaneous, but, in causal terms, the faucet must be turned on before the water starts running" (p. 107).

When we come to the point of conversion in the salvation process, we come to the first point at which the sinner plays a part. Previous to conversion, the sinner plays no part whatsoever. Such acts as effectual calling and regeneration are solely God's doing. Ultimately, every part of the process of salvation (including conversion) is God's doing; salvation, from first to last, is all of grace. The sinner, at points (such as conversion), *participates* in the process, playing an active, necessary, and responsible role. At no point, however does he *cooperate* in the process.

### What is Conversion?

Unlike effectual calling and regeneration, conversion is not so much the act of God as it is the act of the sinner. Though it is an act of the sinner, it is a divinely-ignited act by means of the effectual call and regeneration<sup>23</sup> (accordingly, Scripture explicitly states that both aspects of conversion, repentance and faith, are divinely-given, as shall be seen). The key action in conversion is that of turning (around, from, back, toward). In conversion, the sinner turns from his sin to the Savior. The turning from sin aspect is repentance, while the turning to the Savior aspect is saving faith (turn & trust). "Repentance is chiefly conversion in its backward glance (turning from sin), whereas faith is primarily conversion in its forward glance (turning to God)"

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<sup>23</sup>"In conversion, the new life implanted in regeneration comes into active expression in the self-conscious life of the sinner in his exercise of repentance and faith" (McCune, 3:86). Demarest (p. 246) calls conversion "a divinely enabled human response." "Active conversion is that act of God whereby He causes the regenerated sinner, in His conscious life, to turn to Him in repentance and faith. Passive conversion is the resulting conscious act of the regenerated sinner whereby he, through the grace of God, turns to God in repentance and faith" (Louis Berkhof). See Acts 3:26.

(Demarest, p. 264). Both aspects are intertwined in the one act of conversion.<sup>24</sup> As Murray (p. 113) states: “The faith that is unto salvation is a penitent faith and the repentance that is unto life is a believing repentance.” Repentance and faith are two sides of the one coin called conversion. How, then, shall we define conversion? Conversion is the divinely-energized act of the sinner by which he wholeheartedly<sup>25</sup> turns from his sin to the Savior in repentance and faith.<sup>26</sup>

The following Scriptures deal with conversion. Notice how the first three passages explicitly mention both aspects of conversion (repentance and faith) in tandem. Notice also how most of the other passages implicitly or explicitly emphasize either repentance, faith, or both in conjunction with the turning of

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<sup>24</sup>In the lesson on calling and regeneration, it was suggested that calling can be viewed as one action with two aspects or as two different actions (the two aspects or the two actions being the general call and the effectual call). In a similar way, conversion can be viewed as one action with two aspects or as two different actions (the two aspects or the two actions being repentance and faith). The former view is preferable. Conversion is one act with two distinguishable, but inseparable, aspects, repentance and faith. One should not view repentance in isolation from faith, or vice versa.

<sup>25</sup>This wholehearted feature of conversion will be developed later in this lesson. Both aspects of conversion, repentance and faith, are acts that involve the entirety of man’s being (intellect, emotions, and will).

<sup>26</sup>Other definitions of conversion include: “Conversion is a turning away from sin toward God” (McCune, 3:84); it is “the act of turning from one’s sin in repentance and turning to Christ in faith” (Erickson, p. 933); “Conversion is our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation” (Grudem, p. 709); it is “the conscious act of a regenerate person in which he or she turns to God in repentance and faith” (Hoekema, p. 113); it is “the voluntary act of the sinner in turning to God away from sin” (David Hershberger); “By spiritual conversion we mean a person’s decisive turning from sin, self, and Satan unto God through Jesus Christ and the power of the Spirit” (Demarest, p. 249).

conversion.

Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15)

... I [Paul] did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:20-21)

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God (Hebrews 6:1)

Note: Technically, it is preferable to place repentance prior to faith, as the above passages do (cf. Matthew 21:32). Furthermore, as Erickson (p. 935) states: "Where one has been logically precedes where one is going."

Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55:7)



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“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations”” (Ezekiel 14:6)

“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct,” declares the Lord GOD. “Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you” (Ezekiel 18:30)

“Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’” (Ezekiel 33:11)

[Jesus] said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted [literally “are turned,” NASB marginal note] and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3)

“Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away ...” (Acts 3:19a)

“For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways” (Acts 3:26)

And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord



(Acts 9:35)

And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord (Acts 11:21)

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM” (Acts 14:14-15)

Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion [literally: “turning”] of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren (Acts 15:3)

“Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles” (Acts 15:19)

‘to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins<sup>TM</sup> and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’ “So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring

both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance” (Acts 26:18-20)

but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away (2 Corinthians 3:16)

For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9)

For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls (1 Peter 2:25)

See also the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-24, a powerful portrayal of conversion.

### What is Repentance?

As mentioned previously, repentance is one aspect of the turning involved in conversion. It is the turning away from sin aspect. Repentance is the divinely-energized act of the sinner whereby he wholeheartedly turns from sin.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Other definitions of repentance include: Repentance is “a change of view, feeling and purpose respecting God, sin and the sinner himself” (McCune, 3:62); “repentance is a change of mind, ultimate loyalty, and behavior whereby pre-Christians turn from sin unto God” (Demarest, p. 252); “Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto

Repentance is a gracious, divinely-bestowed provision, as the following passages indicate:

“For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways” (Acts 3:26)

“He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31)

When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18)

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God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after new obedience” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, quoted in Murray, p. 113); it is “the abandonment or repudiation of sin” (Erickson, p. 935); it is “the change of mind which results in the sinner turning from sin” (David Hershberger); it is “a genuine change of mind that affects the life in some way” (Ryrie, p. 337); “Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ” (Grudem, p. 713); repentance is “the conscious turning of the regenerate person away from sin and toward God in a complete change of living, which reveals itself in a new way of thinking, feeling, and willing” (Hoekema, p. 127); repentance is “godly sorrow for one’s sin together with a resolution to turn from it” (Erickson, p. 937); “‘Repentance’ means change of mind and refers to that transformation registered in our consciousness by which in mind, feeling, and will we turn from sin unto God” (John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 59); “Repentance is a change of mind away from sin toward God whereby the sinner’s view, feeling, and purpose with respect to God, sin, and one’s self is diametrically and permanently changed” (Mike Harding, “The Necessity of Repentance,” *Sola!*, Mar.-Apr. 2002, pp. 3-4); “The biblical definition of repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change in the direction of my life” (Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, pp. 212-213).

with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 2:25)

Repentance is a whole-souled act; it involves the intellect, emotions, and will (see, for example, 1 Kings 8:47-48).<sup>28</sup> The intellectual element of repentance is recognition that one is a sinner who sins; the emotional element is remorse over this fact<sup>29</sup>; and the volitional element is resolve to change this fact.<sup>30</sup> Some of the definitions in footnote 27 (namely, those of Hershberger and Ryrie) are lacking, in that they define repentance only in terms of the intellect. In recent years, some (most notably those from Dallas Seminary<sup>31</sup>, particularly Zane Hodges and Charles Ryrie) made this an issue, asserting that repentance is merely a change of mind and nothing more: “Is repentance a condition for receiving eternal life? Yes, if it is repentance or changing one’s mind about Jesus Christ. No, if it means to be sorry for sin or even resolve to turn from sin” (Charles Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, p. 99). While it is true that,

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<sup>28</sup>Several of the definitions in footnote 27 encompass all three (intellect, emotions, and will). Furthermore, the following theologians explicitly mention all three when discussing repentance: Hoekema (pp. 128-129); Grudem (p. 713); McCune (3:64-65); Demarest (p. 254); A. H. Strong (in Demarest, p. 249); Reymond (p. 725); and Thiessen (pp. 269-270).

<sup>29</sup> “Real repentance is sorrow for one’s sin because of the wrong done to God and the hurt inflicted upon him” (Erickson, p. 938).

<sup>30</sup> “By God’s Word at last my sin I learned—Then I trembled at the law I’d spurned, Till my guilty soul imploring turned To Calvary” (stanza 2 of “At Calvary” by William Newell).

<sup>31</sup>In footnote 5 on page 714 of his *Systematic Theology*, Grudem traces the errors of Ryrie and Hodges to the founder of Dallas Seminary, Lewis Sperry Chafer. Closely related to the errors of the Dallas theologians in regards to repentance is their error of “non-lordship salvation,” an error that will be addressed in the second lesson on sanctification.

etymologically, the Greek word for repentance literally means “change of mind,” it must be remembered that in Jewish thought (though the New Testament authors wrote in Greek, they thought in Hebrew, being Jews), the mind (“heart”) encompassed the entirety of man’s psychological being (intellect, emotions, and will). Furthermore, the following Scriptures clearly show that there is an emotional element involved in repentance: Psalm 38:18, Joel 2:12, Matthew 21:29, 32, and 2 Corinthians 7:9-11. One can be emotionally moved, however, without being truly repentant (as was Judas in Matthew 27:3-4 and Esau in Hebrews 12:17; cf. “the sorrow of the world” spoken of in 2 Corinthians 7:10). The distinguishing element in repentance, which distinguishes the true from the false, is the volitional element, the authenticity of which will be evidenced in one’s actions (see Matthew 3:8//Luke 3:8, Acts 26:20, and Revelation 2:5).

Repentance is an essential part of conversion. This has been denied by some: “Thus, though genuine repentance *may* [emphasis his] precede salvation (as we shall see), it *need not* [emphasis his] do so. And because it is not essential to the saving transaction as such, it is in no sense a condition for that transaction” (Zane Hodges, *Absolutely Free*, p. 146). Millard Erickson (p. 937) gets it right: “As we examine this matter of repentance, we cannot avoid being impressed with its importance as a prerequisite for salvation. The large number of verses and the variety of contexts in which repentance is stressed make clear that it is not optional but indispensable.” In like manner, Thiessen (p. 269) calls repentance “an absolute condition of salvation.” In Luke 24:47, Jesus Himself speaks of repentance for forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 3:19).

Repentance is to leave  
The sins we loved before;  
And show that we in earnest grieve,  
By doing so no more.

(words to a children's hymn)



**Lesson 4: Conversion: Faith** e™

In the previous lesson, conversion was defined as the divinely-energized act of

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the sinner by which he wholeheartedly turns from his sin to the Savior in repentance and faith. Conversion is one action with two aspects, repentance and faith. Also in the previous lesson, repentance was defined as the divinely-energized act of the sinner by which he wholeheartedly turns from his sin. This second lesson on conversion will consider what saving faith is.

