

Soteriology: What the Bible Says about Salvation (Part 2)

Introductory Comments

The following material follows somewhat closely to Grudem's treatment of soteriology:

<i>Grudem</i>	<i>Ryerson</i>
Justification	Justification
Regeneration (covered in the previous segment)	Regeneration
Adoption	Adoption
Sanctification	Sanctification
Perseverance	Eternal Security
Glorification	(Dealt with in a later segment)
Union with Christ	Union with Christ

Justification

Evangelical believers get so accustomed to hearing "Bible words" that we don't often stop to ask ourselves, "Do I know what that really means?" The Scriptures use several terms to describe the complex and thorough transformation that we experience when we become genuine Christians. Most of them are words that we always hated to see on a spelling test. They're long, tedious to write, and tough to define. Justification, for many of us, is one of those words.

Some people use mnemonic devices to call up the meaning of justification. For instance, the phrase "justifiable homicide" refers to a situation that is normally considered wrong but which, under certain conditions, may be viewed as right. So when the Bible speaks of God's justifying us, it's not so complicated or mysterious as it may seem. Here are five statements that explain the doctrine of justification in the light of God's Word.

1. Justification is an everyday Bible concept.

- It begins with Abraham.

Genesis 15:6 – "Then Abram believed God; and God reckoned it to him as righteousness."

- It appears in numerous prophecies (Isaiah 43:23-36; 45:21-25).

-- Isaiah 53:11 – "The Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities."

- Jeremiah 50:20 – “In those days ... search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found; for I shall pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.”
 - It is taught by the Lord Jesus.
 - The idea of justification is in John 3:18 – “He who believes in Him *is not judged*; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”
 - The idea is also presented in John 5:24 – “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 out of death into life.”
 - Luke 18:14 uses the actual terminology – “(The one who pleads with God to forgive his sins) goes down to his house *justified*.”
 - It is fully developed by Paul (the Epistle to the Romans, especially chapter 4).
2. Justification has an easy-to-remember meaning.

- Background: The Bible words come from a root that means “to make right” or “to straighten out.”
- Usage: The words *don't* mean “to make righteous.”
 - A person cannot be made righteous just by *saying* that he/she is righteous.
 - Proverbs 17:15 – “He who justifies the wicked is an abomination to the LORD.”
 - Luke 7:29 – “All the people ... justified God.”

Lest we misunderstand, there *is* something that happens to us in salvation which does make us instantly and radically different. That falls under the category of regeneration or rebirth.

- Justification is a legal term.

1st Timothy 3:16 – “(Jesus was) justified in the spirit.” Did Christ have to be made righteous? No, he was already righteous. He only needed to be declared so. We may draw a comparison to the common term, “legally dead.” The phrase does not *make* the person deceased; it merely states the fact formally.

3. There are four sides to this amazing, instantaneous miracle.

- We are justified _____

Romans 3:24 – “(We are) justified by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” This is the *source* of the miracle.

- We are justified _____

Romans 5:9 – “Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God.” This is the *price* of the miracle.

- We are justified _____

Romans 3:28 – “We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the Law.” This is the *catalyst* of the miracle.

- We are justified _____

James 2:24 – “You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.” This is the *evidence* of the miracle.

Most of the preceding verses describe the way *God* views us and treats us. Here James is reminding us that *people* are watching us, too. If we want them to view us or consider us as righteous, then our conduct must fit the pattern. Our works are the outward evidence of the righteousness that has been imputed to us in Christ.

4. Justification is impossible for man to earn.

- There are three great barriers preventing God from justifying us.

-- Humans are _____ (Romans 3:21, 23).

-- The moral law of God is _____ (Romans 2:12-13).

-- God’s moral nature is _____ (Habakkuk 1:13).

In view of these three factors, it would be morally impossible for any human to be justified before God.

- God has devised a way for us to be justified.

-- He couldn't justify us on the basis of:

- Our _____

Psalm 130:3 – “Lord, if you were to keep track of iniquities, who would be able to stand?”

Psalm 143:2 – “For in your sight no man living shall be justified.”

Isaiah 5:20 – “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.”

- Our _____ (to the Law)

Romans 3:20 – “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Galatians 3:11-12 – “No man is justified by the law.”

