

Working Out Your Salvation

The Wonder and Mystery of Sanctification

January 1, 2017

Part 1- Introduction

Philippians 2:5-13

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.
8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus *EVERY KNEE WILL BOW*, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;
13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

Have you ever pondered how it is that, you are saved today? And by that I don't mean merely that at some point in the past that by His Grace and to His Glory, God saved you, but that you have *remained* saved? For example, I went to sleep last night fully and completely justified of all my sins and I woke up this morning still saved. And I have done that now for 16,607 days. So, what is at work in me and through me and for me that allows that to be true?

But an even more amazing thing than me simply staying saved is that I have actually grown closer to God during the last 45 years. Now I'm not more saved than I was when I was 16 years old and first trusted

in Christ. But since that precious moment when Jesus took His red Blood and washed my black heart and made me whiter than snow, I have personally experienced what the Apostle Peter commanded in **2 Peter 3:17-18** when he said:

17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

I have not merely believed, but I have personally *experienced* the wonder and mystery of “**grow[ing] in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**”. So, Peter said here that those who are “**beloved**” are to “**grow**” in two areas:

- 1. The Grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**
- 2. The Knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**

So, two things, not just one. I have been commanded by the Apostle Peter to grow in two areas:

1. Grace
2. Knowledge

After 45 years of being saved, my knowledge of Divine Truth is more precise, my comprehension of Holy Things is more true, and my understanding of what God said in Scripture is more pervasive than it was when God first forgave my sins.

And, along with growing in Knowledge, God has sovereignly developed three very important and profound affections in me that were not there when I was first saved:

- ✓ I am in awe of Jesus Christ
- ✓ I respect Jesus Christ
- ✓ I admire Jesus Christ

... which is me growing in the Grace of God. And this admiration, respect, and awe have produced a very deep and powerful love for Jesus that empowers and enables me to submit myself to Jesus and to obey Jesus more fully and easier and more eagerly than I used to. And that means that my walk with God is more sure, my steps are more certain, and my obedience is more forthcoming.

Now that doesn't mean that I am sinless, because I'm not. But, it *does* mean that I am being made holy. In other words, I am personally experiencing the reality of the miracle of Sanctification, which is the life-long process of being transformed into the Image and Likeness of Jesus Christ. So, that is the "Miracle" side of this sermon series, that Blair Bradley, as a genuinely saved individual, is personally experiencing the reality that God is at work in me to produce these marvelous qualities.

And that is why it is true to say that Sanctification is a sovereign Work of God. Because the Truth is that no matter what I do, no matter how hard I pray, and no matter how long I study, if God doesn't do the Work, it won't be done.

Now, in many ways, it would be good if the Bible simply stopped right there with the issue of Sanctification, and we could just sit back and rejoice that Sanctification is a sovereign Work of God, and we could then just enjoy what God does with us, as saved people. But, look again at **2 Peter 3:17** where the Apostle says:

... be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

Now this seems to throw a "monkey wrench" in the gears, because this part seems to indicate that I am supposed to do something, in this case, **"be on my guard"** so that I will *not* be **"carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness"**. Peter says here that I am to put forth an effort, that I am to perform a "work", a "deed", an "action", that will result in me not being deceived and so that I will not fall away.

And the way this is worded seems to suggest that if I *don't* do this, if I *don't* put forth this effort, if I *don't* perform this "work", if I *don't* carry out this deed and action, if I am *not* "on my guard" and I attempt

to just glide through life, that I *will* be carried away by the “error of unprincipled men”, and I *will* “fall from my own steadfastness”.

And this would seem to suggest that my Sanctification is something that I must “do”. It is something that I must put forth effort to accomplish. And it also seems to say that if I neglect to act or work or perform, then the happy results of me loving and obeying and treasuring Jesus will not come about.

So, which one is it? Is my progressive Sanctification a sovereign Work of God that God causes all by Himself, or is Sanctification something that I must do and carry out?

And the answer to these questions is, “Yes!” The Bible teaches that Sanctification is *both* a sovereign Work of God *and* it is something that I must “do”. So, that without God sovereignly moving in me and for me and through me, Sanctification will not happen. And unless I do what I am told to do, Sanctification will not happen. And that is the “Mystery” side to this series on sermons.