### What is Faith?<sup>32</sup>

When we speak of faith in the context of conversion, we are speaking of saving faith. Several distinguish saving faith from various other types of faith.<sup>33</sup> Saving faith may be defined as the divinely-energized act of the sinner by which he wholeheartedly turns to the Savior to save him from his sin.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>“To extract from the NT the true understanding of what faith is, is the most important task of theology” (Emil Brunner, quoted in Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, p. 444).

<sup>33</sup>For example, besides saving faith, Ryrie (pp. 326-327) speaks of intellectual or historical faith (exhibited in James 2:19), miracle faith (exhibited in Acts 14:9), and temporary faith (exhibited in Luke 8:13). Similarly, Louis Berkhof, in his *Systematic Theology* (pp. 501-503), speaks of historical faith (mere intellectual apprehension of the truth), miraculous faith (the persuasion that a miracle will be performed), and temporal faith (the persuasion of the truths of religion accompanied by the promptings of the conscience and the stirring of the affections, but not rooted in a regenerate heart).

<sup>34</sup>Other definitions of saving faith include: “Saving faith is the knowledge of, assent to and unreserved trust in the accomplished redemption of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures” (McCune, 3:71); “saving faith is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life” (Grudem, p. 710); “saving faith may be defined as a response to God’s call by the acceptance of Christ with the total person—that is, with assured conviction of the truth of the gospel, and with trustful reliance on God in Christ for salvation, together with genuine commitment to Christ and to his service” (Hoekema, p. 140); saving faith is “laying hold upon the promises and the work of Christ” (Erickson, p. 938); saving faith is “a firm, trustful reliance; a vigorous act of commitment; an entire self-commitment of the soul to Jesus as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world” (B. B. Warfield, quoted in Vernon Grounds, “The Nature of Faith,” *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Fall 1963, p. 124); saving faith is “a whole-souled movement of self-commitment to Christ for salvation from sin and its consequences” (Murray, p. 107).

Saving faith is a divinely-energized act. Scriptures that teach this truth include the following:

And He [Jesus] was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father” (John 6:65)

When they [Paul & Barnabas] had arrived and gathered the church [the local church at Syrian Antioch] together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27)

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8)

For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29)

Saving faith is a whole-souled act, involving the intellect, emotions, and will<sup>35</sup>:

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<sup>35</sup>Notice how the definitions of McCune, Hoekema, Warfield, and Murray in footnote 34 either mention all 3 elements (as in the definition of McCune) or mention the whole-souled nature of faith (as in the definitions of Hoekema, Warfield, and Murray). To these can be added the following: “No true faith has arisen unless there has been a perception of the object to be believed or believed in [intellectual element], an assent to its worthiness to be believed or believed in [emotional element], and a commitment of ourselves to it as true and trustworthy [volitional element]” (B. B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, p. 402); “faith is knowledge [intellectual element] passing into conviction [emotional element], and it is conviction passing into confidence [volitional element]”

- The intellectual element (cognition). “There must be intellectual content to faith. Faith cannot operate in a vacuum; it needs factual, propositional data upon which to converge” (McCune, 3:71). One cannot be saved without knowing that he is a sinner in need of a Savior and that Jesus Christ is the only One who can save him from his sin. The Bible often speaks of believing that ... (see, for example, John 8:24, 20:31, Romans 10:9, and 1 John 5:1).

In order to be saved, one must believe that he is a sinner who has fallen short of the standard of perfection demanded by a holy God and is, therefore, liable to punishment; that the God-man, Jesus

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(Murray, p. 111); “authentic faith, given by God, includes knowledge of the gospel’s great historical facts [intellectual element], an assent to the truthfulness of them [emotional element], and a trust in Christ who accomplished them [volitional element]” (S. Lewis Johnson, “How Faith Works,” *Christianity Today*, Sept. 22, 1989, pp. 23-24); “... [S]o far as it [faith] is man’s act, it is the act of the whole man, mind, affections, and will” (*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, s.v. “Faith,” 3:451); “the person believes in Christ with all his being, not just his intellect or emotions or will” (Ryrie, p. 327); and “What, therefore, the Scriptures mean by ... the faith which is required for salvation, is an act of the whole soul, of the understanding, of the heart, and of the will” (Hodges, 3:91). Theologians that explicitly mention all three elements when discussing saving faith include: Thiessen, pp. 271-273 (intellectual, emotional, and voluntary elements); Ryrie, p. 327 (intellectual, emotional, and volitional facets); McCune, 3:71-74 (intellectual, emotional, and volitional aspects; knowledge, assent, and trust; apprehension, affirmation, and appropriation of truth); Demarest, pp. 259-260 (intellectual knowledge, emotional assent, and volitional trust); Hoekema, pp. 140-142, Hodges, 3:91, and Reymond, pp. 726-729 (knowledge, assent, and trust); Murray, pp. 110-111 and Enns, p. 332 (knowledge, conviction, and trust); Grudem, pp. 709-710 (knowledge, approval, and dependence); and A. H. Strong, cited in Demarest, p. 249 (knowledge of the Gospel, feeling the sufficiency of Christ’s grace, and trusting Christ as Savior and Lord). Zane Hodges (*Absolutely Free*, p. 31) objects: “It is an unproductive waste of time to employ the popular categories—intellect, emotion, or will—as a way of analyzing the mechanics of faith.”

Christ, has met the standard by means of His sinless life and has paid the penalty by means of His sacrificial death; and that by responding in faith and repentance he can be justified in God's sight as a result Christ's work (both His sinless life and sacrificial death) being applied to him.

- The emotional element (conviction). “Intellectual knowledge of God’s saving plan, while absolutely necessary, is not sufficient for salvation. Correct beliefs must be followed by assent to their personal relevance” (Demarest, p. 260). Thiessen (p. 272) describes this element as “the awakening of the soul to its personal needs and to the personal applicability of the redemption provided in Christ, together with an immediate assent to these truths.” One must become personally convinced of the truth that he is a sinner in need of a Savior. “To profess to accept something as true but to deliberately exempt oneself from the truth is *not* to accept it as true” (McCune, 3:72; emphasis his).<sup>36</sup> This is the “understands” of Matthew 13:23. See also 2 Thessalonians 2:10.

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<sup>36</sup>“[Saving faith is] more than merely being convinced that the facts of salvation are true without being personally related to them. It includes this, but what has happened must be appropriated as having happened ‘for me’ and ‘for my sake.’ This ‘for me’ is the decisive and essential factor in justifying faith which definitely distinguishes it from everything else which we otherwise call faith and especially from a mere ‘historical faith’” (Paul Althaus, quoted in John Hannah, “The Meaning of Saving Faith: Luther’s Interpretation of Romans 3:28,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Oct.-Dec. 1983, p. 325).

- The volitional element (commitment). This is the “crowning aspect” (Hoekema, p. 142) of saving faith, without which a person cannot be saved.<sup>37</sup> James 2:19 states: “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.” Demonic faith, though marked by both an intellectual (“believe that”) and an emotional (“shudder”) aspect, falls short of saving faith because it lacks this decisive volitional aspect. “To fall short of trust is to fail to exercise saving faith” (McCune, 3:73). In order to be saved, one must ultimately place his complete trust/reliance/dependence, his full weight upon Jesus Christ and Him alone for his soul’s eternal salvation. “To believe certain facts about the person and work of Christ is a necessary preliminary, but true faith will translate such mental belief into a decisive act of trust. Intellectual conviction must lead to personal commitment” (John Stott, *Basic Christianity*, p. 121). This commitment will invariably have as its consequence correct conduct (see, for example, Ephesians 2:8-10 and James 2:14-26; cf. Matthew 13:23).

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<sup>37</sup>Likewise, John MacArthur (*Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles*, p. 44) states: “This ‘trust’ or *fiducia*, faith’s volitional component, is the crowning element of believing.” Similarly, William Culbertson (*Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Faith,” 1:586) states: “The element without which we do not have biblical faith is the consent of the volition ...” Reymond (pp. 728-729; emphasis his) adds: “And it is particularly this third element of *trust* or confidence that is saving faith’s most characteristic act, as the sinner cognitively, affectively, and volitionally transfers all reliance for pardon, righteousness, and cleansing away from himself and his own resources in complete and total abandonment to Christ, whom he joyfully receives and upon whom alone he rests entirely for his salvation.”

To be precise, there are two objects of saving faith. The general object is the Word of God (see 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and 2 Thessalonians 2:13). The specific object is Christ<sup>38</sup> (see John 3:16, 36, Acts 4:12, 16:31, and Galatians 2:16), both His person/who He is (John 8:24 and 20:31) and His work/what He did<sup>39</sup>, the first (who He is, God in the flesh) giving the second (what He did, lived an infinitely valuable/meritorious life and died an infinitely valuable/meritorious death, both in the sinner's behalf) its value/merit. Notice Romans 10:9 in this regard: "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord [His person], and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead [His work, capped by His resurrection], you will be saved."

Besides believing in Christ, other expressions used in Scripture to describe the action of saving faith include the following: receiving Christ (John 1:12); drinking the water Christ offers (John 4:14; cf. John 7:37); eating Christ's flesh (John 6:53-58); drinking Christ's blood (John 6:53-58); obeying Christ (John 3:36 and Hebrews 5:9; cf. Acts 6:7, Romans 1:5, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, Hebrews 3:18-19, and 1 Peter 4:17); and coming to Christ (Matthew 11:28, John 5:40, 6:35, 37, 44, 65, and 7:37).

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<sup>38</sup>It is more theologically precise to say that Christ saves through faith, rather than to say that faith in Christ saves.

<sup>39</sup>The Reformers recognized that the essence of saving faith is to bring the sinner lost and dead in trespasses and sins into direct personal contact with the Saviour himself, contact which is nothing less than that of self-commitment to him in all the glory of his person and perfection of his work [emphasis mine] as he is freely and fully offered in the gospel" (Murray, p. 112)

## **Lesson 5: Justification**



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In Job 9:2, Job asked the question, “How can a man be in the right before God?” In Job 25:4, one of Job’s friends, Bildad asked a similar set of

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questions: “How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?” The doctrine of justification is God’s answer to these questions. Because all men are unrighteous (Psalm 143:2, Ecclesiastes 7:20, and Romans 3:10) and, therefore, fall short of the perfection God demands<sup>40</sup> (Romans 3:23), the only way a man can become right with God is if someone perfect lives a perfect life in his place. This Jesus did, perfectly keeping the Law, fulfilling all righteousness (Matthew 3:15), providing the perfection/righteousness imperfect men need in order to be right with God. When a sinner is converted, Christ’s righteousness is applied to him, enabling him to be considered righteous in God’s sight, a status that God makes official by a declaration. This declaration is called justification. This is how God can justify the ungodly (Romans 4:5).

