

Walking With
God

Sanctification and the Gospel of Jesus

by Jeff Hatton

Redeemer Presbyterian Church

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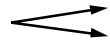
“Have you made the wonderful discovery of the Spirit-Filled life?”¹ I thought I did when I was in college. It all began with a growing and deepening awareness of two great realities while being a Christian. The fact that I was a Christian at the time was the necessary condition to create the perfect environment for the “wonderful discovery of the Spirit-Filled life.”

The Terrible Two: God’s Holiness And Man’s Sinfulness

The first reality was the growing awareness of God’s Holiness both morally and ontologically (i.e. His being). Morally God’s Otherness was the uncomfortable realization that God is fearfully Holy, a “consuming fire” (Heb 12:29) to everything and everyone who is contrary to His character. God’s Holiness does not settle for simple sincerity, ecstatic experiences, or even determined efforts at walking with Him, but rather demands perfect conformity to His Word in thought, word, and deed.

Ontologically God’s Otherness is captured in the infinite distance that exists between the creature and the Creator. God’s ontological otherness creates an awareness of God that is too heavy or too weighty for not only a small, finite human, but also on top of that a sinful one to endure. Thus I was growing in the realization that an infinitely great and “other” God justly demands to see Himself perfectly in my character (heart, mind, and will) and behavior, and there are no awards for coming in second place.

The second reality naturally followed the first. It was the deepening and terrifying awareness of my sin and present lacking of the glory of God (Rom 3:23).² What am I to do with these sinful desires that effortlessly and spontaneously flare-up inside of me just as naturally as breathing, those inner inclinations that leave me reeling as to where they came from and instantaneously swell my heart and mind with its poisonous and yet satisfying appeal? I had no categories for this. Sin according to my understanding was simply acts of the will performed in conscious deliberate rebellion that could be handled through a technique I later learned called “spiritual breathing.”³ But now sin just wasn’t something out there that I chose to do but also something in here where I really lived. “But I am a Christian!” I would say to myself. “I am supposed to be getting better and better, not worse!

The growing awareness of these two terrible realities appeared as mortal enemies engaged in an immortal combat, and the battleground was my soul. As the two great realities grew proportionately together but in opposite directions (i.e. like this: ) , a very ominous chasm was being carved out of my soul by the ever widening distance that was growing between them. Something needed to be done to bridge this chasm.

The “Rearview Mirror Gospel”

Now because I was a Christian at the time I knew that what an unregenerate person⁴ needed the most was to have that infinite chasm between God’s Holiness and man’s sinfulness bridged for them by Christ. But like most evangelicals today and most evangelical teaching today the “Gospel” for me was only for that once and for all bridge crossing that the unconverted needed to make, and was only used by Christians to stir up a little gratitude every once and awhile whenever sentimentality was desired or memorial remembrance was needed.

In other words for the Christian the “Gospel” was like looking in your rearview mirror while driving your car. You needed to look at it every now and then but to drive your car successfully (not to mention safely!) you were required to look ahead through something else, namely your front windshield.

The Super Saints

That “something else” I was told (and in turn told to countless others) was the “wonderful discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life”. Victory was just around the corner... Lewis Sperry Chafer, a one-time president and the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary explains in his definitive work on walking with God:

There are two great spiritual changes which are possible to human experience - the change from the “natural” man to the saved man, and the change from the “carnal” man to the “spiritual” man. The former is divinely accomplished when there is real faith in Christ; **the latter is accomplished when there is a real adjustment to the Spirit**...The “spiritual” man is the divine ideal in life and ministry, in power with God and man, in unbroken fellowship and blessing.⁵

Having one’s personal experience identified as the “carnal man” and a practical “how to” to change that experience to the “spiritual man” is the stuff convictions are made of. Wrestling with the tension of God’s Holiness and one’s sinfulness in an atmosphere where the hermeneutic and apologetic air that one breathed for validating truth was experience and/or whether it worked or not, would naturally lead one to a theology of walking with God that would try to alleviate the tension by promising some sort of “victory”.⁶ Well the “Spirit-Filled Life” promised just that, and continues to abide by the promise of lifting the defeated Christian to the heights of a “higher life”, or to transform the defeated “carnal Christian” into the victorious “spiritual man” you’ve always longed to be.

My problem I soon found out was that I was “trusting in (my) own efforts to live the Christian life.”⁷ Chafer explains, “A Christian is a Christian because he is rightly related to Christ; but ‘he that is spiritual’ is spiritual because he is rightly related to the Spirit.”⁸ The Holy Spirit needs to be appropriated, tapped into, or yielded and surrendered to in order to live the victorious Christian Life. I needed a second work of or adjustment to the Holy Spirit (the first being His indwelling presence after I initially received Christ as Savior) in order to live “victoriously” over the sin and the lacking of the glory of God that I was experiencing. This second work of God’s Spirit could be unleashed by: (1) A sincere desire (2) The confession of all known sin (3) The surrendering or yielding of every area of one’s life to God (4) The appropriation of the Holy Spirit by faith.⁹ This procedure would result in a Christ-directed life by which there is the power to live the Christian life and to experience a more intimate relationship with God.

How Do You Walk With God?

Today most evangelicals believe (as I once did) that the Bible teaches how the believer is to relate to the Holy Spirit and thus walk with God or live “the victorious Christian life”:

“The word of God gives clear directions as to the steps to be taken that they may become spiritual.”¹⁰

And the “wonderful discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life” appears to be the number one answer today for how this is to be done.

However, when all the dust settles with the “Spirit-Filled Life” technique (and for most of our popular notions concerning walking with God today¹¹), two dusty roads seem most traveled upon - the dry and lifeless roads of hypocrisy on the one hand, and despair on the other. Somehow amidst all our preoccupation with and effort toward¹² walking with God, we

made a wrong turn onto the “wide road that leads to destruction.” We have forgotten about the “Gate” and the “narrow road that leads to life” (Matt 7:13-14).