So, we are taking a short “vacation” from our “journey” through the Gospel of Luke to begin this new year by looking at what the Holy Bible teaches about the issue of Sanctification; what it is and how it works in and through the life of the believer. But, because of real shallow and real bad teaching for many years now, there is a lot of confusion about the subject of Sanctification.

For example, there are many people in the modern Church who are the heirs of a 2,000 year-old heresy called “Antinomianism”, or “Lawlessness”. Antinomianism is an evil perversion of the Grace of God that teaches that since we are saved by Grace alone, and not by works, that we are now free to live any way we see fit, and that no sin can “undo” the Salvation that these people brought about by the things that they did for themselves.

Antinomianism was thoroughly examined and completely discredited by the Church almost 2,000 years ago, and yet it is very much alive and well today. This shows us that while many heresies are *ancient*, they are not *extinct*. And it also shows us that simply rejecting a heresy, and formally and officially casting it from the Church after proving it to be wholly unbiblical, does *not* fix the problem. Each successive generation of believers must be taught Divine Truth in a systematic and continuous fashion, or it won't be long until a deadly

heresy will not only be allowed to *re-enter* the Church, but will soon *dominate* the thinking and *deceive* those who say they are saved.

And that is why all truly called and chosen Church Leaders must be ever vigilant, ever watchful, and ever willing to cast aside any teaching by any person that, in any way, transgresses against the Truth of Scripture, and why they must constantly pray and seek God's Face, and study and embrace any teaching that is in accord with the sacred writings.

So, for example, Antinomians honestly believe that their Salvation is a "done deal", and that once they "prayed the prayer" or "walked the aisle" or "raised their hand" or "signed the card" or "shook the preachers hand" that their Salvation was signed, sealed, and delivered. So, in their fogged mind, they have their "ticket punched", and God is now stuck with them, no matter what they do or how they live their lives.

And the result of this heresy is that people are deceived into thinking that Sanctification is really nothing except to either *accumulate* or *lose* some eternal rewards in Heaven. That living in ongoing, public, pervasive, and un-repenting disobedience and sin does not and cannot cause the individual to miss Heaven.

And, while these people would agree that saved people should actually obey the Lord, they would also quickly say that it really isn't that big a deal if they don't. And so, it should come as no surprise that the 2,000 year history of the Church proves that people who are deceived by the heresy of Antinomianism lead very terrible and very sinful lives.

As far as Sanctification is concerned, Antinomianism emphasizes God's Sovereignty at the expense of Human Effort. It should come as no surprise that people who are deceived by Antinomianism talk about Sanctification as being *entirely* a sovereign Work of God that requires absolutely nothing from the individual.

But there is another perversion of the Grace of God that is also 2,000 years old that was also thoroughly examined by the Church, and formally and officially cast off as a "doctrine of demons", and that is the false teaching of the Judaizers, or what we would call Legalism.

Legalism teaches that the Grace of God isn't enough, and that whatever we hope to get out of God we must labor to effect. Legalists are always talking about what they have to "do" to make things happen. As far as Salvation is concerned, a Legalist would teach that a person

has to “do” something to earn God’s Favor. And, it is from the heresy of Legalism from where we get all of the false notions that have plagued the Church by hiding the down through the Centuries like:

- ✓ Sacerdotal Regeneration (Born again through the Sacraments)
- ✓ Baptismal Regeneration (Born again through water baptism)
- ✓ Decisional Regeneration (Born again through Human Decision)

Legalism perverts God’s Grace by teaching that whatever we get from God, including Salvation, we must first *earn* by what we do for ourselves. So, the Legalist teaches that we must *initiate* our actions first, and then God *responds* to what we do by either healing us or blessing us or saving us, or, in this case, sanctifying us.

So, to a Legalist, Sanctification is wholly the result of what we do, how much we pray, how hard we resist sin, and how much we study. A Legalist emphasizes human effort in Sanctification to the expense of the sovereign Work of God.

Now, back in the days when Jesus walked the earth, Legalism was prevalent. The heresy of “Salvation by human works” *dominated* the landscape of the 1st Century. And so, as Jesus correctly and fully preached Salvation by Grace, and not by human works, He was despised by the religious leaders as being an Antinomian. So, as Jesus forgave repentant sinners-, the religious leaders viewed Jesus as being “soft on sin”.