### What is Justification?

Justification may be defined as the act of God by which He legally declares the believing sinner to be righteous in His sight due to the imputation<sup>41</sup> of Christ’s

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<sup>40</sup>It has been said that the righteousness He [God] requires is the righteousness His righteousness requires Him to require. You do have to be perfect to get to heaven. The question becomes, How can any imperfect sinner possibly become perfect? The answer is by becoming positionally perfect/justified by becoming united to One who is perfect, Christ. In a similar vein, Hodges (3:129) writes: “[Believers] have ever regarded it as intuitively true that heaven must be merited. The only question was, Whether that merit was in them or in Christ.”

<sup>41</sup>Imputation is a financial term. It simply means to credit the account of. There are three imputations mentioned in Scripture: 1) the imputation of Adam’s sin (original sin) to all humanity (Romans 4:8, 5:12-21, and 2 Corinthians 5:19); 2) the imputation of the believer’s sin to Christ (2

righteousness to him.<sup>42</sup>

Key texts pertaining directly or indirectly to justification include: Genesis 15:6 (cf. Romans 4:3, 9, Galatians 3:6, and James 2:23), Isaiah 61:10, Zechariah 3:1-5, Romans 3:21-5:21 (particularly 3:21-26 and 5:12-21), 2 Corinthians 5:21, and Philippians 3:9.

That justification is an act of God is explicitly stated in Romans 8:33b: “God is

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Corinthians 5:21a); and 3) the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer (Romans 4:6, 5:12-21, and 2 Corinthians 5:21b).

<sup>42</sup>Other definitions of justification include: “Justification is an act of God by which He judicially declares a sinner to be perfectly righteous and forever treats him as such” (McCune, 3:93); it is “the judicial act of God in which He declares sinners to be righteous and acceptable before Him” (David Hershberger); it is “that judicial act of God by which, on account of Christ, to whom the sinner is united by faith, he declares that sinner to be no longer exposed to the penalty of the law, but to be restored to his favor” (A. H. Strong, quoted in McCune, 3:93); “Justification is God’s action pronouncing sinners righteous in his sight. It is a matter of our being forgiven and declared to have fulfilled all that God’s law requires of us” (Erickson, p. 954); it is “God’s gracious, legal verdict in respect of those who believe in Christ, forgiving their sins and declaring them righteous through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness” (Demarest, p. 367); “Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he 1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us, and 2) declares us to be righteous in his sight” (Grudem, p. 723); “By justification is meant that act of God by which he imputes (or credits to the account of) believers the perfect satisfaction and righteousness of Christ in such a way that all their sins are forgiven and they are considered perfectly righteous in the sight of God” (Hoekema, p. 61); “Justification may be defined as that gracious and judicial act of God whereby he declares believing sinners righteous on the basis of the righteousness of Christ which is credited to them, forgives all their sins, adopts them as his children, and gives them the right to eternal life” (Hoekema, p. 172); it is “a legal act wherein God pronounces that the believing sinner has been credited with all the virtues of Jesus Christ” (Enns, p. 639); “Justification may be defined as that act of God whereby he declares righteous him who believes in Christ” (Thiessen, p. 275); and “Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, and received by faith alone” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, quoted in Demarest, p. 361).

the one who justifies” (cf. Romans 3:26 and 4:5).

Justification is a judicial act. It is God as Judge rendering a verdict, declaring one to be what he legally is (Deuteronomy 25:1 and 1 Kings 8:32). It is the opposite of condemnation, the declaring of one to be legally unrighteous (notice the following passages, where justification and condemnation are contrasted: Deuteronomy 25:1, 1 Kings 8:32, Proverbs 17:15, Matthew 12:37, Romans 5:16, 18, and 8:33-34). Though it is true that justification (positional righteousness) infallibly leads to sanctification (practical righteousness), one must be careful to distinguish between the two.<sup>43</sup> Justification means to be declared righteous, not to be made righteous.<sup>44</sup> Notice especially Luke 7:29 in this regard: “When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God’s justice ...” (“acknowledged God’s justice” is literally “justified God”; see NASB marginal note). These people did not make God righteous; rather, they simply declared Him to be what He already was, righteous.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Justification is the imputation of righteousness, while sanctification is the impartation of righteousness. One of the problems with the Roman Catholic understanding of justification is that it confounds (mixes) justification and sanctification. For a thorough refutation of the Roman Catholic position on justification, see Hoekema (pp. 163-169) and Grudem (pp. 727-729).

<sup>44</sup>When Romans 5:19 speaks of believers being “made righteous” in justification, “made” is the translation of a Greek verb that means “constituted” (Murray, p. 123; Demarest, p. 372; Reymond, p. 742).

<sup>45</sup>“That justification does not mean to make holy or upright should be apparent from common use. When we justify a person we do not make that person good or upright. When a judge justifies an accused person he does not make that person an upright person. He simply declares that in his judgment the person is not guilty of the accusation but is upright in terms of the law relevant to the case” (Murray, p. 119).

Justification is *by* faith alone<sup>46</sup>, not by works, nor by faith + works<sup>47</sup> (including not *because of* faith). This was the truth at the heart of the Protestant Reformation (*sola fide*).<sup>48</sup> Notice especially the following texts in this regard: Romans 3:20b, 26, 28, 30, 5:1, Galatians 2:16, 3:8, and 24. Justification is “an obtainment, not an attainment” (Erickson, p. 959).

Justification is a decisive verdict that cannot be overturned: “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies” (Romans 8:33). The ultimate issue is what we are “in His sight” (Romans 3:20b), righteous or unrighteous. If we are righteous in His sight, what we are in our own sight or in the sight of other men is irrelevant. Whether or not we feel justified is irrelevant; justification is an objective fact.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>“Justification by faith alone lies at the heart of the gospel and it is the article that makes the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Murray, p. 130).

<sup>47</sup>In Romans 4, Paul makes it clear that Abraham was not justified by works. However, James (in James 2:21-24) teaches that Abraham was justified by works. Which is it? Both. Paul is speaking of *pre-conversion* works, James of *post-conversion* works. Paul is speaking of *saving* faith, James of *sanctifying* faith. Paul is speaking of a *declaration* of righteousness, James of a *demonstration* of righteousness. Paul is focusing on Genesis 15, James on Genesis 22. James is likely correcting an abuse of Paul’s teaching. Paul taught, and rightly so, that justification is by faith, not by works. Some erroneously inferred from this a license to sin (see Romans 3:8 and 6:1). James corrected this error by stressing that though it is true that it is faith alone that saves (*sola fide*), the faith that saves is never alone, but will be authenticated by works.

<sup>48</sup>The Roman Catholic Council of Trent, in response to the Protestant Reformation’s stress on justification by faith alone, unequivocally pronounced: “If anyone says that a sinful man is justified by faith alone, ...: let him be anathema” (cited in Hoekema, p. 164).

Justification is rooted in the work of Christ (Romans 3:24). At the moment of conversion, not only is one's sin forgiven, based on its having been imputed to Christ on the Cross (2 Corinthians 5:21a; cf. Romans 5:9), but also Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer, constituting him righteous in God's sight<sup>50</sup> (Romans 5:12-21 and 2 Corinthians 5:21b) and enabling him to be justified/declared righteous.<sup>51</sup> As Edward Mote has written: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness" (stanza 1 of "The Solid Rock").<sup>52</sup>

Justification is by grace (Romans 3:24 and Titus 3:7).

While there is some truth to the expression that to be justified means that God

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<sup>49</sup>"Brothers, what would your people give to know for sure that their acceptance and approval before God was as sure as the standing of Jesus Christ His Son?" (John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*, p. 32).

<sup>50</sup>The believer is constitutionally righteous because the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to him. In justification, God declares to be what is actually so. If He declared the sinner righteous, even though he wasn't, God would be unjust. As Proverbs 17:15 states: "He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord" (cf. Isaiah 5:23a).

<sup>51</sup>"The ground for our justification is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, by which we mean all that Christ did for us in suffering the punishment which our sins deserved, and in perfectly keeping God's law for us. This perfect righteousness, imputed or credited to us when through faith we become one with Christ, is the totally adequate ground for our justification" (Hoekema, p. 190).

<sup>52</sup> Another hymn that speaks to this is "Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness," by Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf.

treats me “just as if I’d never sinned,” Grudem (p. 727, footnote 4) and Reymond (pp. 740-741) caution against indiscriminately using it.

Join, earth and heaven to bless  
The Lord our Righteousness.  
The mystery of redemption this,  
This the Savior’s strange design—  
Man’s offence was counted his.  
Ours his righteousness divine.

In Him complete we shine;  
His death, his life, is mine;  
Fully am I justified,  
Free from sin, and more than free,  
Guiltless, since for me He died;  
Righteous, since He lived for me.

- John Wesley (cited in Hodges, 3:195)

## Lesson 6: Sanctification: Explanation™

What is Sanctification?

PDF Editor

According to Hoekema (p. 193), the English verb, “sanctify” literally means “to make holy” (from two Latin words: *sanctus*, “holy” and *facere*, “to make”). Sanctification, then, would be the making holy of something (a place, an object, etc.) or someone. In both Hebrew and Greek, the root idea of holiness is separation, the act of setting apart. Accordingly, sanctification is the separating, the setting apart of something or someone for a special purpose. In Scripture, believers are often called “saints,” meaning holy, separated, or set apart ones. In sanctification, the believer is set apart from sin to God. This setting apart of the believer from sin to God takes place in three “phases”: 1) initial, positional, “definitive” (Hoekema, p. 202), or “objective” (Demarest, p. 407) sanctification at the moment of conversion, the setting apart of the believer from the penalty of sin (1 Corinthians 6:11<sup>53</sup>; cf. Acts 20:32, 26:18, 1 Corinthians 1:2, and Hebrews 10:10<sup>54</sup>) ; 2) progressive, experiential, or “subjective” (Demarest, p. 408) sanctification throughout one’s Christian life, the gradual setting apart of the believer from the power of sin (Hebrews 2:11 and 10:14; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18, 15:2, and 2 Corinthians 2:15<sup>55</sup>); and 3) perfect, final, entire, or ultimate

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<sup>53</sup>In 1 Corinthians 6:11 (“were sanctified”), Paul uses an aorist tense verb in speaking of sanctification. In Greek, the aorist tense is indicative of a point-in-time action in the past. In this text, the focus is on initial sanctification. Accordingly, it is mentioned alongside justification.