This is a paper about progressive sanctification or walking with God. However, it is not a call to climb-up to the “higher life”, or to descend into the “deeper life”, nor to tap into the Holy Spirit (the power source) to live the victorious Christian life, but rather to Behold the One who is our Sanctification (1Cor 1:30). In other words sanctification is about beholding the Gate not our walking, His descent not our ascent, the Gospel not second works of grace, Christ alone not Christ plus something else. With the most popular teaching today as a polemic backdrop, this paper will seek to answer the burning question every Christian must face, “How Do You Walk With God?” The answer will be sought as I unpack: (1) Briefly what I consider to be the most significant issues in the major views of sanctification in the Church (2) What Luther called the Theology of the Cross.

Summary of Major Views on Sanctification

What did Christ actually accomplish when He lived, died, and rose again to reign in heaven? What did Christ really mean just before He died on the cross when He said, “IT IS FINISHED!” (Jn 19:30)? Did He actually finish or accomplish salvation (justification, sanctification, and glorification), and all that is left to be done is the application of the accomplished salvation by the Holy Spirit to God’s people through the instrument of faith (Jn 17:1-2, 4, 9-11; Rom 9:11-18)? Or did Christ merely make salvation “finishable” or possible, which only lacks the will of man to “make a decision” or make the choice that would turn the “possible” salvation into actual?¹³ In other words did Christ actually save sinners on the cross (Matt 1:21), or just make sinners savable who in turn save themselves by exercising that one thing that salvation is conditioned upon, the will?

The difference between these two options of: (1) Definite Atonement and (2) Possible Atonement (my term), lays open the very heart of the Gospel.¹⁴ For what is at stake here is not only grace alone verses merit or works as the primary cause of one’s salvation, but also Christ alone verses Christ plus “willing and running” (Rom 9:16) in as the basis or grounds of one’s salvation. Either salvation is solely the work of Christ, or willing and running has been added. It is from the view of salvation either being (1) accomplished by Christ or (2) being made available by Christ that the major views of sanctification build their theology.

Justification Is Not Distinct From Sanctification¹⁵

Here justification is confused with sanctification resulting in a Christ Plus Gospel which Paul anathematizes in Galatians (1:8,9), thus revealing the lostness of those who trust in this false Gospel. In other words the righteousness of Christ alone is not the basis of one’s saving status before a Holy God but rather Christ plus personal willing and running (moralism and/or legalism) or an infused righteousness (the traditional Roman Catholic view). The issue here that fueled the Protestant Reformation and led to the recovery of the very heart of the Gospel (justification by grace alone through faith alone on account of Christ alone) is also seen functionally today among “evangelicals” who lose sight of Christ’s righteousness as the basis of their acceptance before God and fall into various forms of “perfectionism.”¹⁶

Many well-meant efforts at so-called sanctification become sinful. For the man who applies himself earnestly and diligently to good works, solely to attain a holier status and thus become a holier person, has lost his reward. His end in view is not God, but himself; and...this wrongly planned sanctification causes self-exaltation and spiritual pride.¹⁷

How easily our hearts turn Pelagian and need the Divine cut of the Law (Gal 3:10-14; Rom 7:7-13) so that the healing balm of the Gospel may be applied. However, the danger needs to be recognized among many evangelicals that the persistent functional practice of seeking justification in one's sanctification might reveal not just our legalistic tendencies (which the Law functions to expose and then to drive us to Christ), but rather a "zeal without knowledge" that does not know "about God's righteousness" and "seeks to establish (its) own" (Rm 10:2-3).

This view of sanctification is not just unbiblical but also anti-Christian, for it pits man's righteousness against Christ's righteousness as the basis for a saving status before a Holy God. Justification is not finished in this distorted notion of the Gospel, only made possible and in need of man's causal contribution of self-righteousness to make it finished.

Justification Is Distinct But Separated From Sanctification

Here the Gospel is broken apart thereby creating a Christ minus Gospel. Instead of Christ's work alone accomplishing or purchasing a sinner's justification, sanctification, and glorification (the unbreakable chain of salvation), another work is needed in addition to Christ's work in the area of sanctification. Namely some sort of willing, surrendering, yielding, or work of the Holy Spirit (that the Christian must appropriate, tap into, or leverage out of heaven) is needed to cause the effect of some aspect of sanctification.¹⁸ There seems to be two dynamics at work here.

First sanctification is separated from justification thereby destroying the unbreakable chain of salvation that Christ purchased (Rm 8:29-30). Thus resulting in an old theology that Zane Hodges has made new again and even popularized in the so called Lordship Salvation Controversy, which is referred to today as free grace.¹⁹ Historically the Church has called this view easy believism or antinomianism, which basically means that one can profess Christ as Savior but need not profess Him as Lord. "Fire insurance" is all that is needed, no fruit or godly effects (meaning sanctification) need to apply as the evidence that one has the "fire insurance" he/she professes. Thus the division between Christ's work of justification and sanctification.

Or to say the same thing differently, there are three kinds of people in the world: (1) The Natural Man, an unregenerate person (2) The Carnal Man, who although is a Christian, is living a self-defeated life because he is trusting in his own efforts to live the Christian life (bears no fruit or does not experience sanctification). Here the Holy Spirit is resident but not President (3) The Spiritual Man who lives the victorious Christian life (bears fruit or experiences sanctification) because he has tapped into the power source of the Holy Spirit and been transferred into the "Higher Life".²⁰

Therefore in the Christ Minus Gospel grace is not effective in sanctification, only in justification. To put it into the vernacular, one can believe like a Christian and live like the devil and still be in the fold. This view, ironically, in apparently seeking to protect God's grace (wrongly I might add) has in fact destroyed God's grace by: (1) Making it ineffective in sanctification, and by (2) Destroying the work of Christ through the separation of sanctification from the unbreakable chain of salvation that Christ purchased in His Gospel.

Another irony is also the other dynamic. In seeking to seemingly protect God's grace from the encroachment of sanctification (thus the separation), they have in turn added other

works to sanctification and thus the Gospel creating a Christ Plus Gospel. By removing sanctification from Christ's finished work they have ontologically and functionally made another work (no matter how good it is) the primary cause of one's sanctification, which is adding to the Gospel and a clear perversion of the Gospel.