But, if Jesus walked the earth in our day, the opposite would be true, because our day is dominated by the heresy of Lawlessness. And so, if Jesus did *exactly* what He did 2,000 years ago and spoke the very *same* words, He would be condemned by many of the religious leaders of our day as being a Legalist Who was unmerciful and mean and cruel.

So, because so much of Antinomianism pervades the modern American Church, many people mistakenly run to what they perceive to be the “safety of Legalism”. Because there is so much sin abounding and so little pursuit of Holiness, many people actually see the heresy of Legalism as being better than the heresy of Antinomianism. And that is a tragic mistake.

Because Legalism is just as wrong, just as unbiblical, just as destructive, and just as ungodly as the false teaching of Antinomianism. Neither one of these perversions of the Grace of God are right, neither

one honors God, neither one is taught in Scripture, neither one is true. Both are deceiving lies of satan and both will damn your soul to hell.

So, rather than leave Antinomianism and run into the arms of Legalism, we need to abandon both Legalism and Antinomianism, and run into the arms of Biblical Grace.

And nowhere is this more true than in the issue of Sanctification, which is exactly *why* we are going to spend some time at the beginning of this year looking at what the Bible actually teaches about this amazing subject. And so, we are going to spend the next several Lord's Day mornings looking at both the Miracle and the Mystery of Biblical Sanctification, and, hopefully, we will see that Sanctification is actually a *cooperative* effort between saved people and God.

Sanctify: (Hebrew OT *qadash*) To prepare; to dedicate; to be hallowed; to be holy; to be separate; to show oneself sacred¹

(Greek NT *hagiazoo*) To render or acknowledge to be venerable; to separate from things profane and dedicate to God; to consecrate; to cleanse; to purify by expiation; to purify internally by reformation of the soul²

So, for a person to be "Sanctified" is for him to be "Holy". And, to be Holy means: *to be separate from things profane and to be dedicated to God*. Another way of looking at this is that a person who is Holy is dedicated to God by being separate from things profane. So being distinct or separated from unholy and ungodly things is the pathway to Biblical Holiness.

That is what being "Holy" means. And the basis for which we are to be Holy is that God Himself is Holy. As the Apostle Peter taught in **1 Peter 1:15-16:**

15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior;

16 because it is written, "*YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.*"

... so those who love and follow God should be *like* God in the way we live our lives, the way we conduct business, the way we raise our children, and the way we speak, our attitude towards money, and

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through our obedience. And so, Sanctification is becoming “like” God, not in Deity, but in purity.

Now the English word “Sanctification” is strange. The English word comes from the Greek, which was then translated into Latin as “sanctus”, which means: *holy*. So the word *should* have been “Holification”, or the process of becoming holy.

But, it is also my prayer that we will see that Sanctification is not just something that is true, but that it is something that we *experience*, and that we experience this Truth on both a *corporate* and a *personal* level.

Now I want to begin this series by first showing you conclusively from the Holy Scriptures that Sanctification is true. And so, we will turn to the Bible and read several verses together. First, in the Old Testament, we see that God tells His people to sanctify the firstborn. **Exodus 13:2** says:

Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me.

... so this is something that these people did. That means that Sanctification is something that we “do”. The children of Israel sanctified every firstborn. But, wait just a minute. In **Numbers 3:13**, we see that God Himself sanctifies the first born:

For all the firstborn are Mine; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, from man to beast. They shall be Mine; I am the Lord.

... and then God *repeated* that He did the Sanctification in **Numbers 8:17**:

For every firstborn among the sons of Israel is Mine, among the men and among the animals; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for Myself.

But then, in **1 Chronicles 23:13**, it looks like both God and Man sanctified Aaron and his sons for the priesthood :

The sons of Amram were Aaron and Moses. And Aaron was set apart to sanctify him as most holy, he and his sons forever, to burn incense before the Lord, to minister to Him and to bless in His name forever.

... and then, in **2 Chronicles 5:11**, we go back to people sanctifying *themselves*:

When the priests came forth from the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to divisions),

In **2 Chronicles 35:6** God actually *commands* the people to sanctify themselves:

Now slaughter the Passover *animals*, sanctify yourselves and prepare for your brethren to do according to the word of the Lord by Moses."