- Our _____ (Romans 4:9-11)

Paul makes a point in addressing his Jewish readers, showing them that being circumcised didn't give Abraham a ticket to heaven. He got circumcised because he *already* had faith in Yahweh. It was the faith that saved him, not the outward sign.

-- God could only justify man on the basis of:

- Christ's death for us (1st Corinthians 15:3)
 - His death satisfied the mandatory penalty (2nd Corinthians 5:21)
 - His death was (potentially) effective for all men (Isaiah 53:6)
- Our faith in Christ (John 3:16)

5. Justification is a blessing that leads to more blessings (Romans 5:1-9)

- _____ with God (verse 10)
- _____ of God (verse 2)
- _____ for heaven (verse 2)
- _____ amid trouble (verse 3)

- _____ from wrath (verse 9)

Immature believers are tempted to think, “If God has declared me righteous now, then I can go out and do anything I want and I don’t have to worry about punishment.” False! Under no circumstances will God tolerate unrighteous behavior. In Exodus 23:7 he says, “I will not justify the wicked.” God will never declare conduct to be righteous if it’s not righteous. There is ample evidence in Scripture that a truly born-again, changed person will not desire to keep living a life of wickedness. And the Christian who sins can expect a loving Father to chastise him for conduct unbecoming to one who has been justified.

As always, all of this talk of *what* God does for the believer still doesn’t answer the question *why* he does it. If someone were to walk up to us on the street and ask, “How does God justify a mistake like you?” – we would have to answer, “I can explain to you *how* he does it; but if it takes all of eternity I will never be able to tell you *why*.”

Regeneration

I made a mistake when I moved to Centerville, Ohio, in 1988. I got rid of all of my wide, wide ties from the 70’s and my skinny, skinny ties from the 60’s, and all of my bellbottom pants – even though I *knew* these things would come back into style before another decade transpired. It’s irritating how rapidly fashions and fads change. What’s “in” today may not be “in” tomorrow. And the worst thing is that some truly great things get left in the closet for no other reason than that they have ceased to be “in.”

It isn’t “in” to be a born-again Christian any more. It was for a while; and it felt very reassuring to average believers when politicians and sports heroes and rock legends and movie stars began to name Jesus Christ as their Lord and to claim to have been born again. But then some of the “born-again” politicians lied to us, and some of the “born-again” sports heroes did drugs, and some of the “born-again” rock legends turned to the occult or eastern mysticism, and some of the “born-again” movie stars committed adultery. And finally, some of the more famous TV evangelists were exposed for serious moral failures. The world, in its characteristic way, spurned Christianity and turned to the next religious fad: the New Age. People will try anything once; but they won’t stick with something that doesn’t seem to work.

The tragedy, of course, is that the miracle of regeneration is so very much a part of the greatest news we ever heard, and because of that we are so eager to tell our world about God’s plan of rescuing us. So we feel cheated and robbed and frustrated when the world doesn’t share our excitement because being born again just isn’t “in” any more.

There will always be skeptics – non-believers who will remain non-believers no matter what we say. But each of us may know someone with an honest, searching heart who still wishes it were really possible suddenly to become a different person, to be totally changed, and

who might pay attention if we could show him from the Word of God that rebirth is one of the powerful things that happen when a person receives Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. When we meet such a person, ready to listen, here's what we may tell him.

1. If he asks, "Who says I need to be reborn?" tell him, "God does." God expresses this truth from every possible angle. In fact, God says that we must be:

- Re-_____

Matthew 19:28 – "Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'"

Titus 3:5 – "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit...."

- Re-_____

John 3:3 – "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- Re-_____

Romans 6:13 – "And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as members as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

Ephesians 2:5 – "Even when we were dead in our transgressions, he made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."

- Re-_____

2nd Corinthians 5:17 – "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come."

2. If your friend asks, "Why do I need to be reborn?" the correct answer is, "Because you're in trouble. In fact, you are:

- Spiritually _____

Ephesians 2:1, 5 – “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.... Even when we were dead in our transgressions, he made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”

- Spiritually _____

John 8:44 – “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar, and the father of lies.”

1st John 3:10, 14 – “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.... We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.”

- Spiritually _____

1st Corinthians 2:14 – “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”

John 9:39-41 – “And Jesus said, ‘For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind.’ Those of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and said to him, ‘We are not blind too, are we?’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”

- Spiritually _____

2nd Corinthians 4:3-4 – “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

3. What does it mean to be reborn?

- Definition: To “be reborn” means to receive _____

- The nature of the new birth: To be reborn is to receive:

-- New _____

2nd Corinthians 5:17 – “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come”

-- New _____

John 1:12 – “But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name.”