<sup>54</sup>In Acts 20:32 (“are sanctified”), 26:18 (“have been sanctified”), 1 Corinthians 1:2 (“have been sanctified”), and Hebrews 10:10 (“have been sanctified”), perfect tense participles are used in speaking of sanctification. In Greek, the perfect tense is indicative of a point-in-time action in the past with ongoing effects. In these texts, the focus is primarily on initial sanctification, secondarily on progressive sanctification.

<sup>55</sup>In both Hebrews 2:11 (“are sanctified”) and 10:14 (“are sanctified”), present tense participles are used in speaking of sanctification. In Greek, the present tense is indicative of ongoing, continuous action. A more literal rendering in both verses would be “are being sanctified” (see NASB marginal notes). In these texts, the focus is on progressive sanctification. Similarly, in 1

sanctification at the moment of glorification, the setting apart of the believer from the presence of sin (1 Thessalonians 5:23; cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:13 and Jude 24). This lesson will focus on the second phase, the one that most think of when they think of sanctification.

Theologically, sanctification may be defined as the process between the points of conversion and glorification by which God progressively sets the believer apart from the power of sin.<sup>56</sup> It is the process by which the Holy Spirit of God uses the Word of God to make the child of God like the Son of God. It is the Christianizing of the Christian. It is the process by which the believer's practice is brought into conformity with his position, enabling him to become what he is

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Corinthians 1:18 ("are being saved"), 15:2 ("are saved"; more literally, "are being saved"), and 2 Corinthians 2:15 ("are being saved"), present tense verbals are used, indicative of the present phase of salvation, being saved from the power of sin, i.e., progressive sanctification.

<sup>56</sup>Other definitions of sanctification include: "Sanctification in the progressive sense may be defined as that work of God by which the Holy Spirit progressively renews the life of the believer and enables him or her to live to the praise of God" (Hoekema, p. 62); it is "that gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, involving our responsible participation, by which he delivers us from the pollution of sin, renews our entire nature according to the image of God, and enables us to live lives that are pleasing to him" (Hoekema, p. 192); "Sanctification is that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which the holy disposition imparted in regeneration is maintained and strengthened" (A. H. Strong, quoted in McCune, 3:130); "Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness" (Westminster Shorter Catechism, quoted in Demarest, p. 405); it is "the gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which He delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works" (Louis Berkhof, quoted in Demarest, p. 405); it is "the continuing work of God in the life of the believer, making him or her actually holy" (Erickson, p. 967); it is "a process by which one's moral condition is brought into conformity with one's legal status before God" (Erickson, p. 968); "Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives" (Grudem, p. 746).

(1 Corinthians 5:7, Ephesians 4:1, and Hebrews 10:14). It is the process of spiritual growth (Ephesians 4:15, 1 Peter 2:2, and 2 Peter 3:18). It is conformity to the image of Christ/becoming more like Christ (Romans 8:29; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 4:19, Ephesians 4:13, and 15). It is the relentless pursuit of perfection (Philippians 3:12-14; cf. 2 Corinthians 7:1). It is the washing of the feet of those who are clean (John 13:10-11).

### The Participants in Sanctification

There are two participants in sanctification, the One doing the sanctifying (God) and the one being sanctified (the believer).

#### God

All three persons of the Godhead are agents in the sanctification of the believer: the Father (Exodus 31:13, Leviticus 20:8, 21:8, 15, 23<sup>57</sup>, John 17:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 12:5-11, 13:20-21, and Jude 1), the Son (Ephesians 5:25-27 and Titus 2:14), and the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:13, 15:16, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Titus 3:5, and 1 Peter 1:2), though it is the Holy Spirit who actually does the work.<sup>58</sup> Consequently, it is the Holy Spirit who is most often identified as the divine agent in the sanctification of the believer (see most of the definitions in footnote

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<sup>57</sup>In Exodus 31:13, Leviticus 20:8, 21:8, 15, and 23, God identifies Himself by one of His names, Jehovah m'qaddishkem ("I am the LORD who sanctifies you").

<sup>58</sup>The Trinity works in tandem, each member performing complementary roles. The Father plans (from the Father), the Son provides (through the Son), and the Spirit applies (by the Spirit). The Father is like an architect, the Son like a builder, and the Spirit like a construction worker.

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### The Believer

While it is true that God does the sanctifying, the believer participates in the process, playing a necessary<sup>59</sup>, responsible, and active role. Notice the following texts in this regard: Isaiah 1:16 (“wash yourselves, make yourselves clean”), 2 Corinthians 7:1 (“let us cleanse ourselves ...”), Philippians 2:12 (“work out your salvation”), Colossians 3:5 in the NIV (“put to death”; cf. Romans 8:13), Hebrews 12:14 (“pursue ... sanctification”; cf. 1 Timothy 6:11 and 2 Timothy 2:22), 1 Peter 1:15 (“be holy”), 2 Peter 1:5-7 (“applying all diligence”), and 1 John 3:3 (“purifies himself”).

The interplay between God and the believer in sanctification is most clearly described in Philippians 2:12-13: “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” The believer works out his salvation (v. 12) because (“for” in v. 13) God is at work in the believer, giving him or her the aspiration (“will” in v. 13) and the ability (“work” in v. 13) to do so (v. 13; cf. Colossians 1:29, Hebrews 13:21, and 2 Peter 1:3).<sup>60</sup> The same

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<sup>59</sup>“Without God we cannot; without us God will not” (Augustine, cited in Demarest, p. 425).

<sup>60</sup>“God works in us and we also work. But the relation is that *because* God works we work. All working out of salvation on our part is the effect of God’s working in us ....” (Murray, p. 149). Sanctification is “a divine-human operation initiated and continued by the Holy Spirit” (Hoekema, p. 401).

divine-human dynamic involved in sanctification is also found, though not as explicitly, in 2 Peter 1:3-7.

### The Means of Sanctification

How is a believer sanctified? The next lesson will, among other things, seek to refute the erroneous idea that sanctification comes through an extraordinary experience subsequent to salvation. According to Scripture, sanctification comes primarily through regular intake of and obedience to God's Word. Notice the following texts in this regard: Psalm 1:1-3, 119:9, 11, John 15:3, 17:17, 19, Acts 20:32, 2 Corinthians 3:18 (the "mirror"; cf. James 1:21-25), Ephesians 5:26, James 1:21<sup>61</sup>, and 1 Peter 2:2. As the believer saturates his mind with Scripture, his mind is renewed, thus leading to sanctification (see Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:22-24, and 2 Timothy 3:16-17; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16, Colossians 3:10, and Titus 3:5). Other means of sanctification include prayer (Matthew 6:13, John 17:17, and 19; cf. the many Pauline prayers for his readers, which usually are prayers for their sanctification) and local church involvement (Ephesians 4:11f and Hebrews 10:24-25).

### The Purpose of Sanctification

God's purpose in sanctifying believers is glorifying Himself (Matthew 5:16, Philippians 1:11, and 1 Peter 2:12). God is glorified as others (other men,

<sup>61</sup>In James 1:21, James speaks of the Word of God's ability to save the souls of his readers. Since James was writing to believers (2:1) and the Greek participle translated "is able" is in the present tense, James is speaking of the ability of the Word of God to presently save his readers from the power of sin, i.e., sanctification.

angels, and God Himself) see His glory in us/His image reflected in us and respond accordingly.<sup>62</sup> Through sanctification the believer progressively becomes more like Christ<sup>63</sup> (Romans 8:29; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Colossians 3:10). Because Christ is the image/exact replica of God (Colossians 1:15; cf. John 1:18 and 14:9), both in being and in behavior (see footnote 63), by becoming more like Christ, the believer becomes more like God. The more the believer is glorified (2 Corinthians 3:18's "from glory to glory")/becomes like Christ/reflects Christ's image by beholding the glory of Christ in the Word<sup>64</sup>, the more God is glorified by His image being reflected in the life of the believer.

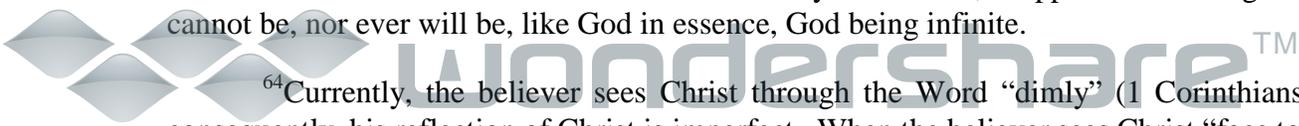
Some final notes: Just as the believer is saved by grace, so is he or she sanctified by grace: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). See also Galatians 3:1-3 in this regard. "It is by grace that we are being saved as surely as by grace we have been saved" (Murray, p. 147).

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<sup>62</sup> "Our responsibility and privilege is to glorify Him—to enhance His reputation in the minds of rational creatures, to live our lives and order our days so that all who encounter us will have a higher regard for God than they might have had they never encountered us" (Douglas Bookman, "The Godward Focus of Biblical Counseling," in *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, by John MacArthur, Wayne Mack, et. al., p. 161).

<sup>63</sup> Likeness to Christ for the believer is strictly in behavior, as opposed to in being. Finite men cannot be, nor ever will be, like God in essence, God being infinite.

<sup>64</sup> Currently, the believer sees Christ through the Word "dimly" (1 Corinthians 13:12); consequently, his reflection of Christ is imperfect. When the believer sees Christ "face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12)/"just as He is" (1 John 3:2), however, his reflection of Christ will be perfect ("like Him").



Also, the reality of past and promised sanctification should cause us to pursue present sanctification. The fact that we have been positionally sanctified (Romans 6:2, 6-7, Colossians 3:3, 9-10) should motivate us to be practically sanctified (Romans 6:12-13, Colossians 3:5, 8, and 12f). And the fact that we will one day be perfectly sanctified (1 John 3:2) should motivate us to be practically sanctified (1 John 3:3).