Notice that this theological view is the same as the first one with respect to what Christ accomplished in His Gospel. Both see the work of Christ as a potential reality that becomes an actual reality when a conditional cause is met, usually the work of faith. Also even though both would never attempt to nullify the work of Christ as the basis of justification for the first view and sanctification for this second view, they do just that. How? By removing the alone from Grace and Christ through the addition of human causal cooperation and effort (or willing and running - Rm 9:16). When the alone is missing from Grace alone as the primary cause of our justification and/or sanctification, merit or works have entered into the picture. And even though the missing "alone" is not eternally threatening or anathematized in this view of sanctification (as it is in the previous view of justification), it could point to an improper view of justification and just as easily swallow-up justification in its pursuit of the "Higher Life". In other words not only is there a danger in this view of becoming mechanistic, superficial, and a black hole into which the righteousness of Christ (justification) tumbles, but also of feeding the same danger we mentioned earlier of covering up a "zeal without knowledge" that does not know "about God's righteousness" and "seeks to establish (its) own" (Rm 10:2-3). When this occurs this view of sanctification can unknowingly grant false assurance to an unregenerate hypocrite.

Also when the alone is missing from Christ alone as the sole basis or grounds of our justification and/or sanctification, merit and works have again entered into the picture of the Gospel. No longer is Christ's finished work alone sufficient to take the sinner from justification to glory... There must be another work(s) along the way which ironically puts the control of a sinner's salvation (justification and/or sanctification) into the sinner's own hands, not God's. That is not a good object in which to place one's faith.

Therefore if Christ's life, death, and resurrection (the Gospel) did not just secure a potential salvation (justification, sanctification, and glorification) but an accomplished salvation for sinners, then what does progressive sanctification look like? In other words how do you walk with God when you walk not to secure your sanctification (the 2nd view)²¹ but rather to express your sanctification?

Justification Is Distinct But Is Not To Be Separated From Sanctification

The answer in a nutshell is: The Christian walks in faith, hope, and love...not fear (c.f. Rm 6:11, 14, 17-18, 22, 8:1-4, 14-17; 1Jn 4:18-19, etc.). Or as the Reformers said, enjoyment²² and gratitude.²³ Since these are responses, we must first look at what faith, hope, love, enjoyment, and gratitude are responding to. First I will continue in the same format I began with in the first two major categories of sanctification (briefly touch upon what I believe to be the significant issues), and then second spend the rest of the paper applying this third major category of sanctification to practically walking with God.

Here Christ accomplished the whole package of salvation and the Holy Spirit applies the benefits to God's people through the instrument of faith. There is no stopping that which the Trinity has been in unity over from all eternity. God the Father freely loved or elected a people for Himself²⁴, God the Son came to accomplish or purchase salvation²⁵ for God's

elected people²⁶, and the Holy Spirit in turn applies the benefits secured by Christ to the people God has made and redeemed for Himself.

There is no potential justification or sanctification that needs to be leveraged out of heaven by some other work or merit on our part in order to become a reality. Nor is there a separation in the salvation that Christ purchases, no divided Christ or half Gospel that crucifies Christ between the two thieves of legalism/moralism (the Christ Plus false gospel) and antinomianism/easy-believism (the Christ Minus false gospel).²⁷

Justification and Sanctification, are constantly conjoined and cohere; but from this it is erroneously inferred that they are one and the same. For example: The light of the sun, though never unaccompanied with heat, is not to be considered heat...We acknowledge, then, that as soon as any one is justified, renewal also necessarily follows: and there is no dispute as to whether or not Christ sanctifies all whom he justifies. It were to rend the gospel, and divide Christ himself to attempt to separate the righteousness which we obtain by faith (justification) from repentance (sanctification).²⁸

Scripture testifies:

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, 'Let Him Who Boasts, Boast In The LORD (1Cor 1:30-31).

For whom he foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified (Rm 8:29-30).

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Eph 2:8-10).

And the Westminster Larger Catechism affirms:

Q.77 Wherein do justification and sanctification differ?

A.77 Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification imputeth the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification His Spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exercise thereof; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued; the one doth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.²⁹

The root of faith, hope, love, enjoyment, and gratitude has been planted, now it is time to enjoy its fruit.

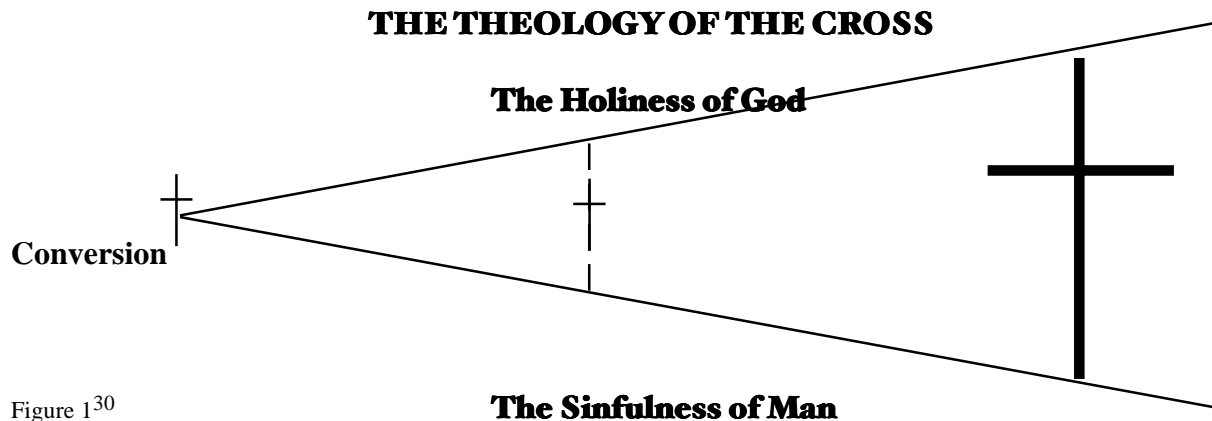


Figure 1³⁰

Behold The Cross

At conversion peace was made between two great raging enemies. The supremacy, sufficiency, and beauty of Christ and His work satisfied or bridged the bottomless, dark chasm that existed between the infinite, blinding splendor of God's Holiness and the scarring, ragged ugliness of man's sinfulness. Faith, hope, love, enjoyment, and gratitude effortlessly and spontaneously poured forth in response to the overwhelming revelation of the glory of Christ and His work unveiled so sovereignly and graciously to us in and through the message of the Gospel (see the first cross in figure 1). Now, what happens next?...