-- New _____

2nd Peter 1:4 – “For by these he has granted to us his precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”

-- New _____

Ezekiel 36:26 – “Moreover I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

-- New _____

Ephesians 4:23-24 – “And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

- Restrictions: Rebirth is something that:

-- Man _____

2nd Corinthians 4:3-4 – “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

-- God _____

John 1:13 – “... who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

4. How can I become reborn? It happens when:

- You believe the _____ of God

John 3:5 – “Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’”

Ephesians 5:26 – “... that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.”

- You receive the _____ of God

John 14:16-17 – “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that he may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold him or know him, but you know him because he abides with you, and will be in you.”

Romans 8:9, 11 – “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.... But if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who indwells you.”

5. How can I prove that I am reborn?

- I prove it to myself by my:

-- _____ in Christ

1st John 5:1 – “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of him.”

-- _____ for Christ

John 8:42 – “Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on my own initiative, but he sent me.’”

-- _____ for Christians

1st John 3:14 – “We know that we have passed out death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.”

- I prove it to others by my:

-- Commitment to _____

1st John 2:29 – “If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of him”

-- Love for _____

1st John 4:7 – “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”

-- Victory over _____

1st John 5:4, 18 – “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.”

I had a buddy who got ahold of an old truck – late 40s or early 50s model – and he took it home and started to fix it up. The engine seemed to be in good working order, but it wouldn’t start. What do you suppose Jim did to get that truck started? Give it a fresh, new paint job? No. Re-upholster the interior? No. Put new tires on it? No. Jim could only get that truck running again when he installed a new generator. And you could tell the instant that new generator was in place, because you could hear the engine running and you could see that truck moving down the road.

Pity a poor old truck that sits around doing nothing just because it needs a new generator! Even more tragic is a truck with a perfectly good, brand-new generator, that sits around and *acts* like it’s dead.

Adoption

When my sister Chris and I were little kids, we used to talk about being adopted. Not that we really were adopted; but you know how kids are sometimes. If we were bad and got spanked, we wondered if Mom and Dad didn't love us because we didn't really belong to them. Or we fantasized how great it would be if we were adopted by Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, or by Tarzan and Jane, or by the Three Stooges. Which just goes to show that, in our juvenile minds, adoption could be a good deal or a bad deal depending on how agreeable the new parents were.

These days, of course, we look at adoption from the other side. My wife and I used to have a standing joke: When the kids were very, very exasperating, they couldn't be ours. But then, when they were very, very good, they couldn't be ours, either!

People used to develop some rather odd ideas about adoption. I hope we've outgrown the days when an unpleasant stigma was attached to an adoptive child. In fact, in our day people have become more supportive of parents who adopt, and toward the "child of choice."

And yet, old ideas persist. So just in case we are tempted to look down upon adoption as a second-class way for a child to grow up, it would be good to remember that *every believer is adopted!* Ephesians 1:5 declares that "God lovingly predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the kind intention of his will."

The idea that God has adopted you should be one of the most heart-warming aspects of your salvation. The Bible unfolds this tender truth in three ways:

1. What does adoption mean? The Scriptures use two words to convey this precious truth.

- The Bible word "adoption"

Romans 8:15 – "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry our 'Abba! Father!'"

Galatians 4:5 – "(Christ came to redeem us) that we might receive the adoption as sons."

-- To the Romans, it required a public _____ of an heir's position and privileges.

-- To God, it suggests his formal _____ of your position and privileges in Christ.

- The Bible word “son”

Galatians 3:26 – “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 1:5 – “(In love) he predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the kind intention of his will.”

- In ancient culture, a son was better because a daughter didn't _____ very much.
- To God, a “son” is anyone who is in line to inherit all of the _____ of the Father.

2. How adoption is displayed

- There are certain invisible privileges that you possess immediately

- Your new _____ because God is your Father.

Galatians 4:5 – “... in order that he might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

Romans 8:15 – “You have received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which we cry out ‘Abba! Father!’”

- Your new _____ -- God's Spirit living inside you.

Galatians 4:6 – “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”

- Your new _____ -- co-regency with Christ.