PDF Editor

## **Lesson 7: Sanctification: Errors**

The following sources significantly contributed to the content of this lesson:

- “Lordship Salvation: Historical Origins and Analysis of the Current Debate,” a workshop presented by Dr. William Combs at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the Ekklesia Consortium
- *What Should We Think of the Carnal Christian?* by Ernest Reisinger
- Hoekema (pp. 17-27, 214-225)
- Demarest (pp. 265-273, 390-398, 411-420)

Over the years, several errors have arisen in the area of sanctification. It is the aim of this lesson to examine and refute these errors and, in so doing, reaffirm the biblical position on sanctification.

### The Error of Severing Sanctification from Justification

In this series, it has been pointed out that salvation is a process that may be likened to a chain with inseparable links (see Romans 8:29-30).<sup>65</sup> Thus, one cannot be justified without also being progressively sanctified.<sup>66</sup> There are some,

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<sup>65</sup> “The doctrines of grace are like a chain—if you believe in one of them you must believe the next, for each one involves the rest” (C. H. Spurgeon, cited in Demarest, pp. 442-443).

<sup>66</sup> “You cannot take Christ for justification unless you take him for sanctification .... You can no more separate justification from sanctification than you can separate the circulation of the blood from the inhalation of the air. Breathing and circulation are two different things, but you cannot have

however, even within fundamental circles, who believe otherwise, driving a wedge between justification and sanctification, claiming that one can be converted without being progressively sanctified. There are several ways in which this error of justification-sanctification disconnect manifests itself.

### “Non-Lordship Salvation”

In the first lesson of the two lessons on conversion, mention was made of the error that has emanated from Dallas Theological Seminary (traceable to its founder, Lewis Sperry Chafer and popularized by former Dallas professors, Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges) in regards to repentance (a repentance devoid of emotional and volitional elements). A related error advanced by the same Dallas theologians is that of so-called “non-lordship salvation” (as opposed to so-called “lordship salvation”). The debate over lordship vs. non-lordship salvation took center stage in the evangelical world in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1988, John MacArthur, a proponent of lordship salvation, published *The Gospel According to Jesus*. In response, non-lordship proponents Charles

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the one without the other; they go together, and they constitute one life. So you have justification and sanctification; they go together, and they constitute one life” (A. A. Hodge, quoted in Hoekema, p. 19). “The whole sixth chapter of Romans, for example, was written for no other purpose than to assert and demonstrate that justification and sanctification are indissolubly bound together; that we cannot have the one without having the other; that, to use its own figurative language, dying with Christ and living with Christ are integral elements in one indisintegrable salvation” (B. B. Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. 356). “All justified people are sanctified, and all sanctified are justified. What God hath joined together let no man dare to put asunder. Tell me not of your justification unless you have also some marks of sanctification. Boast not of Christ’s work *for you*, unless you can show the Spirit’s work *in you*. Think not that Christ and the Spirit can ever be divided. I doubt not that many believers know these things, but I think it is good for us to be put in remembrance of them” (J. C. Ryle; emphasis his).

Ryrie and Zane Hodges respectively published in 1989 *So Great Salvation: What It Means to Believe In Jesus Christ and Absolutely Free!: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation*. In 1993, MacArthur countered with his *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles*. The heart of the debate is whether or not commitment to the lordship of Christ is inherent to conversion. Passages such as Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, and Colossians 2:6 seem to render a decisive verdict in favor of the “lordship salvation” position.<sup>67</sup> See also such passages as Acts 5:32, 6:7, 9:6, Romans 2:8, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, and 1 Peter 4:17. A person is converted by placing his or her faith in Christ, both His person (who He is) and work (what He did), the first giving the second its efficacy. At conversion, one receives Christ as all He is, including both Savior and Lord.<sup>68</sup> Sanctification is the process by which the believer’s submission to the lordship of

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<sup>67</sup>“No man can be said to be truly converted to Christ who has not bent his will to Christ. He may give intellectual assent to the claims of Christ and may have had emotional religious experiences; however, he is not truly converted until he has surrendered his will to Christ as Lord, Savior and Master” (Billy Graham, quoted in R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ*, pp. 60-61). “... A.W. Tozer frequently claimed that saving faith includes submission to Christ’s lordship. He wrote that the increasingly popular, evangelical view that says, ‘There is no need to repent, surrender, and obey Christ; just come to him and believe on him as Savior’ is flatly heretical” (Demarest, p. 266). “... [W]e must confess ‘Jesus as Lord’ (Rom. 10:9) to be saved. To believe in him as Lord is to recognize him as Lord, and we cannot recognize him as Lord until we ourselves abdicate. This note ... is often overlooked or even referred to a later time of consecration, but the Scriptures connect it with the initial experience of salvation” (Thiessen, p. 273).

<sup>68</sup>“We take Him for what He is—the anointed Savior and Lord who is King of kings and Lord of lords! He would not be who He is if He saved us and called us and chose us without the understanding that He can also guide and control our lives” (A. W. Tozer, quoted in Demarest, p. 266); “It is as unbiblical as it is unrealistic to divorce the Lordship from the Saviorhood of Jesus Christ. He is ‘our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,’ and saving faith is commitment to Him who is both Son of God and Savior of men” (John Stott, quoted in Demarest, p. 266).

Christ becomes increasingly evident.

Sanctification by an Extraordinary, Post-Conversion Event or Experience

Another form that the error of justification-sanctification disconnect takes is the idea that one becomes justified at the moment of conversion, but begins to be sanctified at a point subsequent to conversion, the point being an extraordinary event or experience (a “crisis” experience), variously described as a second work of grace, a second blessing, dedication<sup>69</sup>, Spirit baptism<sup>70</sup>, Spirit filling, etc.<sup>71</sup> According to some adherents of this concept, it is at such a point that one becomes a disciple of Christ, goes from being a “carnal” Christian to a “spiritual” Christian, receives Christ as Lord, exercises repentance, etc.

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<sup>69</sup>The “act of dedication” is the particular form this error has taken in fundamentalism. Thiessen (p. 290), though not necessarily a fundamentalist, articulates this position when he writes: “Where the initial surrender has not been adhered to, there is need first of a definite presentation of the life to God before practical holiness is possible (Rom. 6:13; 12:1f.); but when the believer is wholly dedicated to God, progress in sanctification is assured.” Justification for this doctrine is often based on a faulty understanding of the significance of the aorist tense of the Greek verb translated “present” in Romans 12:1. Commenting on Romans 12:1, Charles Ryrie (*Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 79) states: “First of all there must be an initial, decisive and crisis presentation. This is represented in the Greek by the aorist infinitive used here ... the presentation of the body is a single, irrevocable act of surrender rather than a series of repeated acts of dedication.” Thomas Schreiner (*Romans*, p. 643), also commenting on Romans 12:1, disagrees: “The aorist form of the imperative is occasionally adduced to support the idea that such total commitment to God is a definitive once-for-all act that should never be repeated, or is the process by which one attains entire sanctification. This is a gross misreading of the aorist tense, which does not inherently denote once-for-all action. Whether the aorist signifies an action that occurs only once is indicated by other contextual factors. No such contextual factors are present here.”

<sup>70</sup>Early fundamentalist leaders, D. L. Moody and R. A. Torrey viewed Spirit baptism as a special work of sanctification subsequent to conversion, no doubt contributing to the prominence of the two-stage idea within fundamentalism.

<sup>71</sup>According to some, this extraordinary, post-conversion event or experience is what brings the believer into a state of perfection.

The “Carnal Christian”

Yet another error that the justification-sanctification disconnect has produced is the so-called “carnal<sup>72</sup> Christian.” Rather than classifying people into two categories, saved and unsaved, adherents of this view add a third category, classifying the saved into two different categories, “carnal” Christians and “spiritual” Christians (based on 1 Corinthians 3:1). This error has been popularized in fundamental circles by the *Scofield Reference Bible*<sup>73</sup>, the “textbook of fundamentalism.” It has been perpetuated through such avenues as Lewis Sperry Chafer’s *He That is Spiritual* (1918), Charles Ryrie’s *Balancing the Christian Life* (1969), and a tract written by Bill Bright and published by Campus Crusade for Christ entitled “Four Spiritual Laws” (1965). According to Scripture, however, “carnal Christian” is an oxymoron. While it is true that a true believer, being a sinner, will at times engage in carnal activities (1 Corinthians 3:1-4), he will not live in a continuous state of carnality (Romans 8:4-13).<sup>74</sup>

The Error of Perfectionism

Through the years, there have been groups that have taught that one can reach

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<sup>72</sup>“Carnal” is the KJV rendering of the Greek adjectives translated by the NASB as “of flesh” in 1 Corinthians 3:1 and “fleshly” in 1 Corinthians 3:3. The English word, “carnal” comes from the Latin root, *carn*, meaning “flesh.”

<sup>73</sup>“Paul divides men into three classes: ‘Natural’ i.e. the Adamic Man, unrenewed through the new birth; ‘Spiritual’ i.e. the renewed man as Spirit-filled and walking in the Spirit in full communion with God; ‘Carnal’, ‘fleshly’, i.e. the renewed man who, walking ‘after the flesh’, remains a babe in Christ” (*Scofield Reference Bible*, pp. 1213-1214, quoted in Reisinger, p. 6).

<sup>74</sup> “The New Testament quite clearly refuses to endorse a carnal Christian experience as a legitimate status quo” (Reymond, p. 770).

a state of perfection in his or her sanctification. Groups that have taught this doctrine in various forms include the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Free Methodist Church, the Salvation Army, the Church of God (Anderson, IN), the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Nazarene Church, and the Pilgrim Holiness Church (Hoekema, p. 215; cf. Demarest, p. 390).<sup>75</sup> Notable adherents in church history have included John Wesley and Charles Finney. Such a state of perfection has been called “Christian perfection,” “entire sanctification,” “perfect love,” etc. There is some confusion as to what individuals who espouse perfectionism mean by “perfect,” primarily due to watered-down conceptions of sin.<sup>76</sup> To Wesley, sin was limited to voluntary transgression of known law. Thus, to be “perfect” in Wesley’s mind was not equivalent to being free from sin, just free from known sin.<sup>77</sup> That sinless perfection is unbiblical is seen by such passages as 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (cf. 3:12-13) and 1 John 1:8-10.

