



John's Schedule

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What is the Grace-Energized Life?



Part 47 (070826AM)

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This week I had lunch and someone stopped by our table and asked, "Could you define 'grace-energized' for me?" I did briefly there at that restaurant, but as I thought and prayed about it, I decided that it would be good to pause one week and back up to look at the underlying doctrine of progressive or personal sanctification which is what grace-energized living is all about.

As we open to [Philippians 2:12-15](#) consider this question, "Did you know that **spiritual growth is not automatic**--but requires our cooperation with God?"

Grace-energized living means our personal, daily application of the spiritual disciplines. That is what God states in our passage this morning, both His work and ours, side-by-side: "Work out your own salvation, For it is God who works in you" ([Phil. 2:12-13](#)).

Paul sent this strong challenge to many who sat to hear his letter back to the church in Philippi as he explained to them that when we were saved by grace[1][1] through faith, nothing was left undone by God—we were saved to the uttermost.

But in God's plan He left something for us to do. At the instant of salvation we were justified and positionally sanctified[i][i] (just a big way of saying that we became saints). But that instantaneous justification launched what God describes as a life-long arduous struggle to work out our own salvation.

Is this some type of contradiction in the Bible? Is it a mistake, a mistranslation, or something? No, it is the command God has left to every believer called the doctrine of progressive sanctification.

Where there is life, there is always growth. Our new birth was just the beginning. God gave us all we need to live godly lives, but as His children we must apply ourselves by diligently using the "means of grace" He offers us.

Paul commands each of us to work out our own salvation in [Philippians 2:12-14](#). The work 'work out' is **energein** in Greek, and means "energize, work out fervently". We see what God wants us to be in His Word, and we tell Him, "YES, that is what I want, help me to obey." Then we take earnest, active steps to obey—and in doing so we find amazingly that He gives us the spiritual power and strength to change areas of our life that have stubbornly stayed the same for so long!

Grace-Energized Living Means We Work with God

Whether Peter's list of seven characteristics of the godly life ([II Peter 1:5-8](#)) or Paul's list of the "fruit of the Spirit" ([Gal. 5:22-23](#)), these qualities grow out of a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. But, as Peter clarifies, we don't "let go and let God," as though spiritual growth were God's work alone, but as Peter wrote, "Make every effort...", meaning God the Father and you and me His children must work together to see these qualities grown.

Every part of our spiritual life is through God's grace. Our human works have no place in gaining salvation or in obtaining merit with God. The Christian life is *sola gratia*, grace alone. Yet, the Apostle Paul wrote, "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" ([Philippians 2:12b](#)).

God works in us; but as children of grace we must work at our Christian walk.

God presents us with a divinely ordained synergism that is required of all Christians. This same Paul who fought the legalists and Judaizers all across the Roman province of Asia (modern Turkey), writing of his hatred of works-religion in Galatians, clearly commanded each believer to, "work out your own salvation" ([Phil. 2:12](#), NKJV).[2][2]

Please stand as we read together [Philippians 2:12-15](#) and pray.

Philippians 2:12-15 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear

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- Part: 27 Peter—Do You Love Me?
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- Part: 4 Have You Opened the Greatest Gift of All?
- Part: 3 Salvation: Redemption
- Part: 2 Salvation: Regeneration
- Part: 1 Salvation--The Only Gift Everyone Really Needs

and trembling;13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, NKJV

Our Life Long Goal is Christ-likeness

First, in v. 12a “**work out** your own salvation” uses a Greek verb rendered “work out” which means “to continually work to bring something to fulfillment or completion.” This could never refer to salvation by works because of everything else God’s Word says (cf. **Rom. 3:21–24; Eph. 2:8-9**), but it does refer to the divine responsibility each of us received at salvation to actively pursue personal sanctification, progressive sanctification, or grace-energized living.

Then in v. 12b “**with fear and trembling**” explains our attitude as we pursue sanctification is a healthy fear of ever offending God. We cultivate a growing, life-long, righteous awe and respect for our Holy God (**Is. 66:1, 2**).

Paul continues in v. 13a “**for it is God who works in you**” clarifies for us that while each believer is responsible to work (v. 12), only the Lord can produce any virtue, good work, or spiritual fruit in our life (**John 15:5**)—that is why we call this progressive sanctification being “energized-by-grace”. God accomplishes this as He works in us by His Spirit who lives within (**1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19-20**).

He adds in v. 13b “**both to will and to do**” that progressive sanctification (grace-energized living) happens in our lives only as God energizes both our desires and actions. The Gr. word for “will” indicates that God has as His planned purpose to make us live godly lives.

Finally Paul warns in v. 14 that grace-energized living should be “**without complaining and disputing**”. The Greek word used here for “complaining” is a word that sounds like what it means. Its pronunciation uses a part of our voice often heard when we mutter or grumble. Paul says beware of your emotions rising up against the plan of God He has designed through the circumstances of your life. The second word for “disputing” speaks of “questionings” or “criticisms” about life’s events that we don’t like, and reminds us our disagreements with our circumstances are ultimately directed against God.

So Paul clearly explains to us that we have our part to do in dressing ourselves with each of His grace-energized virtues. We must daily strip off the rotting garments of the old us. We must read the Word and ask God to renew our minds through the Spirit. The only way this can happen is through **God** whose grace energizes us to do it (v. 13).