Galatians 4:7 – “Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.”

- Your new _____ -- your Father's.

Revelation 3:12 – “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will not go out from it any more; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from my God, and my new name.”

Revelation 21:7 – “He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.”

-- Your new _____ -- no more bondage to fear.

Romans 8:15 – “You have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons....”

- There are certain visible changes that you show from then on:

-- Guidance by _____

Romans 8:14 – “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.”

-- Separation from _____

2nd Corinthians 6:14-18 – “Do not be bound together with unbelievers....”

-- Victory over _____

Revelation 21:7 -- “He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.”

-- Discipline by _____

Hebrew 12:6-8 – “For whom the Lord loves, he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakes, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.”

-- Transformation into _____

Matthew 5:9 – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

Philippians 4:7 – “And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

3. What adoption achieves

- It moves you from _____ to _____
In times of suffering.

Romans 8:18 – “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

- It moves you from _____ to _____
In your standards.

Galatians 4:7-11 – “Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son.... But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things...?”

- It moves you from _____ to _____
In conduct.

1st Thessalonians 5:1-8 – “...But since we are of the day, let us be sober....”

- It moves you from _____ to _____
In God’s eyes.

Galatians 3:26, 28 – “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.... There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Dottie Rambo wrote a song for kids titled “I Am Adopted.” It goes like this:

*I am adopted, I’m a special kid, you see.
I’m proud to be a member of the royal family.
My Father owns a Kingdom and he sits upon his throne.
He gives me everything I need; it’s nice to just belong!
I’m adopted. I’m chosen. I bear my Father’s name.
Just livin’ the life of luxury in the castle of the King!¹*

Those of us who have been adopted into God’s family ought to be so grateful for his generous mercy that we are omitted to living for him, letting our world what God is like by showing them what he does for his kids!

¹ Rambo, Dottie, “I Am Adopted,” from the album, *Down by the Creek Bank* (Nashville, TN: Brentwood-Benson, 1978).

Sanctification

For 2,000 years the biggest names in church history have been arguing about the meanings of the Bible words, “sanctify, sanctification,” and their related terms. In the Roman Catholic catechism, sanctification is defined as a process of improvement by which God saves you. To a Wesleyan Methodist, sanctification is a means by which God makes you perfect. The Reformed Church simply says that sanctification is a way of becoming a better person.

Who’s got it right? And why should there be so much confusion over a word that’s only five syllables long? In order to develop a complete and balanced view of sanctification, we must survey the entire Word of God, and let the Author of sanctification speak for himself.

The basic interpretation of the Bible words for “sanctify” is “set apart, to take something out of the group, away from all of its partners, and to lay it aside in a class by itself. You can “sanctify” a piece of pie. Just cut it, put a cover over it, and hide it in the back of the fridge for later. The Bible even uses this terminology to describe people or things that were separated from the crowd for *evil* purposes. In general, however, God’s Word uses this phrase to describe that which is separated from sin, that which is cleaned up and made pure and holy, that which dedicated to God and to his purposes. It’s a word that usually conjures up the image of cleanliness and of God’s ownership.

The Old Testament word *kadesh* and the New Testament word *hagios* occur hundreds of times in Scripture. There are many nuances to study. But simply put, sanctification is that part of God’s great plan by which he takes three steps to separate us from sin and for himself.

1. First, there is the part of sanctification by which I am *positionally* (“I have been”) sanctified.

- What is positional sanctification?

Hebrews 10:10-12 – “By this will we have been sanctify through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stads daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away ins; but he, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, ‘sat down at the right hand of God.’”

Acts 26:18 – Jesus appeared to Paul and gave him a new purpose: “to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in me.”

From these statements we can identify three truths about positional sanctification:

-- It’s something that happens _____

We're sanctified by the death of Christ. It didn't take long for Jesus to die. And we're sanctified by our personal faith in the sufficiency of Christ's death. The moment we put our trust in Jesus as Savior, we have been sanctified.

-- It's something that God _____

This kind of "setting apart" is not something that we can manufacture for ourselves. We can't make ourselves clean. We can get ourselves dirty, but we can't wash away our own stains of sin. God had to do that for us. We needed his Son to die for us to provide cleansing from the guilt and punishment of sin.