And over in the New Testament, in **John 17:17**, Jesus prayed that God the Father would sanctify His people:

Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

... but then, just two verses later, Jesus says that He sanctifies *Himself*:

John 17:19

For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

In **The Acts 20:32** it seems as though Sanctification is something that has already happened at some point in the past:

And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

And then, **The Acts 26:15-18** says that Sanctification is something that has already happened, "by faith":

15 "And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'

16 'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you;

17 rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,

18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

But then, in **Romans 6:19**, it appears that Sanctification comes about as a result of something that we do:

I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

... but, just three verses later, it seems as though our eternal life is the outcome of being sanctified:

Romans 6:22

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

Then, in **Romans 15:15-16**, the Apostle teaches that Sanctification is brought about by the Holy Spirit:

15 But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,

16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that *my* offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

But then, in **1 Corinthians 1:2**, the same Apostle writes as though Sanctification is something that has already happened:

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified

in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours:

... and he repeats that logic in **1 Corinthians 6:11**

Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

But then, in **Ephesians 5:25-27**, the very same Apostle writes as though Sanctification is something that is *ongoing*:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

Then, in **1 Thessalonians 4:3-7**, this same Apostle writes as though Sanctification is something that is both ongoing *and* something that we bring about by striving for sexual purity:

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

6 *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*.

7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

But then, in **1 Thessalonians 5:23** Paul writes as though Sanctification is something that God does for us:

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.

But then, in **2 Timothy 2:21**, he writes as though Sanctification is something that we bring about ourselves:

Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these *things*, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

In **2 Thessalonians 2:13**, Paul writes as though Sanctification comes *before* Salvation, and is the actually the “means” by which Salvation flows to us:

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

In **Hebrews 2:11**, the writer says that the reason why Jesus is not ashamed to call sinners his “brothers” is because both “He Who sanctifies” and “those who are sanctified” are from the same Father.

For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one *Father*; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

But then, in **Hebrews 12:14**, the same writer teaches that we who are saved are to *pursue after* both Peace and Sanctification.

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

... and notice here that the writer of **Hebrews** taught that without pursuing Sanctification, no one will see the Lord, meaning he won't go to Heaven.

So, these are examples of why there is so much confusion about Sanctification and why we need to study this subject. And this is *why* 500 years ago the Protestant Reformers wrote this definition down:

"The work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness."³

So, there is much to consider. But, based on just the Scriptures we have read so far, there are a few things we know to be true:

- ✓ **Sanctification** is a fact of history, a present truth, and an ongoing reality. It is true to think and say that believers have *already* been sanctified (historical fact), that they are sanctified right now (present truth), and they are *being* sanctified (ongoing reality).
- ✓ **Sanctification** is a cooperative and ongoing Work between the saved soul who genuinely desires to be holy, and the Omnipotent sovereign God Who is determined to have a holy Church.
- ✓ **Sanctification** is both a Divine Commandment and a Joy; a Requirement and a Pleasure.
- ✓ **Sanctification** is both something to hope for and something to rejoice about.
- ✓ **Sanctification** is accomplished both by the Grace of God and "by faith through works".
- ✓ **Sanctification** is not something for which we volunteer, yet something we must be willing to carry out.
- ✓ **Sanctification** is both the means by which we are finally saved, and the confirmation that we have already been saved

And there are other terms besides "Sanctification" scattered all through the pages of the Bible for what dying to sin and living to Righteousness looks like:

- Walking by Faith and not by Sight
- Walking in the Spirit
- Serving Christ
- Being Obedient
- Bearing Godly Fruit
- Pursuing Holiness
- Crucifying the Flesh
- Putting to Death the Deeds of the Body

³ The Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. 35)

➤ Working Out Your Salvation with Fear and Trembling

So, how does this Sanctification work? And what does it look like when it is working in my life? And the key lies in a song that Charles Wesley wrote in May, 1739, called, "*O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing*". One of the lines of that song says,

He breaks the power of cancelled sin
He sets the prisoner free;
His Blood can make the foulest clean;
His Blood availed for me.

... and Wesley wrote this song after experiencing a crisis of his own faith where, after searching the Scriptures and his own heart, he determined that he was truly saved. And by writing this, Wesley was teaching the fundamental Truth about Sanctification, and just *how* the Cross and our ongoing struggle with sin are related. The Cross, which represents the vicarious Death of Jesus, *cancel*s sins for all who believe on Jesus. And on the basis of that Divine Cancellation of our sins, the Power of our actual sinning is then broken.

