

THE PERFECTED AND PROGRESSIVE ASPECTS OF THE BELIEVER'S SANCTIFICATION

GRACE NOTEBOOK

The Perfected and Progressive Aspects of the Believer's Sanctification

By John Woodward

Is it possible to be so excited about God's grace and our new identity in Christ that we miss part of God's provision for victorious living?

Imagine a mechanic who sets out to fix his car, since the engine won't run. He finds and replaces the broken part and puts it all back together. The engine now runs! Great! But as he cleans up, he discovers a few "left over" parts that had been in the engine. But he says, "What's the harm? The engine's now running, so I'll forget about reinstalling these parts." However, the next week his wife is driving the car and the engine stops again. Those parts were intended by the manufacturer after all...

We celebrate the teaching and writing skills of several popular, recent Exchanged Life writers. But have you noticed the "left over parts?" The "parts" have to do with the second half of Paul's letters. The first half presents the doctrine of grace, the second half usually relates this truth to the "therefore" of the believer's responsibilities of faith, practical obedience, spiritual warfare and ministry (See Ephesians 1-3/4-6; Colossians 1-2/ 3).

You're invited to study and prayerfully consider this outline:

Saintly Living

I. In one sense, the regenerated believer has already been sanctified (positionally and spiritually).

A. *Believers are designated as holy* (about 60 times in the NT). - 1 Cor 3:17: "If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."

- Col 3:12: "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;"

- 1 Thess 5:27: "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren."

- Heb 3:1: "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,"

- 1 Pet 2:5: "you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

- 1 Pet 2:9: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;"

- Rom 1:7: "To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

- Rom 16:2: "that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also."

- Rom 16:15: "Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them."

B. *Sanctification is based on being in Christ.* - 1 Cor 1:30: "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

C. *Sanctification is based on the completeness of the New Covenant* - Heb 10:10: "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

D. *This complete aspect is usually known as "positional sanctification." However, this complete aspect of holiness is also based on the regeneration of the believer's spirit as made holy through union with Christ* - 2 Cor 5:17:"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

- 1 Cor 6:17:"But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him."

- Eph 4:24:"... the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

II. Sanctification is also a continuing process and responsibility. The believer's soul and bodily actions are to be conformed to the indwelling Christ (Rom 8:28,29).

A. *Progressive sanctification is indicated by admonitions to holy behavior (via bodily actions).* - Rom 6:13,19: "And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God ... I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness."

- Eph 5:8: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light."

- 1 Peter 1:15: "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,"

- 2 Pet 3:11: "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

- 2 Cor 6:17,18: "Therefore 'Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.'"

B. *Progressive sanctification is indicated by admonitions to develop holy character (in the soul, i.e. mind, will, and emotions).* - Eph 4:24: "and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

- Col 3:12: "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;"

- 1 Tim 2:15: "Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control."

- Titus 1:8: "but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled,"

- Jas 1:2,3: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience."

- Rom 5:3-5: "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

C. *Progressive sanctification is indicated by admonitions to devotion (in the soul).* - Rom 12:1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,

acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

- Heb 12:14: "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:"
- 2 Cor 5:15: "and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for [purpose, not agency] Him who died for them and rose again."
- 1 Pet 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;"

D. *Progressive sanctification is indicated by Christ's intercession for His people.* - John 17:17: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

E. *Progressive sanctification is implied in the believer's holy calling.* - 1 Thess 4:7: "For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness."

- 2 Tim 1:9: "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 given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,"

F. *The progressive aspect of sanctification refers essentially to the believer's soul and body.* - 2 Cor 7:1: "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." [In the Greek there is no definite article before 'spirit'; this admonition refers to spiritual issues, not a progressive holiness in the regenerated human spirit].

- 2 Tim 2:20-22: "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

- 2 Tim 3:16,17: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

- Heb 12:10: "For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness."

- Heb 10:14: "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being [present tense in the Greek] sanctified."

- 2 Cor 3:18: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

- 2 Peter 3:18: "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."

G. *This progress in holiness is experienced through cooperation with God's grace through the indwelling Christ.* - John 15:4,5: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

- Gal 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; 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 gave Himself for me."

- Philippians 2:12,13: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only,

but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation [in the soul] with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you [in the spirit] both to will and to do for His good pleasure."

- Titus 2:11,12: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,"

III. Sanctification will be perfected when the redeemed are with the Lord after this earthly life.

A. *The Holy Spirit, Who has sealed the believer, is the pledge of ultimate sanctification and glorification.* - Eph 4:30: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

- Rom 8:22,23: "For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."

B. *The past, present, and future aspects of the believer's sanctification are interrelated.*- 1 John 3:1-3:

"[past/present] Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God;

- [future] and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

- [present] And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

- 1 Thess 5:23,24: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it."

In light of these Scriptures, it should be evident that our responsibilities are really our response to His ability. Cooperation, obedience, spiritual disciplines, etc., need not be evidence of self-effort or legalism.[1] As Ian Thomas pointed out, Christ's Life being lived through us will be the same righteous quality of life He demonstrated while here in His earthly ministry.[2]

We may have "fixed" the common impression of performance-based acceptance, an opinion-based identity, and legalism, but what about the "left over parts"? May we humble ourselves and ask for the honest discernment to "test all things and hold on to what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). Like His people in previous generation, we will discover that finding balance is an ongoing process. Since we teachers will be judged more strictly at the judgment seat of Christ (James 3:1), may we recover any neglected teaching for the sake of those we disciple. May we all demonstrate a distinctive testimony to the lost ... to whom we shine as lights in the world (Phil 2:15).

[1] Dr. John Best has called attention to these distinctions by observing two "voices" in the New Testament Greek--the indicative (what is) and the imperative (what should be). See his books such as *Exploring the Treasure of Your New Human Spirit*, and *Romans 5-8:16 Commentary and Study Notes* - www.abundantlivingresources.org/

[2] See Thomas' volume, *The Saving Life of Christ*.

Believer's New Heart," and "Growing in Grace." Regarding trichotomy, see "Man as Spirit, Soul, and Body: Implications for Biblical Counseling" (first edition) under Gracenotebook.com section: Theological Papers.

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The purpose of Grace Notes is to highlight the dynamics of abundant living as summarized in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; 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 gave Himself for me" (NKJV). Hundreds of articles are available online to freely use for personal ministry, newsletters, etc. To find an article by topic, author, or key word, click "Grace Notes"/search at www.GraceNotebook.com. Please pray for God's blessing on this internet ministry.

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have it more abundantly' (John 10:10).

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