-- It's something that every _____

Acts 26:18 is clear: If we belong to Jesus, if we have received him and what he did for us at the cross, then we *have been sanctified*. We have been set apart. In this sense at least, we have been made holy to the Lord.

- How does positional sanctification happen?

Hebrews 13:12 – "Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered outside the gate."

I am positionally sanctified at the moment I _____

We don't readily identify with Jewish religious practices, but here's something we need to see. If we had lived in Old Testament times and had entered the Temple, we would have been required to bring a perfect lamb and give it to the priest. The priest would slaughter the animal, burn the carcass on the altar, and spill the blood out before the Temple as a way of symbolizing that the *animal's* death temporarily took the place of *our* death. Our willingness to sacrifice that lamb was a message to God that we really were sorry for the sin that we had committed. And all of that blood was a gruesome reminder to us that sin is a terrible thing.

The moment we identified ourselves with Jesus Christ, we instantly were sanctified.

- What does positional sanctification do for us?

-- It makes us _____

1st Peter 2:9 – "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, *a holy nation*, a people for God's own possession."

Holiness is closely connect with God’s ownership of us. To be sanctified, then, means to come under the power and authority of the Almighty God.

-- It promises us _____

Hebrews 10:14 – “For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

There is no Purgatory, no place where Christian people have to go temporarily after death to undergo a final “purging” from sin before they can enter heaven. Quite the contrary. Positional sanctification accomplishes a miracle: it makes us clean enough for heaven.

-- It allows me to _____

Hebrews 10:19 – “Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus....”

Dirt is not allowed in the throne room of God. The only way to get clean enough to enter his presence and have the right to talk with him, is to be sanctified. And at the moment we entrusted our souls (with all of our sinful stains) to Jesus Christ, we immediately became washed and clean and fit to enter the throne room of our new Heavenly Father and to fellowship with him.

2. There is another aspect of sanctification that I did not receive at the moment of salvation, by which I am *progressively* (“I am being”) sanctified.

- What is it? A process of _____

During my lifetime (after salvation) the gap is gradually supposed to get wider between myself and my old sinful habits. Little by little, I am set apart from sinful way; little by little I am polished into a complete and mature Christian. Positional sanctification is the same for every believer; progressive sanctification is different for every believer. Depending on my willingness to let go of the old life and my willingness to forsake sin, I may become sanctified somewhat faster or slower than the believer next to me.

- How does it happen?

John 17:17 – “Father, sanctify them in the truth; your Word is truth.”

The instrument that God uses to bring about this change in our lives is the Bible. How does the Bible sanctify us?

- The Word _____ sin in my life.

Hebrews 4:12 – “The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword. It pierces as far as the division of soul and spirit; it can slice joints and marrow; it is able to judge even the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

We can't read the Bible very long without it splashing icy water in our faces and waking us up to the fact that we are doing something that God hates.

- The Word _____ sin from my life.

Ephesians 5:26 – Jesus “washes us with the water of the Word.” If the Bible were just another book, its comments on sin would sound interesting but harmless. But since the Word is “alive,” it jumps out of the pages and attacks our sin! It penetrates right to the soul and burns into every rack and crevice where sin is hiding. It scours and disintegrates every impure thought, every unwholesome word, every diabolical action.

Getting sanctified is not always fun. That may be why so many of us are tempted to neglect our Bibles. As great as it feels to *be* clean, it can be uncomfortable to *get* clean as we allow the disinfecting power of God's Word to come in contact with our grimy souls.

- The Word _____ me into Jesus' image.

2nd Corinthians 3:18 (paraphrased) – “We Christians are different from the way Moses was after he came down from meeting God on the mountain. We don't have to cover our faces to keep the glow from scaring people. As a matter of fact, we *need* to let our faces shine like mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. As the Spirit of the Lord uses the Word to work inside us, we become more and more like him, reflecting his image more and more brightly as time goes on.”

If it's even remotely true that abiding in the Book can make me act, talk, and think more like my Savior, then why don't I allow it to have more opportunities to sanctify me?

- Where does progressive sanctification lead?

- _____ over sin

1st Thessalonians 4:3 – “This is the will of God concerning you: your sanctification. In other words, abstain from sexual immorality. Learn to control your desire. Don’t defraud anyone. Live a pure life.”

As we permit God’ Word and God’s Spirit to gain control of our thinking and our actions, we can actually see real progress in leaving the old sinful tendencies behind and getting a grip on our tongue, on our thought life, and on our behavior.