### Conclusion

Sanctification is progressive, not punctiliar (point in time).<sup>78</sup> Rather than waiting

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<sup>75</sup>The following labels are descriptive of other groups that adhere to perfectionist beliefs: Keswick (the “w” is silent), deeper life, higher life, victorious life, “let go and let God,” and holiness.

<sup>76</sup> John Wesley (cited in Hodges, 3:255) speaks of mistakes and infirmities as “deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need atonement, yet they are not properly sins” and “A person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please, I do not.”

<sup>77</sup>According to Demarest (p. 392), “Wesley held the seemingly contradictory statement that Christian perfection admits of degrees and is capable of increase or decrease.” One adherent of perfectionism has even gone so far as to speak of “imperfect perfection” (Donald Metz, cited in Hoekema, p. 216), an oxymoron if ever there was one!

for or seeking an extraordinary event or experience (such an extraordinary event or experience has already happened—it's called conversion), the believer is to be daily (2 Corinthians 4:16) and diligently (2 Peter 1:5) adding to his faith (2 Peter 1:5-7) by the means of sanctification God has provided (Bible intake, prayer, local church involvement), allowing the Holy Spirit to progressively conform him to Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18<sup>79</sup>). While God does on occasion use extraordinary events and experiences to accelerate spiritual growth ("spiritual growth spurts"), sanctification most often occurs in the minutia of the Christian life through spiritual disciplines (daily devotions, regular church attendance, etc.).

## Lesson 8: Eternal Security

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<sup>78</sup> "...[S]anctification—the ongoing process of conformity to Christ—is achieved by the Spirit. But not as a sudden miraculous gift: the NT knows nothing of any shortcut to that ideal" (R.E.O. White, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "sanctification," p. 970).

<sup>79</sup> Though the RSV (Revised Standard Version) is not a translation this writer would recommend, its translation of the Greek phrase translated "from glory to glory" in the NASB in 2 Corinthians 3:18 as "from one degree of glory to another" is a good one.

There are few doctrines in soteriology (the study of what the Scriptures say about salvation) more sharply debated than those of eternal security and perseverance. Does the Bible teach that one can lose his or her salvation? Or does it teach “once saved, always saved”? Should we sing “every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before<sup>80</sup>” or “every other day”?

The doctrines of eternal security (also known as “preservation”) and perseverance are inseparably intertwined.<sup>81</sup> They are two sides of the same coin. Whereas eternal security is the divine side of the coin, perseverance is the human side.<sup>82</sup> Notice especially 1 Peter 1:5 in this regard: “who are protected by the power of God [preservation] through faith [perseverance] for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” In a similar vein, compare Jude 24 (God keeps the believer) with 1 John 5:21 (the believer is exhorted to guard himself, same Greek verb; cf. Jude 21, similar concept, different Greek verb) and

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<sup>80</sup>These words are taken from the chorus, “Sweeter Than the Day Before,” written by Robert C. Loveless.

<sup>81</sup>Severing perseverance from eternal security can lead to grave consequences: “In some evangelical churches, instead of teaching the full and balanced presentation of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, pastors have sometimes taught a watered-down version, which in effect tells people that all who have once made a profession of faith and been baptized are ‘eternally secure.’ The result is that some people who are not genuinely converted at all may ‘come forward’ at the end of an evangelistic sermon to profess faith in Christ, and may be baptized shortly after that, but then they leave the fellowship of the church and live a life no different from the one they lived before they gained this ‘eternal security.’ In this way people are given false assurance and are being cruelly deceived into thinking they are going to heaven when in fact they are not” (Grudem, p. 806).

<sup>82</sup>The interrelatedness of the two doctrines is reflected in many of the definitions and descriptions in footnotes 84 and 92, some of the definitions and descriptions of eternal security in footnote 84 also touching on perseverance and some of the definitions and descriptions of perseverance in footnote 92 also touching on eternal security.

Colossians 1:22 with Colossians 1:23. Since God's work of preservation is foundational to the believer's work of perseverance<sup>83</sup>, we will deal with eternal security first.

### Eternal Security

Eternal security is the act of God by which He keeps the saved saved.<sup>84</sup>

Scriptures that teach this doctrine include the following:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed<sup>85</sup> out of death into life" (John 5:24)

"This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:39)

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<sup>83</sup>"Christians *persevere* by virtue of God's effectual *preservation*" (Demarest, p. 450; emphasis his).

<sup>84</sup>Other definitions or descriptions of eternal security include: "Eternal security is the work of God which guarantees that the gift of salvation, once received, is forever and cannot be lost" (Ryrie, p. 328); "God secures and guarantees the final salvation of all true believers" (McCune, 3:161); and "Security is the work of God by which He secures and guarantees the final salvation of all who put their trust in Jesus Christ" (Dr. David Doran, "Preaching for a Persevering Faith," a workshop presented at the Mid-America Conference on Preaching, held at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, MI on October 24-25, 1996).

<sup>85</sup>The Greek verb translated "passed" here is in the perfect tense, signifying a past, point-in-time action with ongoing result. When a person is converted, he passes from one realm (death) into another realm (life) with no possibility of return. "The action pictured is final and irrevocable, like that of a person who has burned his bridges behind him" (Hoekema, p. 237).

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish<sup>86</sup>; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10:27-29)

He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful (1 Corinthians 1:8-9, NIV; cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6)<sup>87</sup>

The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen (2 Timothy 4:18)

And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9)<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>In the original, this is an emphatic assertion. It literally reads: "and not not will they perish," the negative being repeated for emphasis. "A literal translation would be something like, 'They shall not, repeat, shall not ever perish in the slightest'" (Erickson, p. 992).

<sup>87</sup>"The work thou hast for me begun shall by thy grace be fully done" (cited in Hoekema, p. 242).

<sup>88</sup>Salvation is eternal; eternal life is eternal. While it is true that eternal life is more a quality of life than a quantity of life, it is still a quantity of life, life that is everlasting, without end (see John 3:16, 6:51, and 10:28). The moment a person is converted, he is given the gift of eternal life. Eternal life is not a future reality; it is something the believer already possesses. Notice the

Therefore He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3-5)

We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him (1 John 5:18)

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen (Jude 24-25)

To these passages can be added the following ones: Romans 8:29-30<sup>89</sup>, 38-

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following Scriptures in this regard: John 3:36 (“has eternal life”), 5:24 (“has eternal life”), 6:47 (“has eternal life”), and 1 John 5:13 (“have eternal life”). When the Bible speaks of eternal life as a future reality (as in Luke 18:30, Romans 2:7, James 1:12, and Revelation 2:10), it is viewing it in its full and final sense, i.e., glorified existence in heaven.

<sup>89</sup>The chain of salvation cannot be broken. Those who are justified will be glorified. Interestingly, the Greek verb translated “glorified” in Romans 8:30 is in the aorist tense (past time), not the future tense, signifying the certainty of glorification for those who are justified. “The final verb (‘glorified’) is a proleptic aorist, the action (the final perfecting of the saints) being so certain of

39, and 11:29. Consider also the significance of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in relation to eternal security,<sup>90</sup> as well as the doctrine of union with Christ.<sup>91</sup>

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occurrence that it is viewed as past" (Demarest, p. 446).

<sup>90</sup>At conversion, the Holy Spirit indwells/takes up permanent residence within the believer (1 Corinthians 6:19), an indwelling that guarantees the ultimate redemption of the believer (at glorification). Accordingly, the Holy Spirit is called a "pledge" (2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5, and Ephesians 1:14), a security deposit/down payment of sorts (the Greek word was used of an engagement ring). Likewise, the Holy Spirit is likened to "first fruits" (Romans 8:23). "First fruits" were the first fruits of the harvest, the implication being that there would be more fruit to follow. Opponents of eternal security often point to Psalm 51:11 ("do not take your Holy Spirit from me") in support of their belief that the Holy Spirit's indwelling can be forfeited. However, David is speaking not of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, but of the ministry of the Holy Spirit known as "theocratic anointing," the temporary, Spirit-given ability to lead the theocracy (see Numbers 11:17, Deuteronomy 34:9, Judges 3:10, 1 Samuel 10:6, and 16:13-14). David's concern in Psalm 51:11 was that God would do to him what He had done to his predecessor, Saul (see 1 Samuel 16:14).

<sup>91</sup>At conversion, the believer is spiritually united with Christ. Union with Christ is an inseparable bond. See especially Colossians 3:3 in this regard ("your life is hidden with Christ in God"). Commenting on this verse, Homer Kent (*Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Colossians & Philemon*, p. 109) states: "To describe the believer's life in this manner is to indicate that it is doubly safe. It is hidden away with Christ, and He is seated on the right hand of God (v. 1) in heaven. Surely there could be no safer refuge than this. To have one's life hid with Christ in God is to be in vital association with the One who is in heaven as a forerunner, guaranteeing the safe arrival in due time of all who are in Him (Heb 6:20)."

## Lesson 9: Perseverance

Perseverance is the divinely-enabled act of the believer by which he continues to believe and behave as one who is saved.<sup>92</sup> When theologians speak of perseverance, they often speak of it in terms of perseverance in faith/creed (John 8:31, 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, Colossians 1:23, and 2 John 9) and faithfulness/good works/deed (1 John 2:3-4). A true believer will always “keep the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).<sup>93</sup> A true believer may, however, on occasion

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<sup>92</sup>Other definitions or descriptions of perseverance include: “The perseverance of the saints means that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again” (Grudem, p. 788); “The Christian, kept by the grace of God, will successfully endure all the trials and temptations of this life, and remain true to the Lord until death” (Erickson, p. 985); “They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved” (Westminster Confession of Faith; cited in Hoekema, p. 235); “...[A]ll who are by faith united to Christ, who have been justified by God’s grace and regenerated by his Spirit, will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but certainly persevere therein to the end” (Thiessen, p. 294); and “... [S]uch as are truly regenerate, being born of the Spirit, will not utterly fall away and finally perish, but will endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (New Hampshire Confession of Faith, cited by William Combs, “Perseverance of the Saints,” *Sola!*, Dec. 2000, p. 1).