But, it is important to understand that it isn't the other way around. There would be no Gospel and no music if we tried to sing:

"He cancels the guilt of conquered sins."

No! First comes the Divine Cancellation based solely on the Merits of Christ alone. Then, out from that, flows the conquering.

And there are several ways that the New Testament shows how this works, but I'll just mention three:

1. In the Death of Christ, we died.
2. In the Death of Christ, we were bought.
3. In the Death of Christ, we were forgiven.

And in each of these cases, there is a Power that is unleashed from the Cross to us that expresses itself through our own personal, volitional, constant attack against our Sin. In other words, in each of these three cases, the way the Cross becomes effective in us conquering

cancelled sin is by *empowering our will to oppose sin in our lives*. And all of these have a "cause" and an "effect". So let's look at this.

1. In the Death of Christ, we died.

Cause: **Romans 6:5b**

... we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death ...

Effect: **Romans 6:11-13**

11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,

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

2. In the Death of Christ, we were bought.

Cause: **1 Corinthians 6:19b-20a**

19 ... your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

20 For you have been bought with a price...

Effect: **1 Corinthians 6:20b**

... therefore glorify God in your body.

3. In the Death of Christ, we were forgiven.

Cause: **Ephesians 4:32b**

... God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Effect: **Ephesians 4:32a**

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other...

Now notice that the Cause is always something that Jesus did, and the Effect is something that we do in *response* to what Jesus did. Also, notice that what we "do" is a radical change in our behavior *away* from carnal and selfish behaviors to godly and Christ-like behaviors.

So, in every case, the *Cause* or the *Decisive Impulse* for my Holiness (Sanctification) and my sin-killing, is the Death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. And that means that the Decisive Power for our *conquering* of sin is Christ's *canceled* of sin first by paying for it with His Death. In other words, the only Sin that we can defeat is a sin that has already been forgiven.

If we try to defeat an *unforgiven* sin, in other words, if we try to conquer our sin *before* it has been canceled by the Death of Jesus and our faith and trust in His Death, we become our *own* Saviors. And according to **Romans 4:4&5**, when we do that, we *nullify* the Justification of the ungodly, and we head straight for despair and eternal damnation.

But in each of these three cases, the common link between the Cross and my conquered sin is *my own empowered will that compels me to "do"*. Which is: My will that has been empowered to fight sin with Blood-bought Power. So, in each of these three cases, the statement of my death, and my purchase, and my forgiveness in Christ's Death on the Cross was made the *Cause*, or the *Source*, of several Divine Commands that have been addressed to my will.

- **Do not let sin reign in your mortal body.**
- **Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness.**
- **Present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.**
- **Glorify God in your body.**
- **Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other.**

So, as I rejoice in God's Sovereign Work in Christ to die for me to cancel out my sins and break the power that those sins once held over me, that Reality *empowers* my will to *respond* with new behaviors that glorify God and that proves the Worth and Value of Jesus Christ.

The Power that engages and enlivens and carries my will, so that it will be clear that my "willing" is a "Cross-exalting willing" and not merely a humanly engineered effort, is the Power of the Holy Spirit, Who is given to me precisely *because* of the Death of Christ for me. So, the Holy Spirit is a Blood-bought, New Covenant Gift of God.

And that means that the link between the Cross and my conquered sin is a "Holy-Spirit empowered will". In every single case, I am "working" and I am "willing" and I am "serving". I am *actively* and *consistently* putting sin to death. And I am doing that because I want to. So, my will is fully engaged. But, in every case, my will is *empowered by another Will*, the Will of the Spirit, the Will of Jesus Christ, and the Will of God the Father.

So, I say it again, the link between the Cross and the conquered sin in my life (Sanctification) is my Holy-Spirit empowered will. And that empowering by the Spirit is Blood-bought.

In other words, God intends that *part* of our experience of Sanctification be the conscious, willed, ongoing opposition to specific sins in our lives. And I say only "part" of our experience of Sanctification because this is *not* the whole work of Sanctification. Because, in some areas of sin, God just sovereignly *removes* the desire. And when He does that, the temptation becomes weak and we don't have to fight that fight against that sin any more.

And that is marvelous indeed. And while God does do that for *some* sins, He doesn't do it for all sins. And so, it is God's Will that we actively and constantly *engage* our wills to the Power of the Holy Spirit and fight against the remaining vestiges of sin in our lives. And we do that on a *progressive* scale. And that effort and that marvel and that mystery is called "Sanctification".