-- _____ for God’s service

2nd Timothy 2:21 – “Therefore if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.”

We must never try to do something for God with our right hand, while our left hand is holding onto sin. We must be sanctified if ever we hope to accomplish anything for Christ and for eternity. If we allow God to scrub away the sin and make us clean, we will be fit for the Master’s use.

-- _____ with Christ

John 13:8 – “If I do not wash you, you have no part with me.”

Our Lord cannot fellowship with people who are unclean because of sin. He will never disown us just because we are guilty of offending him. But we won’t enjoy his companionship. Sin destroys our fellowship and our communication with Christ. It’s only when the Word of God is allowed to wash through our hearts and bring repentance and confession that Jesus is willing to forgive us; and then our sense of oneness with him is restored.

3. In the end, God’s ultimate goal is for me to be *prospectively* (“I will be”) sanctified.

- What is prospective sanctification? A sudden _____ act of God.
- How does he do it?

1st Thessalonians 5:23 – “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1st John 3:2 – “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him just as he is.”

Two things happen simultaneously that will bring about this miracle:

-- It will happen when _____

One of these days we'll be whisked away into the loving arms of our returning Savior. In the moment when we see him, we will be utterly transformed. Our physical bodies will be glorified. The outward evidences of sin and imperfection will disappear. We will be cleansed outside and inside fully and finally. We will be completely and eternally set apart from sin. We will be totally sanctified.

-- It will happen when _____

There will be something about that long-awaited, unhindered vision of Christ in all his glorious perfection that will sweep away the last rags of sin and stain from our souls and bodies.

- What will prospective sanctification do for us?

-- It will make me _____ tomorrow.

1st John 3:2 doesn't mean that we're going to become like little gods when we see Jesus. It means that we'll finally reacquire the thing that Adam lost: a perfect mind and soul, unblemished by sin; an imperishable body, unravaged by any of the effects of sin.

-- It makes me _____ today.

1st John 3:3 – “Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as Jesus is pure.”

If we get a grip on what it's going to be like to look into the face of our Savior, then we won't be content just to sit around and wait for the Rapture to sanctify us. If we earnestly long to see Jesus and to get started on eternity, we will begin today to dust the cobwebs of sin out of our lives.

If we have accepted Christ, then we have positional sanctification. But how are we doing with progressive sanctification? How thoroughly have we allowed God's Spirit to put distance between us and our old sinful ways?

In the Old Testament, certain animals were called holy, sacred, sanctified -- a lamb, a calf, a dove – these could be set apart for God, sacrificed to him. In these latter days we are urged by God's Word to let *ourselves* be set apart.

Romans 12:1 – “I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”

Eternal Security

The dictionary defines “security” as “the state or feeling of being free from fear, care, danger; safety or a sense of safety; freedom from doubt; certainty.” To a banker, the word “security” refers to “a bond or stock certificate; any evidence that shows ownership of property.” To an insurance agent, “security” is “a policy covering the loss of property, health, or life.” To a small child, “security” is often a thumb and a blanket.

Bible scholars define biblical security as “perseverance of the saints; the certain continuation of the salvation of those who are saved.” Salvation is a complex topic, and our discussion is not complete until we have dealt with the question, “Can a saved person ever be lost?” And if the answer to that question is “yes,” it raises additional questions:

- Does he throw away his own salvation?
- Does God grab it away from him?
- Does he lose it by ceasing to believe?
- Does he lose it by committing a certain unpardonable sin?

Catholic theologians answer, “Yes, a person may lose salvation by committing a mortal sin.” Lutherans and Arminians say, “Yes, but he will regain his salvation if he is elect.” Wesleyans and Pentecostals teach, “Yes, he loses salvation by sinning willfully against Christ.” Calvinists say, “No, a truly saved person will persevere to the end and cannot be lost.”

Here are four postulates that will guide our discussion.

1. There is a biblical basis for eternal security.

- Reasons related to the Father

-- Perseverance is consistent with his _____

Romans 8:28-29 – “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. For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son.”

-- Perseverance is consistent with his _____

Jude 24 refers to God as “him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand in the presence of his glory blameless with great joy.”

-- Perseverance is consistent with his _____

Romans 8:39 – “Neither death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- Reasons related to the Son

-- His _____

Hebrews 10:14 – “By one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified.”