<sup>93</sup>“In true Christians the light of faith occasionally flickers, but it will never be extinguished” (Demarest, p. 441). Zane Hodges denies that a true believer will invariably persevere in faith: “... [W]e miss the point to insist that true saving faith must necessarily continue. Of course, our faith in Christ *should* [emphasis his] continue. But the claim that it absolutely must, or necessarily does, has no support at all in the Bible” (*Absolutely Free!*, p. 63) and “Nowhere does the Word of God guarantee that the believer’s faith inevitably will endure. What *does* [emphasis his] it guarantee? That God’s purposes are not defeated by the collapse of a Christian’s convictions about the truth ... the believer’s basic relationship to God is unaffected by the overthrow of one’s faith ... Undoubtedly, the Christian who has lost his or her faith may cease to name the name of Christ, and may even cease

temporarily fail to persevere in good works (“backslide”). If he does, God will chasten him (Hebrews 12), putting him back on track. Passages in Scripture that speak of perseverance include the following:

“You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved” (Matthew 10:22; cf. Matthew 24:13//Mark 13:13)

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine” (John 8:31; cf. 2 John 9)

Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off (Romans 11:22)

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain (1 Corinthians 15:1-2)

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in

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to confess Christianity ... Let there be no mistake. The failure of one’s faith is a grim possibility on the field of spiritual battle” (p. 111).

order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister (Colossians 1:21-23)

If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us (2 Timothy 2:12)

but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end (Hebrews 3:6; cf. Hebrews 3:14)

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised (Hebrews 10:36)

They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us (1 John 2:19)

To these passages can be added John 15:1-7.



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Perseverance is the divinely-enabled act of the believer. God graciously enabling<sup>94</sup>, the believer perseveres through such divinely-ordained means as Bible intake (1 Timothy 4:16), prayer (Luke 22:31-32 and Jude 20-21), local church involvement<sup>95</sup> (Hebrews 3:12-14, 10:24-25, and 1 John 2:19), and the trials of life (James 1:2-4 and 12, et. al.). If a believer does not utilize such means, he or she will not persevere (just as a person who does not breathe will not live). While it is true that God will prompt a true believer to utilize such means, thereby ensuring his or her perseverance<sup>96</sup>, awareness of this fact should in no way diminish the intensity with which the believer perseveres. “Perseverance means the engagement of our persons in the most intense and concentrated devotion to those means which God has ordained for the achievement of his saving purpose” (Hoekema, p. 155).

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<sup>94</sup>“So it is not by their own merits or strength but by God’s undeserved mercy that they [true believers] neither forfeit faith and grace totally nor remain in their downfalls to the end and are lost. With respect to themselves this not only easily could happen, but also undoubtedly would happen; but with respect to God it cannot possibly happen, since his plan cannot be changed, his promise cannot fail, the calling according to his purpose cannot be revoked, the merit of Christ as well as his interceding and preserving cannot be nullified, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit can neither be invalidated nor wiped out” (Article 8 of the Canons of Dort, cited in Hoekema, p. 254).

<sup>95</sup>Grudem (p. 793), commenting on Colossians 1:22-23, states: “Paul knows that those whose faith is not real will eventually fall away from participation in the fellowship of the church.” Warren Wiersbe, in his commentary on 1 John (*Be Real*, p. 88), states: “Any group, no matter how ‘religious,’ that for doctrinal reasons separates itself from a local church which holds to the Word of God, must immediately be suspect.”

<sup>96</sup>“God’s sovereign protection is consistent with human responsibility, because it works through human responsibility and guarantees that we will respond by maintaining the faith that is necessary to persevere” (Grudem, p. 794).

What should one make of the “warning passages” in Scripture (such as Romans 11:22, Galatians 5:21, Hebrews 2:1, 3:12, 4:11, 12:25, and 2 Peter 3:17) that threaten the believer with loss of salvation? If the believer cannot lose his salvation, are not such passages pointless? Not at all. Such passages are one of the means God uses to keep the believer persevering. As Erickson (p. 994) states: “If salvation is sure and permanent, what is the point of the warnings and commands given to the believer? The answer is that they are the means by which God renders it certain that the saved individual will not fall away.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>Hoekema (p. 247) concurs: “... God keeps his people from falling away through means, and these means include warnings against apostasy. By giving heed to warnings of this sort believers persevere.” Commenting on Hebrews 6:4-6, Demarest (p. 459) states: “This stern warning issued to wavering Jewish Christians (cf. 2:1-3; 3:7-13; 12:25) represents an important strategy God uses for achieving believers’ perseverance.” Commenting on Colossians 1:23, Peter O’Brien (“Colossians, Philemon” in *Word Biblical Commentary*, p. 69) states: “If it is true that the saints *will* persevere to the end, then it is equally true that the saints *must* persevere to the end. And one of the means which the apostle uses to insure that his readers within the various congregations of his apostolic mission do not fall into a state of false security is to stir them up with warnings such as this.” John Piper (in a February 8, 2004 sermon on Romans 11:17-24 entitled, “You Stand Fast Through Faith; So Do Not Become Proud, But Fear”; accessible at [www.desiringGOD.org](http://www.desiringGOD.org)) put it this way: “The Bible teaches that God will cause his elect people to persevere to the end in faith (not perfect faith, and not without struggles); and the Bible threatens Christians in general that if they make shipwreck of their faith they will be lost. The reason this is not inconsistent is that these threats are one of the means God uses to keep his people faithful to the end.” When God gives such a threat “the true believers take it to heart and stand in awe. They fear. They tremble at how fragile they are and how dependent on grace they are, and how crucial their authenticity is and how urgent it is that they prove real in their behavior. In this way the threat serves to keep them from falling. On the other hand, the hypocrites in the church—the pretenders, the people who are not really spiritual and are only going through the religious motions—do not tremble humbly at the warnings of the Bible. They may even use the doctrine of eternal security or perseverance to justify their indifference to these [threat] texts. That is a sign that they are in danger and may not be true Christians at all.”

### Problematic Passages

Admittedly, there are several passages in Scripture that on the surface appear to contradict the doctrines of eternal security and perseverance. These passages include 1 Samuel 16:14 (“the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul”; see footnote 90), Psalm 51:11 (“do not take your Holy Spirit from me”; see footnote 90), John 15:1-7, 17:12, Galatians 5:4 (“fallen from grace”), 1 Timothy 4:1 (“some will fall away from the faith”), 6:10 (“have wandered away from the faith”), Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-31, 2 Peter 2:20-21, and Revelation 3:5 (“I will not erase his name from the book of life”). Properly interpreted, however, these passages do not teach what opponents of eternal security and perseverance claim they teach. For the proper treatment of problem passages such as these, see Hoekema (pp. 246-253) and Grudem (pp. 795-803).

Belief that salvation can be lost essentially impugns God’s character by 1) insinuating that God does not keep His promises to preserve the believer (however, see 1 Corinthians 1:8-9 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24) ; 2) insinuating that God is not powerful enough to keep the believer saved (however, see John 10:28-29, Hebrews 7:25, 1 Peter 1:5, and Jude 24); and 3) insinuating that man’s will is ultimate, thus denying God’s sovereignty.

## Lesson 10: Assurance

“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!” So wrote Fanny Crosby at the start of her beloved hymn, “Blessed Assurance.” To be saved and sure of it is indeed a great blessing.

### What is Assurance of Salvation?

Assurance of salvation may be defined as the subjective, Spirit-supplied certainty that one is saved. It is the conviction/confidence that one has been converted/is a Christian. Bruce Demarest (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. “assurance,” p. 91) describes assurance as “the confidence of the believer in Christ that notwithstanding his mortal sinful condition he is irrevocably a child of God and an heir of heaven” and (p. 92) “the deep personal conviction created by the Holy Spirit in the heart that sins have been forgiven, that I have been adopted into the family of God, and that I belong to him forever.” Donald Whitney (p. 12) defines it as “a God-given awareness that He has accepted the death of Christ on your behalf and forgiven you of your sins.”

Assurance is not the same as eternal security. While one cannot lose his salvation/security, one can lose, at least to some degree, his sense of salvation/assurance. Whereas eternal security is objective, assurance of salvation is subjective and, therefore, admits of degrees (it is more like a dimmer control than an on-off switch). David Doran (“Introduction to Biblical Counseling”

class notes) contrasts the two as follows:

The Security of the Believer	The Assurance of the Believer
God's sovereign accomplishment in salvation	Man's subjective appreciation of salvation
It is positional, i.e., a fact	It is practical, i.e., a feeling
It is an unchanging relationship of favor with God	It is a changing relationship of fellowship with God

That the Holy Spirit is the One who supplies such assurance is seen by such texts as Romans 8:15-16, Galatians 4:6, 1 John 3:24b, and 4:13 (cf. 1 John 5:10a).

Can One be Certain of Salvation?

While some (such as Roman Catholicism<sup>98</sup>) deny that one can have a “know so” salvation, the Bible teaches otherwise. Passages that say so include:

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and *attaining* to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, *resulting* in a true knowledge of God's mystery, *that is*, Christ *Himself* (Colossians 2:1-2)



<sup>98</sup> Hoekema (p. 146) cites the Council of Trent: “No one can know with a certainty of faith, which can not be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God.” The Council of Trent even went so far as to pronounce an anathema upon anyone who so believed.

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end (Hebrews 6:11)

Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22)

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments (1 John 2:3)

By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked (1 John 2:5b-6)

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren (1 John 3:14a)

We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him (1 John 3:19)

We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us (1 John 3:24b)

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit (1 John 4:13)



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These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13)

We know that we are of God (1 John 5:19a)

Rightly does the Westminster Confession of Faith (cited in Reymond, p. 791) state that “such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love Him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may, in this life, be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.”

### How Can One be Certain of Salvation?

2 Corinthians 13:5 commands believers: “Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith.” What criteria should a Christian use when conducting such a test? There are three basic means by which a believer can be certain that he or she is saved<sup>99</sup>:

1. God’s Word. Some may be uncertain of salvation due to being ignorant of the Truth and/or being infected by the false.<sup>100</sup> By faith, taking God at

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<sup>99</sup> “This assurance does not derive from some private revelation beyond or outside the Word, but from faith in the promises of God which he has very plentifully revealed in his Word for our comfort, from the testimony of the Holy Spirit testifying with our spirit that we are God’s children and heirs (Rom. 8:16-17), and finally from a serious and holy pursuit of a clear conscience and of good works” (Article 5 of the Canons of Dort, cited in Hoekema, p. 150).

<sup>100</sup> “The Devil’s diabolical strategy, in general, is to convince lost people that they are saved and saved people that they are lost” (Whitney, p. 85).