Behold Sin's Dominion

Every view of the spiritual life has at its starting point an understanding of the human plight in sin. Indeed, a weak view of the latter is at the base of every distortion in the former. Simply put, an inaccurate understanding of the power of sin in the believer's life will lead to distorted expectations of spiritual progress.³¹

Sin and grace, although stark opposites, are intimate allies in our understanding of the salvation (justification, sanctification, and glorification) that Christ accomplished. What we do with the one (sin) we will do with the other (grace). For instance if we have a low view of sin in terms of its effects upon man (i.e. "we're not that bad!"), then we will have a low view of grace in terms of its effects upon man (i.e. "a little assistance is all I need," or "God helps those who help themselves").

Therefore sin and grace rise or fall together. If we fudge in our understanding of the one, then we will fudge in our understanding of the other.³² This is why the uglier sin is to God's people the more beautiful Christ will be, and visa versa.

Before conversion a believer is under the dominion of sin (Rm 6:6, 14, 17, 19, 20). This dominion is the universal hold of sin over one's whole life with no contrary influences (like grace) at work at all.³³ Therefore not only were we "hostile to God" and did not "submit to God's law" in our unregenerate state, but also "nor could (we) do so" ("submit to God's law"; Rom 8:8).

Why is an unregenerate unbeliever unable to submit to God's law (Rom 8:8)? Answer: Because of the dominion of sin (Rom 6:20). There is no special grace at work in him/her, like the presence of the Holy Spirit. He/she does not submit to God because of being constrained

against their will (i.e. they wanted to but were not permitted to), but rather because of just the opposite which makes it a slavery of the worst kind. They do not submit to God because they do not want to! The unregenerate person hates God and loves sin!³⁴ The dominion of sin in an unbeliever is so thorough, so complete, so total, so comprehensive that there is not one drop of “good” or “contrary influence” (special grace) in all the landscape of their faculties (i.e. mind, affections, will). There is only the powerful, universal hold of sin.

The great Puritan John Owen likened sin’s dominion to that of a forest, a “dense tangle of trees, vines, and underbrush. The ground is completely covered; there are no clearings and light never penetrates to the soil.”³⁵ Under the dominion of sin we were “dead in sin” (Eph. 2:1) and dead to the life of God (Rom 6:20). In this condition unregenerate sinners do not need a “potential” Savior, they need a real Savior. A Savior that does not make them savable (which they in turn save themselves by their faith or some other work) but really saves them by paying the penalty of their sin and imputing His very own righteousness to them (justification), and then imparting His very own righteousness to their souls (regeneration and progressive sanctification).

Understanding the dominion of sin helps the Christian see the incredible grace, mercy, and work that God manifested in Christ, as well as the extraordinary privilege and hope of no longer being under the dominion of sin (Rom 6:14). For the Christian definitive sanctification is done,³⁶ which guarantees some degree of progressive sanctification in this life and certain glorification in the next. If sin’s universal sovereignty and rule has been dethroned for the Christian, then what is the nature of sin in the believer?

Behold Sin’s Continual Presence

John Owen answers the above question this way, “Grace changeth the nature of man, but nothing can change the nature of sin.”³⁷ Ferguson summarizes Owen and the main point about sin in the believer nicely.

The nature of sin does not change in regeneration or sanctification, but its **status** in us is radically altered.³⁸

The nature of sin in the believer does not change...Its **status** in us is radically changed. Sin’s status in the believer changes from dominion to rebellion. Sin can no longer possess a universal hold upon the believer with no contrary influences because there is now a contrary influence, namely the Holy Spirit. There is no more slavery to sin in a universal, comprehensive sense amidst the landscape of the Christian’s faculties or being. A clearing has been made in the jungle where there was none before.

When the unregenerate became a Christian it was the first time a contrary influence (power, law, principle) to sin took up residence within the landscape of his/her being. The presence of this contrary influence (the Holy Spirit) was of such a nature that not one area of his/her being was untouched. The Bible describes this indwelling of the Holy Spirit in such a glorious manner that the nature of the believer changes (2Cor 5:17). For the first time the “Spirit lusts against the flesh” and the “flesh lusts against the Spirit” (Gal 5:16-17). In other words when we become Christians the war begins. One of the foremost marks of a Christian is that he/she struggles with sin, not that he/she does not struggle with sin.

We’ve got it backwards today, struggle with sin is good (rebellion), no struggle with sin is bad (dominion). The normal Christian life is being at war with sin. Where there is no war with sin, there sin has dominion. If the normal Christian life is struggling with sin, what about growing in the Christian life?

Am I Getting Better Or Worse?

Contrary to most notions of the Christian life today, we should not see ourselves as getting better and better. In fact, just the opposite should be taking place.³⁹ “The longer we walk with God, the more unsettled we should become.”⁴⁰ Why? Because we are walking with an infinitely HOLY GOD.

Look at figure 1 again. As I mentioned before, when we became Christians the terrible two realities of God’s Holiness and our sinfulness found peace in Christ. Now as we go on in the Christian life the awareness of the terrible two does not lessen but increases. We are not decreasing in our knowledge of a Holy God but increasing. Thus we will always be proportionately aware of our “lacking the glory of God” (Rm 3:23). This awareness should drive us to Christ and His righteousness.

Unfortunately what usually takes place as we go on in the Christian life and grow in our awareness of the terrible two is that the supremacy, sufficiency, and beauty of Christ and His work (like His imputed righteousness) stays the same size or even shrinks from lack of attention (see 2nd cross in figure 1 on page 10).⁴¹ What has happened?

