

Salvation—Sanctification (13th)

(Today we continue studying the *experimental* aspect of sanctification in the life of the believer as he lives on earth. Today’s podcast discusses the individual growth of the Christian and that the life of sanctification was included in the salvation ordained before the creation of the world.)

When we speak of sanctification and the growth of the believer in Christ we do not mean that each child of grace will reach the same level of maturity or manifest the same degree of faith in his service unto the Lord. As we are individuals naturally and possess different skills and talents in the physical world, so likewise each Christian has his unique gift and expertise in the kingdom. Too often a believer will look at or compare himself to a fellow-believer and think himself either greatly inferior or even question his salvation altogether. God warns us against such actions: “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise,” II Corinthians 10:12. The general consensus is that this is condemning those who consider themselves to be superior in their service and think of themselves more highly than others. However, the principle may be applicable to those that think themselves to be nothing and when comparing themselves to others who seemingly are extremely blessed in their service and abound with talents. This is wrong. If there is any evaluation to be done, one should assess his life based on what he used to be in comparison to where he is presently. In other words, we might adopt the sentiments of John Newton, the author of the song “Amazing Grace”:

“I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am.”
(<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/17247-i-am-not-what-i-ought-to-be-i-am>)

Yes, the Scriptures exhort us to examine ourselves, especially prior to partaking of the Lord’s Supper, so that we do not partake of it “unworthily,” cf. I Corinthians 11:28-29. (As a side note, allow me to stress that the passage does not teach that we are to examine ourselves to determine if we should partake of the Lord’s Supper or not. No. The text declares that one is to “examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.”) Yes, listen again to the words of John Newton as quoted by Arthur Pink in a previous podcast:

“But alas! these my golden expectations have been like South Sea dreams. I have lived hitherto a poor sinner, and I believe I shall die one. Have I, then, gained nothing? Yes, I have gained that which I once would rather have been without — such accumulated proof of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of my heart as I hope by the Lord’s blessing has, in some measure, taught me to know what I mean when I say, ‘Behold I am vile!’ I was ashamed of myself when I began to serve Him, I am more ashamed of myself now, and I expect to be most ashamed of myself when He comes to receive me to Himself. But oh! I rejoice in Him, that He is not ashamed of me!” Ah, as the Christian grows in grace, he grows more and more *out of love with himself*. (*The Doctrine of Sanctification*, P. 124.)

Yes, John Newton saw himself to be a great sinner, but he also recognized that the Lord made a change in him by the grace of God so that he was not the person he used to be. Yes, “by the grace of God” he could say “I am what I am,” he confessed at the same time that he was not what he “once used to be,” and that, too, was by the grace of God. Therefore, dear one, as we study the growth of the believer and the life of sanctification, do not think that we are meaning living a sinless life or that every child of grace is

going to appear the same. The life of a believer is a struggle. It has been likened to a person climbing a mountain and on his way to the summit he passes through many valleys and crosses many peaks, but overall from the base to the top of the mountain there is an overall line of upward progression. Yes, the Christian has many struggles and set-backs from the time of his regeneration, but he continues to “grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” as he lives in this body of sin. As stated in a previous podcast, the Lord adapts each and every experience in life to chastisement so that we “might be partakers of his holiness,” cf. Hebrews 12:5-14. With this foundation established, let us look at a few verses that encourage, exhort, or confirm that sanctification is not an after-thought on the part of God, but it is included in His salvation as ordained before the world was. There are so many passages that it is extremely difficult to know where to start and obviously there will be many passages that will come to your mind that I will overlook or simply omit. Nevertheless, please be patient with my inabilities and lack of insight as we endeavor to study a few texts relating to the subject of sanctification. However, if there were no scripture to investigate regarding this matter, the words of John Bunyan are apropos in his essay on practical Christian holiness entitled “A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity.” He wrote as follows:

They that name the name of Christ should depart from iniquity, because the very profession of that name is holy. The profession is an holy profession. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord; the vessels, that is, the profession, for by that is, as it were, carried about the name and gospel of Jesus Christ. We must, therefore, lay aside all iniquity, and superfluity of naughtiness, and do as persons professing godliness, as professing a profession, that Christ is the priest of, yea the high-priest of. (1 Tim. ii. 10. Heb. iii. 1.) It is a reproach to any man to be but a bungler at his profession, to be but a sloven in his profession. And it is the honour of a man to be excellent in the managing of his profession. Christians should be excellent in the management of their profession, and should make that which is good in itself, good to the church and to the world, by a sweet and cleanly managing of it. (*Works of John Bunyan*, Vol. 3, p. 313.)

Though it is difficult to know which passage to address at this time, allow me to direct your attention to Ephesians 2:10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” This verse clearly states that we are made or fashioned by God and created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Dear believer, you are who you are and what you are because God formed you and shaped you “in Christ Jesus.” You were not only chosen in Christ before the world (Ephesians 1:4) but you were chosen for a purpose—to be “holy and without blame before” God. As our text affirms, this includes good works. In other words, when we were elected before the creation of the world we were also ordained by God to walk in good works. You see, beloved, the only reason you are not living like the world is because God determined from the beginning that He would not only regenerate you but He would work in you by the Holy Spirit so that your walk and conduct would not be according to the course of this world. Too often salvation is presented as individual elements or components left to the believer as to whether he will live in them or not. Thankfully, God does not leave it up to us independently to live the Christian life or not. No. God from the beginning, not only chose us for salvation but He equally ordained our lives accordingly so that we reside in His salvation from the beginning to the end. Often the objection is presented that the verse says “that we should walk in them” and not that we will walk in them. However, the “should” has the same intensity as “should” in Ephesians 1:4 and John 3:16. It is the should of certainly rather than the should of uncertainly or unlikely to happen. In fact, the Greek scholar A. T. Robertson, commenting on this said, “Good works by us were included in the eternal foreordination by God.” Even the Greek word (προετοιμάζω [proetoimázō, *pro-et-oy-mad'-zo*]) translated “hath before ordained” sets forth the concept that the elect will walk in good works. Albert Barnes said of this, “The word here used—proetoimazw—occurs in the

New Testament nowhere else, except in **Ro** 9:23, where it is rendered, 'had afore prepared.' It involves the idea of a previous determination, or an arrangement beforehand for securing a certain result. The previous preparation here referred to was the Divine intention; and the meaning is, that God had predetermined that we should lead holy lives. It accords, therefore, with the declaration in **Eph** 1:4, that he had chosen his people before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy." (Computer Bible program *Sword Searcher*.)

Many other quotes could be supplied to affirm this interpretation of this verse, but I will close with one other from the commentary of John Gill. It is as follows:

which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them, or has "before prepared"; for the preparation of good works to be performed by saints, and the preparation of them for the performance of them; are both from the Lord; God has appointed good works to be done by his people and in his word he has declared what they are he would have done; and it is his will not only that they should do them, but continue to do them; not only that they should do a single act or more, but walk in them; their conversation and course of life should be one continued series of good works; but the intention is not that they should be saved by them, but that they should walk in them; and this being the pre-ordination of God, as it shows that predestination is not according to good works, since good works are the fruits and effects of it, so likewise that it is no licentious doctrine; seeing it provides for the performance of good works, as well as secures grace and glory.

This concludes our study for today. Farewell.