-- His _____

Romans 5:10 – “If, while we were the enemies of God, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son, how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life?”

-- His _____

Hebrews 7:25 – “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing that he ever lives to make intercession for us.”

- Reasons related to the Holy Spirit

-- His _____

John 14:16 – “He shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever.”

-- His _____

1st Corinthians 12:13 – “By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” (How do you “unbaptized” a person?)

-- His _____

Ephesians 4:30 – “Grieve not the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed until the day of redemption.”

- Reasons related to the nature of the change that has occurred in every true believer

-- Our _____

1st Peter 1:23 – We have been “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.”

-- Our _____

Romans 6:4 – “... as Christ was raised from the dead ... so we too might walk in newness of life.”

2. There are some passages difficult to fit with the doctrine of eternal security. Critics ask, “Don’t the following verses teach that a person can lose his salvation?”

- This verse warns believers regarding the Father’s chastening.

1st Corinthians 3:17 – If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.”

- This verse deals with false Christians.

1st Timothy 4:1 – “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith.”

- This verse talks about physical endurance.

Matthew 24:13 – “He who endures to the end shall be saved.”

- This verse is designed to reassure believers.

2nd Peter 1:10 – “Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about his calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble (or doubt).”

- These texts refer to heavenly rewards.

Revelation 2:10 – “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Revelation 3:11 – “I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown.”

3. There have been some logical objections to the idea of eternal security.

- If the believer is so secure, why does God keep warning him?
 - In warning us to keep living righteously, God is using many means to keep us from ruining our lives with sin.
 - God wants to warn the phony believer not to place too much trust in platitudes.
- What happens if a believer ignores God’s warnings?
 - He’s probably not a real believer.
- What about cases where a Christian *has* backslidden?
 - The backslider may be a phony Christian in disguise.
 - Don’t write off a “backslidden” Christian until you get to the last page of his story.

4. There is real practical value in the doctrine of eternal security.

- It gives me _____

The thing that makes the Christian life so attractive to people is mainly the observation that the ones who are Christians are peaceful, joyful, contented, and secure in their Savior. That draws more people to Christ than all the promises of a heavenly mansion.

- It encourages _____

1st Corinthians 15:58 – “Therefore, beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

A cable technician wouldn’t get much work done if he shinned up the pole and tried to work with one hand while he held onto the pole with the other to keep himself from falling. No, he hooks his safety belt, leans back, and works with both hands; and he gets a lot more done because he’s not constantly worried about falling.

Some people think that if you're in danger of losing your salvation, it will make you work harder at being a Christian. Not true. All that does is foster negative thinking and prevent you from doing your most effective work for the Master.

- It offers help to _____

Some have said that they are reluctant to give their hearts to Christ because they're afraid they won't be able to keep living a righteous life. What a joy it is to be able to explain to them that the power to lie above sin comes to us when we invite Jesus into our lives.

For a saved person who is weak in his struggle against one temptation or another: There is hope for him, too. He doesn't want to sin because he knows that every day he lives brings him closer to the day when he will be welcomed into heaven, his eternal home. And he wants to lay up treasures in the place where he knows he will spend eternity.

Union with Christ

Perhaps at one time or another you have applied for a job in a place where you could not be employed unless you joined a labor union. In this segment of our study, we will discuss the fact that we cannot be saved without "joining a union." Ironically, this union places us into an eternal relationship with the Manager Himself. To understand this concept, we must explore it from four perspectives.

1. The fact that our "Union with Christ" is an integral part of our salvation comes to us from Scripture in several ways.

- We learn it from outright statements.
 - John 17:23 – In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed that the Father would care for his beloved disciples after the Savior's departure from the earth. "I am in them, and you are in me. O Father, (I pray) that they may be made complete in unity."
 - Romans 8:1 – "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
 - 1st Corinthians 6:17 – "One who has joined himself to the Lord has become one spirit with him."
 - See also Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 2:6-7.

- We learn about it from illustrations.
 - John 15:5 – “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from me you can do nothing.”
 - Romans 7:1-4 – “...the Law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives.... For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.... Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.”
 - Ephesians 1:22-23 – “And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”
 - See also Ephesians 2:20; Romans 5:14; John 6:51-56; John 17:21.
- We learn it from the ordinances.
 - Romans 6:1-5 -- _____ symbolizes that we have been placed into Christ.
 - 1st Corinthians 10:16-17 -- _____ symbolizes that Christ has entered us.