The turmoil that results (conviction)⁴² from the widening gap between God’s Holiness and our sinfulness soon becomes too great to bear. We must find relief and peace. The ever widening gap must be closed and so begins our journey to close the gap, and this is our problem...

Instead of running to Christ and His alien (outside of us) righteousness to perfectly bridge the ever widening chasm and to bring comfort to our distressed, guilt-ridden souls, we run to or build other bridges in an attempt to cross the chasm and live in peace. Therefore we leave Christ and His work in our rear-view mirror as we look ahead through “something else” (our front windshield) in order to drive our car.⁴³ We swap Christ’s work for ours, His righteousness for our righteousness, and in the process “fall from grace” as we “are seeking to be justified by the law” (Gal 5:4).

And on this treadmill we run: Working harder, becoming more disciplined, searching for second blessings, striving for deeper experiences, being more active in Church and ministry, appropriating more of the Holy Spirit, praying this prayer and going to that conference, trying this technique and implementing that method, surrendering all and yielding more, climbing to the “Higher Life”, tapping into the “Spirit-Filled Life”, willing more faith, striving to become the “Spiritual Man”, and even attempting to recreate and recover some certain time period in church history when the church was “really the church” and people were “really spiritual,” etc. The broken lines extending from the second cross in figure 1 (page 12) represent all our efforts at trying to make ourselves more righteous in order to find relief and peace from the terrible two. All of these efforts at “bridge building” must either: (1) Lower God’s standards of Holiness so that they can now appear to be kept (hypocrisy) (2) Redefine the nature and effects of sin in the believer so that we appear not as bad as we seem (hypocrisy) or (3) A combination of the both.

The bottom-line is that we are trying to bridge the gap between God’s Holiness and our sinfulness through our own works of righteousness, even when we do “good things” and use God and/or the Holy Spirit to do it. The infused, inside of us righteousness swallows-up the imputed, outside of us righteousness of Christ. We hold to forms of godliness that all avoid Christ and His righteousness, thus denying the Gospel of its power (2Tim 3:5). In the end we are impoverished and thrown into one of two options...

Hypocrisy Or Despair?

Hypocrisy is what occurs when we pretend to be something we are not. It is the difference between reality and the portrayal of reality. There seems to be two kinds of hypocrisy that travel down the wide road to destruction.

First there is the kind of hypocrisy that comforts the unbeliever and deceives him/her into thinking they are Christians when in reality they are not. Thus giving a false assurance. Historically the Puritans referred to these poor souls as Professors not Possessors.⁴⁴ In other words they professed to be in the faith but in reality did not possess the Object of faith. There is no struggle with sin in this person's life. The dominion of sin reigns unnoticed and they never face the terrible two in such a way that leads them to Christ.

Unfortunately this kind of hypocrisy finds fertile soul in teaching that seems to be characterized by two things: (1) A view of sanctification that sees justification as distinct but separated from sanctification (see page 7).⁴⁵ Why? Because the reality and awareness of the terrible two (remember: God's Holiness and Man's Sinfulness) is bridged not by the righteousness of Christ alone but by some other "second work"⁴⁶ that: gives you "victory" or "success" in the Christian Life, makes you a "Spiritual Man", transfers you into the "Spirit-Filled Life" or "Higher Life", frees you to live the "Exchanged Life", etc. Also in these false attempts to "bridge" the chasm between the terrible two, a low view of indwelling sin in the believer is created and thus a low view of God's grace secured at the cross. The damage that occurs here is that these false "bridges" try to wean us away from our struggle with sin by creating "victory", the "higher life", or the "spiritual man". In other words they take away one of the most distinguishing marks of the believer (the struggle that comes from being simultaneously justified and yet a sinner) - the struggle with sin. This creates a false assurance for the unregenerate hypocrite, and as will soon be discussed no assurance for the Christian in despair (2) The avoidance or lowering of the Moral Law and/or the lack of emphasis upon the Holiness of God. The avoidance or lowering of God's Holiness and perfect standards of righteousness (which the Law functions to reveal of God and to show the absence of in man) creates a moralism or legalism that falsely manufactures a new keepable Law, thus fueling self-righteousness and avoidance of Christ's righteousness.

Second, there is the kind of hypocrisy that is very much at home in the believer. This kind of hypocrisy seems to follow a progressive process if not curbed. The beginning stages seem to center around outright conscious misrepresentations of the truth, mostly due to the idol of the approval or fear of man (for such is the nature of sin). The next stage centers around one's response to the terrible two. Usually this is accelerated by the views of sanctification that spring from justification being distinct but separated from sanctification (see page 7). Why? Because the truth of the terrible two (God's Holiness and Man's Sinfulness) does not go away even though other bridges are erected and traveled in order to close the gap between them and to find peace from the raging guilt of "lacking the glory of God" (Rm 3:23). Therefore "success" becomes contingent upon creating different realities in terms of God's Character and man's sinfulness than what is really true and then living under these manufactured false realities - this is hypocrisy.

Usually the first casualty in this redefining process is sin. New definitions are created to define the nature of sin, its effects, and its location in the believer.⁴⁷ The next to hit the theological deconstructionist's dictionary is the nature of grace and its effects.⁴⁸

The final stage of hypocrisy for the believer is the most dangerous. It is akin to the star athlete who starts to believe his own press clippings. Reality fades into the background to such an extent that you actually begin to deceive yourself into believing what you have been

telling yourself. You become good at living in the world you have created. This seems to be the hardest nut that God's grace must crack, and will usually absorb many painful blows from the hand of a loving Father in order to reveal the "sinfulness of sin" (Rm 7:13) and the righteousness of Christ alone before it will crack. Although hypocrisy is most damaging to a believer's conscience, despair tears away at his assurance of salvation.

Despair braces itself like a man (Job 40:7) and faces the terrible two. The problem is, despair doesn't see Christ. Despair has come to the end of all its trying harder and its swallowing of the "secrets" to the Christian life, and is left alone considering itself a second class Christian because "it didn't work for me while it does work for everyone else. They must be God's first team or the super saints, while who knows if I'm even in the ballgame." The irony about despair is that it never considers whether "it" may not be working for the "super saints" too. All it sees is itself, alone, with no work of Christ to hang onto. What despair needs to see, and what hypocrisy refuses to see is the supremacy, sufficiency, and the beauty of Christ and His work.