So, none of these Commands about our behavior would be in the Bible if God did not intend that some sins be defeated by conscious opposition from our wills in the Power of the Holy Spirit.

And the Passage that illustrates this the best is the one we started with, **Philippians 2:12-13**:

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

Now here, the Apostle Paul was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to begin verse 12 with these words "**So then**". And this phrase means: "*Because everything I just told you in verses 5-11 is true, now do this.*"

So then, because Jesus Christ *is* and *has done* all that the Apostle teaches in these verses, we are now told to “do” something in verse 12:

... work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

So we are to “**work out**” the Salvation that Jesus Himself has paid for. And we are to “**work out**” the Salvation that God the Father chose for us to receive from before the foundation of the world. And we are to “**work out**” the Salvation that the Holy Spirit has drawn us to and awaken us to while we were dead in trespasses and sins.

Now the phrase “**work out**” comes from a Greek word that means: *To produce, or to bring about, or to effect*. And this is an agricultural term that has to do with “working *out* of the ground that which has already been worked *into* it”. So, it is to make visible the plant which grows from the seed that has been planted.

So, the proof or the result that a seed has been put into the ground is the plant that grows out from the ground that can be seen and touched and felt and used. And while it is true that there are times that we can simply throw seed into the ground and up springs a plant with no effort on our part, most of the time the “working out” of a seed involves things we have to “do”, like watering and weeding and fertilizing, things that if we don’t do the plant will not grow and the seed was put into the ground in vain.

So, if there is no visible plant growing out from the ground, how do we *prove* that the seed was actually put into the ground in the first place? Look again at verse 13:

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

Now the word “**for**” means: *because*. So, verse 12 Commands me to work out my own Salvation and verse 13 tells me why and how. Why do I work out my Salvation with fear and trembling? How do I do this? Because it is God, sovereignly, all by Himself, Who is at work inside of me, to give me two things that I don’t already have in myself. And what are those two things that God sovereignly gives me?

1. The “Will” to Work for God’s Good Pleasure.

2. The "Power" to Work for God's Good Pleasure.

So, in this case, the Apostle is teaching that the proof that the Seed of Christ resides inside of us is the resulting plant or the fruit or the response that grows out from that implanted seed, which is the transformation of my behavior. The Seed of Christ is the new nature that has been sovereignly given and that has overcome the old Adamic nature that was fallen and rebellious.

But, how do I know that the new nature is actually in me? Because, this Seed of Christ is ever working in me to produce the fruit of that transformation.

The Command to "work out my Salvation" is not a sadistic order to put forth more human effort to do something that God knows that I am bound to fail at. No, it is a Command to trust that the finished Work that Jesus Christ has already accomplished on the Cross and that has been made real to me by Grace and through Faith, which is busy inside of me *empowering* me to not only have the "will" and the "desire", but to also have the "power" and the "ability" to prove or make visible that that finished Work is real, by me "working" for God's Good Pleasure.

But why in the world should there be "fear and trembling" as I attack my sin and prove my Salvation to be real? The reason given right here in the text is not a threat, but a gift. Work and will to kill your sin, and do it with fear and trembling, because God Almighty, the Maker of Heaven and earth, Redeemer, Justifier, Sustainer, and Father is so close to you that *your* "working" and "willing" are actually *His* Working and Willing *through* you.

And we should tremble at this breathtaking thought. God Almighty is in you! And God is the One in you, *causing* the willing. God is the One in you, *facilitating* the working. So, my effort to work out my Salvation is not only being carried out in the very Presence of all-holy God, but is the very continuous, sustained, strenuous Effort of God Himself, Who is now inside me "working".

So, I am not waiting for a miracle so I can be sanctified. I am actually *experiencing* this miracle. And while Sanctification is an ongoing Reality that I believe and trust in, it is also a Wonder and a Mystery that I experience. So, my ongoing effort to work out my Salvation by fighting against sin is actually God's Action in fighting my

sin through me. And my own willing is actually God's Willing, in and through me.

So, as I not only *believe* in Sanctification, I also personally *experience* what God does *in* me and *through* me, to His Glory in the Power of the Holy Spirit, to grant me the honor and privilege of conquering the sin that He has already canceled!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.