His word, believing His promises to secure salvation, the believer can be certain of salvation.<sup>101</sup> Such promises may be found in John 3:16, 36a, 5:24, 6:37, Acts 2:21, 16:31, Romans 10:9, and 13. Remember, God has promised to save and has the power to save. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2 and Hebrews 6:18), nor can He lose (John 10:28-29 and 2 Timothy 1:12); He cannot fib, nor can He fail to finish (Philippians 1:6). See the previous lesson on Eternal Security.

2. The Believer's Walk. Some may be uncertain of salvation due to the failure to persevere in behavior befitting a believer.<sup>102</sup> According to the book of 1 John, written to assure the saints in Ephesus of their salvation (see 1 John 5:13), there are 3 basic "birthmarks" of a believer<sup>103</sup>, two of which involve such behavior:

- Correct Christology (2:22-23, 4:2-3, 15, 5:1, and 4-5)
- Consistently<sup>104</sup> correct conduct (1:6, 2:3-6, 29, 3:6-10, and 5:18)

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<sup>101</sup>“Those who have had the most abiding assurance of God’s love, are those who have been most in meditation on the written assurances of that love” (J.W. Alexander, cited in Whitney, p. 27).

<sup>102</sup> Whitney (p. 15) says that Christians can sin away their assurance and that “assurance atrophies as the result of sin.” Thankfully, when a Christian persists in sin, God disciplines him, thereby restoring the assurance that he is a son (Hebrews 12:5-8).

<sup>103</sup> B.B. Warfield (cited in Whitney, p. 47) once said that “a man who has none of the marks of a Christian is not entitled to believe himself to be a Christian.”

<sup>104</sup> “... [T]he Bible requires only the *presence* of evidences, not the *perfection* of them” (Whitney, p. 65; emphasis his). Though Christians will not have completely correct conduct (1 John 1:8 and 10), they will be convicted when they do not and confess their corruption (1 John 1:9). Such sensitivity to sin (such as Paul had in Romans 7:15-25) is a sign that one is saved. Whitney (p. 22) writes that

- Concern/care for Christians (2:9-11, 3:10, 14-15, 4:7-8, 16, and 20), rather than having a “crush” on the corrupt culture (2:15-16)

In order to diligently make his calling sure (2 Peter 1:10a), a believer is to diligently add to his faith various virtues (2 Peter 1:5-7). As has been sung, “If you’re saved and you know it, then your life will surely show it” (see James 2:14-26, as well as the entire book of 1 John). To the degree one’s life is not showing it, to that degree one cannot be certain of salvation. When one doubts his or her salvation, the problem is most often unconfessed sin. In that case, one must get rid of the splinters of sin that are causing suffering to one’s soul (David Doran). See the previous lesson on Perseverance.

3. The Spirit’s Witness. Working through both God’s Word and the believer’s walk<sup>105</sup>, the Spirit of God convinces the Christian that he has indeed been converted. Scriptures that speak of this ministry of the Spirit, often referred to as the internal witness or testimony of the Spirit, include Romans 8:15-16, Galatians 4:6, 1 John 3:24b, 4:13, and 5:10a.

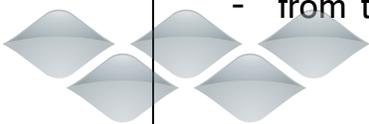
“sensitivity to sin is actually one of the best signs that you are a Christian.”

<sup>105</sup> “The Holy Spirit is the One who convinces us that we are Christians, but He often does so by guiding our own rational and logical processes in properly evaluating the evidence that He has changed our lives in accordance with His Word” (Whitney, p. 40).

“The work which his goodness began,  
The arm of his strength will complete;  
His promise is Yea and Amen,  
and never was forfeited yet.  
Things future, nor things that are now,  
nor all things below or above,  
Can make him his purpose forgo,  
Or sever my soul from his love.

My name from the palms of his hands  
Eternity will not erase;  
Impressed on his heart it remains,  
In marks of indelible grace.  
Yes, I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the earnest is giv’n;  
More happy, but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in heav’n”

- from the hymn, “A Debtor to Mercy Alone” by Augustus Toplady (cited  
in Reymond, p. 792)



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## **Lesson 11: Glorification**

Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6: “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” The good work of salvation begun in regeneration will be completed in glorification (cf. Romans 8:29-30 and the chart entitled “The Process of Salvation” in the first lesson of this study).

There is a sense in which salvation is “already”; there is another sense in which it is “not yet.” Glorification is the receiving of the “not yet”; it is the final phase of salvation. It is being saved/receiving eternal life in the full and final sense. Notice the following Scriptures in this regard:

“These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life”  
(Matthew 25:46)

who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life (Romans 2:6-7)

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life (Romans 6:22)

Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed (Romans 13:11)

so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7)

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him (James 1:12; cf. 1 Peter 5:4 and Revelation 2:10)<sup>106</sup>

who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:5)

obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls (1 Peter 1:9)

### What is Glorification?

Glorification is the act of God by which He perfects both the nature and body of the believer.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Both James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10 speak of the “crown of life.” Taking “of life” to be in apposition to crown (i.e., the crown which is life), the crown of life would be eternal life in its full and final sense. In similar fashion, the “crown of glory” (1 Peter 5:4) would be glorification.

<sup>107</sup>Murray (p. 175) defines glorification as “the complete and final redemption of the whole person when in the integrity of body and spirit the people of God will be conformed to the image of the risen, exalted, and glorified Redeemer.”

1. **Glorification perfects the nature of the believer.**

Prior to conversion, the sinner has one disposition/nature, the sin nature. Consequently, sin totally dominates/reigns uncontested in the unbeliever. At conversion, however, one is given a second disposition/nature, the new nature (2 Peter 1:4). These two natures do battle within the believer throughout his Christian life (Romans 7:14-25 and Galatians 5:17). The moment the believer leaves this life and enters the afterlife (at death or at the Rapture), he is given a glorified nature, one in which righteousness totally dominates/reigns uncontested.

According to 1 John 3:2, this transformation will take place when the believer sees the glorified Christ: “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.” As the believer sees Christ through the Word, he is transformed into the image he sees (2 Corinthians 3:18); however, because the image he sees is an imperfect one (“dimly” in 1 Corinthians 13:12), the transformation is incomplete. When the believer sees Christ “face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12), he will see Him perfectly/“just as He is” (1 John 3:2) and will be completely/perfectly transformed into the image of Christ (cf. Romans 8:29). Consequently, the believer will be “like Him” (1 John 3:2), in behavior (not in being, as finite creatures will never be like their infinite Creator in their essence or being), resembling his Creator to a perfect



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degree, as did Adam and Eve when first created.

Part of what will make heaven so glorious is that only those with glorified natures will reside there. See 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:27 in this regard.

Other Scriptures (besides those mentioned above) that speak of the perfecting of the believer's nature at glorification include Colossians 1:22 (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:8, Ephesians 1:4, 5:27, 1 Thessalonians 3:13, 5:23, and Jude 24) and Hebrews 12:23 (the perfecting of the nature of Old Testament believers).

## 2. Glorification perfects the body of the believer.

An equally important, but often subordinated, aspect of glorification is the glorification of the believer's body. There is a sense in which the believer's glorification is incomplete until his earthly body is glorified. The glorification of the believer's body makes him physically fit for existence in heaven (1 Corinthians 15:50). The glorification of the church age believer's body will take place at the conclusion of the church age, at the Rapture (Philippians 3:20-21 and 2 Thessalonians 1:10).<sup>108</sup> The

<sup>108</sup>The glorification of the bodies of Old Testament saints and those saved during the Tribulation will take place when these two groups are resurrected in the brief period of time between the Second Coming of Christ (at the end of the Tribulation) and the start of the Millennium.

glorification of the believer's body is spoken of in such passages as Romans 8:23, 1 Corinthians 15 (particularly the last half of the chapter), and Philippians 3:20-21.

The glorified or resurrection body will in some respects be similar, but in other respects dissimilar, to the earthly body (just as a seed is both similar and dissimilar to what it produces; see 1 Corinthians 15:35-44). In terms of similarity, the glorified body will most likely resemble one's earthly body at the point it reaches full maturity, just prior to the onset of the aging process. As Grudem (p. 831) states: "Moreover, since the gradual process of aging is part of the process by which our bodies now are subject to 'corruption,' it is appropriate to think that our resurrection bodies will have no sign of aging, but will have the characteristics of youthful but mature manhood or womanhood forever." In terms of dissimilarity, it will be a body insusceptible to death, decay, disease, etc. (1 Corinthians 15:42). It will also be characterized by a "glorified glow," a visible radiance (like Moses in Exodus 34:29-35 and Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17//Mark 9//Luke 9); see Daniel 12:3, Matthew 13:43, Hebrews 1:3, Revelation 1:16, and 21:23. As Grudem (p. 831) states: "There will also be a kind of brightness or radiance surrounding our bodies that will be an appropriate outward evidence of the position of exaltation and rule over all creation that God has given us."



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The believer's union with Christ makes his glorification a "sure thing." Since Christ has been glorified, and the believer is united to Christ, the believer will be glorified. See Romans 8:17 and 2 Thessalonians 2:14 (cf. footnote 91).

The hope of glorification (Romans 5:2, Colossians 1:5, 27, and Titus 3:7) is a blessed one (Titus 2:13). It is this hope that makes the sufferings, trials, heartaches, etc. of this life worth it all. See especially Romans 8:18 and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (cf. 2 Timothy 2:10 and 1 Peter 5:10) in this regard. As the songwriter, Esther Kerr Rusthoi (1909-1962) wrote in her beloved hymn, "When We See Christ":

Ofttimes the day seems long, our trials hard to bear,  
We're tempted to complain, to murmur and despair;  
But Christ will soon appear to catch His  
Bride away, All tears forever over in God's eternal day.

Sometimes the sky looks dark with not a ray of light,  
We're tossed and driven on, no human help in sight;  
But there is one in heaven who knows  
our deepest care, Let Jesus solve your problem—just go to Him in prayer.

Life's day will soon be over, all storms forever past,  
We'll cross the great divide to glory, safe at last;  
We'll share the joys of heaven—a harp, a  
home, a crown, The tempter will be banished, we'll lay our burden down.



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It will be worth it all when we see Jesus, Life's trials will seem so small  
when we see Christ; One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,  
So bravely run the race till we see Christ.

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make  
you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to  
the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory,  
majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever.

Amen.”

(Jude 24-25)



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