No One Can Savor What They Do Not See

Yes, the longer we walk with God the more unsettled we should become...**AND the more beautiful Christ should become** (see cross #3 in Figure 1). Christ died for Christians too!⁴⁹ The awareness of God's Holiness and thus the awareness of our sinfulness should drive us to Christ again and again and again. Sin and repentance should characterize our Christian walk. The Christian community should be a redemptive community of sinners who honestly face their sin and joyfully behold their Savior in the wonder and sanctifying beauty of His person and work.

Christ and His work should get more lovely, more excellent, more radiant, and more sweet to us, even if we do not (3rd cross in figure 1 on page 12). The result will always be a greater rest, relish, delight, wonder, and satisfaction in God's grace and mercy for us in Christ. And as we grow in our worship of and satisfaction in (faith, hope, and love) all that God is for us and promises to be for us in Christ, something quite unexpected occurs. It is so below the surface of our lives that it is hard to see, and usually it is only over a period of time that we actually come to any notice of it whatsoever...

We are slowly conforming to or becoming more like that which we are beholding (2 Cor 3:18). Slowly, painfully, with much failure, and with continual struggle but nonetheless it is there, transformation is taking place.⁵⁰ We are changing because He is faithful to complete that for which He started, which is the seeing Himself in a people He has redeemed for Himself. And the great hope, which is as certain as He is, is that one day we will see Him...and when we do we will be like Him for we shall see Him as He is! (1 Cor 15:51).

Before concluding one other thing needs to be briefly noted about the role of the Gospel in the Christian's walk with God. The Gospel (Christ's life, death, and reigning resurrection) accomplished our sanctification (1 Cor 1:30). We do not need another work for our sanctification. What we do need, however, is Gospel preaching to effect our comfort and progressive sanctification.⁵¹

The message of Christ and His work is the "power of God" for our salvation (which includes our sanctification). In the message of the Gospel Christ shows up! And when Christ shows up in the efficacy of His work, faith, hope, and love will be there. They will not need to be willed into action. Why? Because they are effects not causes! We need to get our causes and effects in line. The cause is always the grace of God alone grounded in the finished work

of Christ alone and applied to (the effect of salvation which Christ's work purchased) God's people through the means of faith alone.⁵²

In other words the Holy Spirit applies the work of Christ (justification and sanctification) to His people through (the means of) the message of Christ and His finished work (Rm 1:16-17; 10:17). No one can savor what they do not see and through the preaching of Christ we see!⁵³ The Object always precedes faith (Rm 10:17). We need the supremacy, sufficiency, and the beauty of Christ and His work preached to us continually for it is the only cause that produces the effects or application of our salvation.⁵⁴

Conclusion

Dr. John Hannah said, "I have never met a godly person who thought he was...but I have met a lot of ungodly people who thought they were godly." There seems to be a direct correlation between sin and grace. For the Christian the terrible two will always be there until death takes away its sting and glory takes over. This leaves only two options for walking with God, either Christ gets bigger and bigger or He gets smaller and smaller. Either Christ continues to bridge the infinite chasm between the terrible two or we build another bridge, which is no bridge at all (Gal 1:7).

"Bridge building" for the Christian is not a good business to be in, its dividends are either hypocrisy or despair. However for the one who beholds Christ and His work, comfort, worship, life, and progressive transformation (to name a few) flow from an endless reserve. Today we need to recover the depth of the solution (the gospel) by facing the depth of our problem (sin).

Preaching Christ is the God appointed means of increasing the size of the cross (the 3rd cross in figure 1 on page 12) to match the growing awareness of the terrible two. The knowledge of God in Christ is an unknown cure today for the gaping chasm between the terrible two, for the practical weaning away from sin, and for most notions of walking with God. We cannot savor what we do not see, and no one can choose an object that is not there. We do not need more preaching and teaching that tells us to: "Be like", "Be good", or "Do good" for they do not give us the Object, they give us only ourselves (2 Cor 4:5). We need Christ! The Christian life is one of **beholding** God in Christ. Walking with God is a gospel issue.

APPENDIX: GLOSSARY

Dominion of sin: The universal hold of sin with no contrary influences (like special or renewing grace). It is the sovereign uncontested rule of the law of sin within the soul of man. Thus the dominion of sin is over all unregenerate descendants of Adam.

Flesh: The description of the abounding sinful characteristics that have dominion in the nature of the unregenerate, and the residual effects of the dominion of sin in the nature of the regenerate.

The Gospel: The finished work of Christ accomplished by His life, death, and reigning resurrection. This work is often referred to as redemption in the Scripture.

Human Nature: The constitutional nature of man that consists of the body (the material element) and the soul/spirit (the immaterial element).

Holiness: Literally I take it to mean that God sees Himself in it; A conformity unto God in the nature of man; specifically a conformity unto God in the nature or defining characteristics of man's mind, affections, and will.

Law: A working, impelling, urging, and effectual inbred (indwelling) principle or power that abides in the soul.

Nature: A set of defining characteristics; it is not a constitutional element of shape, size, proportion, or volume; it is the suitability, disposition, frame, qualities, inclination, desires, sense, taste, or appetite of the mind, affections, and will.

Regeneration: A certain one-time effect of revelation; a work of God's Spirit that is "instantaneous," and "consisting in one single creating act" (Owen, 3.387) that is part of the application of what Christ's finished work on the cross accomplished for His people; it is the grace and beauty of God in Christ showing up or being imparted to the mind, affections, and will of man in such a way that his/her defining nature changes from being sinful to being spiritual; the creation of a holy, gracious nature in the soul of man by the Word or Call of God by His Spirit; the ending of the dominion of sin (though the law of sin is never eradicated until glorification) and the beginning of the dominion of grace; to make alive to God in Christ by the arrival (revelation) of God in Christ and the resulting conformity of man in his nature to the object of Christ that was revealed.