2. The nature of this union with Christ

- It is a _____ union.
 - 1st John 5:11-12 – “...God has given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”

This is the single most important benefit of being fused together with Jesus. Life is available only to those who are one with him.
- It is an _____ union.
 - Romans 8:38-39 – “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, or angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

3. The results of our union with Christ

- The results for the Christian

-- We are identified with Christ.

- We have been _____ with him.

Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered himself up for me.”

- We have been _____ with him.

Romans 6:4 – “Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death....”

- We have been _____ with him.

Ephesians 2:5-6 – “Even when we were dead in our transgressions, God made us alive together with Christ ... and raised us up with him....”

- We have been _____ with him.

Ephesians 2:6 – “... and seated us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

- We will be _____ with him.

Colossians 3:4 – “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.”

-- We are blessed in Christ.

- We receive _____ in him.

Romans 8:2 – “The law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ has set you free from the law of sin and death.”

- We receive _____ in him.

2nd Corinthians 5:21 – “God made him who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him.”

- We experience _____ in him.

1st Corinthians 1:30 – “By his doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

- We are endowed with _____ in him.

Romans 8:16-17 – “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

- We receive _____ in him.

Romans 7:4 – “Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.”

- The results for Christ

- He gains _____

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”

When you united with him, you became part of the fortune he is inheriting from his Father. You are precious to him. You are valuable enough to the Son of God that he was willing to die for you. And now you are part of the glorious inheritance that belongs to him, a trophy of grace, a jewel in his crown. Nothing in the created universe matters to Jesus more than you do.

- He gains _____

Ephesians 1:2-23 – “And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

We are all part of the same unit, we all function individually but with one purpose, and we all get our direction from one head, the Lord Jesus. He sends out instructions simultaneously to each of us body parts, and we move forth smoothly and effectively for him.

- He gains _____

John 17:21 – “That they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us; that the world may believe that you sent me.”

4. The practical value of knowing this truth

- It keeps us from becoming _____

Colossians 2:20-21 – “If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as ‘Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch’?”

We Christians are in constant danger of falling into the temptation to think that Christianity is a matter of eating and drinking the right things, wearing the right styles, chanting the right phrases, carrying the right Bible. But Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians to prevent them from being tricked into such thinking. It’s wrong to set up rules of conduct for Christians which are not specifically handed down by God; because legalism is a principle of this world, not a principle of heaven. And since we are supposed to have died with Christ to the unwholesome principles of the world, we have no business copying the sinful, legalistic tendencies of our unsaved neighbors. Union with Christ should have rescued us from that.

- It keeps us from becoming _____

Colossians 3:1 – “If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”

We are also tempted to live as though this world and this life were all that mattered. We shouldn’t have to be reminded that someday all of the trappings of earthly life are going to be burned up. Our objective is to move through this life paying only minimal attention to the temporary things, yet paying maximum attention to the things of eternity.

We are united with a person who doesn’t live here, and who is not overly impressed with anything this dusty globe has to offer. He walks on streets of gold, his real estate is dotted with custom-made mansions, and he possesses an indestructible body. He has it all. And because we are one with him, we have it all, too. So why are we so enamored with the paltry, cheap, temporary little trinkets of this world?

Union with Christ is very practical. It keeps us from making utter fools of ourselves while all of heaven is watching.

Because, in the eyes of God, we are inseparable from his precious Son, it is possible for us to be saved; it is possible for us to enjoy the privileges of being God’s children; and it is

imperative for us to live like members of the royal family – not for ourselves, but so that all the universe will see us and will focus their worship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Resources

Humberd, R. I. *Salvation, Security, and Assurance*. Flora, IN: Humberd's Books, no publication date.

McClain, Alva; Whitcomb, John C. Jr.; Smith, Charles R. "Christian Theology: Salvation and the Christian Life." Winona Lake, IN: Unpublished class notes, Grace Theological Seminary, 1973.

Assignments for Next Segment ("The Christian Life")

1. Read Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, chapter 18.
2. Answer one or more of the "Questions for Personal Application" at the end of each chapter, and be prepared to share and discuss your answers in class. Or compose a question of your own (which relates to the subject matter in those chapters), research the topic, and be prepared to share your answer with the class.