Effectual Calling: WSC 31. What occurs when Christ shows up in His supremacy, sufficiency, and beauty to save sinners; it is seeing the Redeemer in the efficacy of His work; the coming of God; "the crisis of the finite in the light of the infinite" (TDNT); the object of Christ shows up; the secondary cause of grace originating from the grounds of grace (Christ's work) that begins and continues the Christian life.

Salvation: The unbreakable chain or complete salvific package of justification, sanctification, and glorification.

Sanctification: WSC 35. "It is the universal renovation of our natures by the Holy Spirit into the image of God, through Jesus Christ" (Owen); the application of Christ's finished work in such a way that the righteousness that was imputed because of Christ is progressively imparted or infused because of Christ into the very nature of believers; the restoration (saving) of man's soul through the mortifying of the indwelling sin that still resides there, and the restoring of the grace and holiness that once was there in Adam; where regeneration deals with kind (the impartation of the grace and life of God in Christ into the soul), sanctification deals with degrees of the already present kind.

Soul/Spirit: The immaterial element of human nature that is comprised of three interdependent faculties: (1) The mind (2) The affections (3) The will.

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¹ Dr. Bill Bright, *The Holy Spirit Booklet* (Arrowhead Springs: Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc., 1966), front page.

² To come short of reflecting the glory of God or falling short of being like God (John Murray, *The Epistle To the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 112-113). It is the state of lacking conformity to the moral perfections of God in thought, word, and deed.

³ The notion of what to do when you reclaim the throne of your life through deliberate acts of disobedience. Out with the bad (sin) and in with the good (Holy Spirit). First, call it sin. Second, call it forgiven. Third, call upon God to fill you again with His Holy Spirit by faith. This process results in the Christ-directed life by which Christ now lives His life in and through you by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Dr. Bill Bright, *The Holy Spirit Booklet* (Arrowhead Springs: Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc., 1966)).

⁴ An unbeliever or non-Christian.

⁵ Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 22.

⁶ This preoccupation with formulas, steps, methods, programs, how to's, being more effective, practical applications, etc... is what I call the *Pragmatic Hermeneutic*. In other words for something to be true it must: (1) Coincide with my experience and/or (2) Be measurable, practical, or something people can get their hands on.

⁷ Bright, 6.

⁸ Chafer, 23.

⁹ Bright, *The Holy Spirit Booklet*.

¹⁰ Chafer, 22.

¹¹ I am using this phrase comprehensively in terms of the broad issues of progressive sanctification or growth in the Christian life.

¹² Any quick examination of the book titles at Christian bookstores (excuse me, they are not being called bookstores anymore, *Christian Lifestyle Stores*), will reveal a very demanding market in sanctification issues.

¹³ Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer believed the latter (see "For Whom Did Christ Die?" reprinted in *Biblioteca Sacra* (Oct.-Dec. 1980), 325). It should be noted that this causal notion of the will seems to be in direct conflict with Romans 9:16 - "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy."

¹⁴ The Gospel is the historical, objective, external, finished work of Jesus Christ. As Lutheran, Rod Rosanblatt states: "A good test to see if something is the Gospel or not is - If it is something that happens in me or is done by me, it is not the Gospel...But is rather what the Gospel produces (Christians United For Reformation, *Galatians*, The White Horse Inn Radio Program, 1996). In other words, the Gospel may produce all kinds of changes or have many effects, but these changes/effects are not the Gospel. The issue is in getting our cause and effects in line. The **cause** is the work of Christ alone, what Christ did, or what Christ's life, death, and resurrection accomplished *alone*. While the **effects** (i.e. regeneration, justification, sanctification, glorification, and faith, hope, love, etc.), are what the Gospel accomplished or are the application of what the Gospel accomplished by means of the Holy Spirit to God's people.

¹⁵ The following three categories are taken from Dr. Grassmick's *Guidelines for Research Paper 205*, Dallas Theological Seminary, pp. 1-2.

¹⁶ A Wesleyan-Holiness theology that has its roots in the theology of Charles G. Finney and "underlies much of Pentecostal and charismatic understanding", as well as "has deeply influenced mainstream evangelicalism through the

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Keswick movement” (Michael Horton, *In The Face of God* (Dallas: WORD Publishing, 1997), 166). For further treatment see *Studies In Perfectionism* by Benjamin B. Warfield.

¹⁷ Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1900), 502.

¹⁸ This position represents a host of traditions that have a common ancestry in thought to semi-pelagian or Arminian theology. The traditions usually represented here are: the Wesleyan-Holiness groups, Pentecostal-Charismatic groups, Keswick/Higher Life groups, and today’s Exchanged Life variations.

¹⁹ See his book, *Absolutely Free!*.

²⁰ Dr. Bright, *The Holy Spirit Booklet*.

²¹ As hard as it might be for view #2 proponents to affirm what I just said, they really have no choice. Ontologically and functionally their theology forces this statement of reality concerning their system.

²² The Westminster Larger Catechism Q/A.1. states: Q.1 “What is the chief and highest end of man? A.1 “Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever” (*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 3rd edition, (Atlanta: Committee for Christian Education & Publications, 1990), Larger Catechism Q/A 1).

²³ *The Heidelberg Catechism* divides itself into three parts: (1) Sin and Misery (2) Deliverance and (3) **Gratitude** in which 43 questions and answers are devoted (Q/A 86-129). For example *Q.86*: “Since, then, we are delivered from our misery by grace alone, through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we yet do good works? *A.86*: “Because Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, also renews us by His Holy Spirit after His own image, that with our whole life we may show ourselves thankful to God for his benefits, and that He may be praised by us; then, also, that each of us may be assured in himself of his faith by the fruits thereof, and that by our godly walk our neighbors also may be won for Christ” (*The Heidelberg Catechism*, ed. by G.I. Williamson, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1993), Q/A 86).

²⁴ Ex 33:19; Ps 33:12, 65:4, 106:5; Mt 20:15, 22:14, 24:22, 24, 31; Lk 18:7; Jn 15:16; Acts 13:48; Rm 8:28-30, 8:33, 9:11-13, 16, 20-21, 23, 11:5-7, 28, 33-36; 1Cor 1:27-29; Eph 1:4-5, 11-12; Col 3:12; 1Thes 1:4-5, 5:9; 2Thes 2:13; 2Tim 2:10; Jm 2:5; 1Pet 1:1-2, 2:8-9; 2Pet 1:10; Rev 13:8, 17:14 (verses gathered from Michael Horton, *Putting Amazing Back Into Grace* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1994), pp. 266-270).

²⁵ Mt 1:21; Rm 3:24, 5:8-10; Gal 1:3-4, 3:13; Col 1:21-22; 1Tim 1:15; Titus 2:13-14; Heb 9:12; 1Pet 3:18 (Ibid, 270-271).

²⁶ Mt 20:28, 26:28; Jn 6:36-40, 10:11, 14-15, 24-26, 11:50-52, 17:1-2, 4, 9-11; Acts 20:28; Rm 5:19, 8:32-34; Eph 1:4-5, 7, 5:25-27; Heb 9:15, 28; Rev 5:9 (Ibid, 271-273).

²⁷ Tertullian described the situation in his day as “Christ crucified between two thieves” because the ancient church was facing heresies concerning Christ’s person (quoted from Michael Horton, “Christ Crucified Between Two Thieves”, ed. by Michael Horton, *Christ The Lord: The Reformation And Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 129).

²⁸ Printed in *Selected Works of John Calvin, Tracts and Letters*, eds. Henry Berveridge and Jules Bonnet, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 116).

²⁹ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 3rd edition, (Atlanta: Committe for Christian Education & Publications, 1990), Larger Catechism Q/A 77.

³⁰ Adapted from the Reverend Skip Ryan, *Park Cities Presbyterian Church*.

³¹ Dr. John Hannah, “John Owen and the ‘Normal’ Christian Life: Or Sanctification In An Era Of Confusion”, *Modern Reformation*, November/December 1996, 15.

³² For instance our perception of the nature of the problem (sin) will determine our understanding of the nature of the solution (grace).

³³ John Owen, "A Treatise of the Dominion of Sin and Grace", vol. 6, ed. by William H. Gould, *The Works of John Owen* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 518.

³⁴ In fact if an unregenerate person were to walk into heaven he would turn around and walk out! Why? Because he hates God! God and God's pleasures are contrary to the unregenerate sinner's nature and pleasures (Jn 3:3-6), they are foolishness to him (1 Cor 2:14).

³⁵ John D. Hannah, *Ibid*, 15.

³⁶ The dominion of sin is broken, regeneration leading to progressive sanctification and eventual glorification has begun. Sanctification needs to be viewed from two aspects. One aspect refers to "the state in which believers find themselves because of the work of Christ." The other aspect refers to "the operation of His Spirit in their lives." In other words, sanctification in the NT can be summarized as "a one-time event and as a process, the believers being and becoming holy and acting correspondingly" (David Peterson, *Possessed By God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 14).

³⁷ John Owen, *The Nature, Power, deceit, and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin in Believers*, 6:177.

³⁸ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987), 125-126.

³⁹ Paul seemed to progress in greater awareness of his sinfulness with his statement that he was the "chief of sinners" (1Tim 1:15).

⁴⁰ Dr. John D. Hannah, quoted in *Seminar On John Owen*, summer of 1996.

⁴¹ Most teaching today and the natural inclination of our hearts do not help as well.

⁴² Conviction is a function of the Moral Law of God. The Moral Law serves to draw out the sin that is already there (Rm 7:5, 7-13). Calvin likened the Moral Law to a mirror that reveals the sin in the sinner (as a mirror reveals the dirt on one's face). However, the mirror cannot clean off the dirt that it reveals. Therefore the Law condemns, kills, and destroys by revealing the real culprit in every human being, sin, and by destroying any confidence man could place in his own righteousness. Thus the "Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith" (Gal 3:23).

⁴³ If we are the ones handing out ladders or bridges we bear the indictment of God through the prophet Jeremiah, "they have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, saying 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace" (Jer 6:14).

⁴⁴ See Jonathan Edwards', "A Warning To Professors", in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol 2, (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992).

⁴⁵ Also the view of sanctification that sees justification as not being distinct from sanctification promotes this kind of hypocrisy. However it is clearly not a viable Christian view since it covertly and unashamedly obliterates the righteousness of Christ alone as the only righteousness that secures a saving status before a Holy God. Therefore I am not considering it here.

⁴⁶ Usually of the Holy Spirit or some kind of willing or running on man's part in terms of decision making, surrendering, yielding, appropriating, rededicating, working up more faith, etc.

⁴⁷ For instance the shallow notions of sin being defined as "deliberate acts of the will", and the placing of sin's location strictly in the mind/memory, the soul (as opposed to the mind and spirit in their schemes), the will, or some mysterious second nature within us. Also such notions that teach the possibility of going significant amounts of time without sinning!

⁴⁸ For instance all the notions that create a two-stage Christianity between the “have’s” and “have nots”. And what the “have’s” have is a redefining of reality that gives the appearance of doing better than they actually are.

⁴⁹ Taken from Rod Rosenblatt’s, “Christ Died For The Sins of Christians, Too”, ed. by Michael Horton, *Christ The Lord: The Reformation and Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 195)

⁵⁰ The Christian is “putting to death the deeds of the flesh”, which is the killing *not* eradication of sin historically called *mortification* (Rm 8:13). And the Christian is “putting on Christ”, which is the conformity unto Christ that results from beholding Christ and His work historically called *vivification* (Rm 13:14).

⁵¹ The preaching of the Gospel of Christ is the means by which the Holy Spirit applies the finished work of Christ, of which sanctification is included - “Now to Him who is able *to strengthen you...*” How? “*according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ*” (Rm 16:25).

⁵² Sin is always a function of worship. We sin because we love it. We have to love something more than sin to stop sinning. Therefore practically speaking, the beholding of Christ functions to this effect of weaning us away from our idols. This has historically been referred to as mortification and vivification.

⁵³ John Piper, *Future Grace* (Oregon: Multnomah Books, 1995), do not know the page number.

⁵⁴ I would add one more, the visible word of the sacraments: baptism and the Lord’s supper.