Paul told the Philippian saints that God worked in them but that both divine enablement and human responsibility are involved in getting God’s work done. Believers are partners with God, laboring together with Him. The verb [3][3] **works** (v. 13) means “energizes” or “provides enablement.” When we surrender to God’s plan He makes us both willing and desirous to do His work. [4][4] That is why in the next chapter Paul explains that:

Grace-Energized Living is a Lifelong Pursuit of Christ Each Day Philippians 3:12-13

In **Phil 3:12-13** when Paul describes his life as pressing onward he used a Greek word that describes a sprinter, and their aggressive, energetic push towards a goal. Paul pursued sanctification with all his might, straining every spiritual muscle to win the prize (**1 Cor. 9:24–27; 1 Tim. 6:12; Heb. 12:1**).

*Philippians 3:12-13 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I **may lay hold** of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and **reaching forward** to those things which are ahead, NKJV*

In v. 13 Paul uses the same Gr. word translated “laid hold” in v. 12 and effectively reduces all of personal sanctification to the simple and clear goal of doing “one thing”—pursuing Christ-likeness. He concludes with a reminded that we must neither rely on our past achievements in following the Lord nor dwell on our past sins and failures.

Each day we are faced with one goal for our lives—to stretch every part of our life and every minute of our day towards being like Christ in our attitude and behavior. But how do we do that? Paul continues to explain this in Romans 6. There he taught us that

Grace-Energized Living is Cultivating Lifelong Habits of Personal Sanctification Romans 6:5-23

The daily experience of progressive sanctification demands key choices in mind and action on a believer’s part. These Paul discussed in Romans 6. The first choice or habit is:

We cultivate Habits of Grace-Energized Reckoning Romans 6:5-11

Paul calls us to build a habit of counting on God. He explains the power of the Cross in v. 5-10 and then says, act accordingly. You can count on God to be there when you face temptations and sin, which is the first attitude for progressive sanctification demanded of believers—we “reckon” (pres. imperative, “keep on counting”) ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (v. 11).

Romans 6:5-11 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,9

knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.11 Likewise you also, **reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.** NKJV

This spiritual habit or discipline of reckoning is dependent on our knowing and believing the truths of God's Word as presented in verses 5-10. Then we build upon that habit of faith and also practice:

We cultivate Habits of Grace-Energized Yielding Romans 6:12-14

Romans 6:12-14 Therefore **do not let sin reign** in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. NKJV

Our second habit is translating the power of Christ's death by surrender to His will, as we say no to our own. Paul commands us in v.12 **"therefore do not let sin reign"** using a present imperative ("do not let sin continue to reign") as it did before we were saved. This present imperative is negative so it is better translated, "Stop letting sin reign." Sin reigns in our lives and bodies when we **"obey it in its lusts"**. When sin enslaves (v. 6), we are subjecting ourselves to the rule of our own desires. The Greek word *epithumia* refers to our "longings" or "desires," which may be either good or evil, here these are sinful desires, and thus evil.

In v. 13 Paul repeats the command of verse 12 using more specific terms. He says, **"Do not present** (lit., "do not continue to present," or "stop presenting") **your members to sin"**. Then in contrast to the wrong choices Paul commands that we **"present** (aorist imper., "present once and for all"; also used in v. 19) This refers to a decision of the will.

Before sin can have power over a believer, it must first pass through his will (cf. Phil. 2:12, 13). So we can see that before grace can energize us that choice must pass through our will; and Paul continues **"yourselves to God, as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God"**. Paul says the same thing six chapters later, "Offer your bodies as living sacrifices . . . to God" (Rom. 12:1).

We cultivate Habits of Grace-Energized Serving Romans 6:15-23

Romans 6:15-23 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, **you are that one's slaves whom you obey**, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.18 And having been set free from sin, you became **slaves of righteousness**. 19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.22 But now having been set free from sin, and **having become slaves of God**, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. NKJV

Grace-Energized Living is Progressive Sanctification

Justification differs from sanctification thus: the former is an instantaneous act with no progression; while the latter is a life long process with it the idea of growth unto completion.

Our ultimate goal is to be like Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:12-14; 1 John 3:2). Only by continually focusing on Him the Spirit transforms the believer more and more into His image. **II Corinthians 3:18** describes progressive sanctification. The more believers grow in their knowledge of Christ, the more He is revealed in their lives.

When we pray in faith asking God to change us, and we want to respond to God's will, our prayer is a sanctifying grace that changes our lives dramatically. Prayer is a means of progressive sanctification. One more passage we need to look at is **II Corinthians 3:18**.

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

"The tense is interesting here: we are being transformed from one degree of character, or glory, to another. It is because sanctification is progressive, a growth, that we are exhorted to "increase and abound" (1 Thess. 3:12), and to "abound more and more" (4:1, 10) in the graces of the Christian life.

The fact that there is always danger of contracting defilement by contact with a sinful world, and that there is, in the life of the true Christian, an ever increasing sense of duty and an ever-deepening consciousness of sin, necessitates a continual growth and development in the graces and virtues of the believer's life.

Holiness is not a mushroom growth; it is not the thing of an hour; it grows as the coral reef grows: little by little, degree by degree.[5][5]

Salvation is all about God changing us. First we are made a new person by the new birth inside an old body. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has

come" (2 Corinthians 5:17)!

Then new birth begins a new lifelong goal for every believer called progressive sanctification. We are all called by God to make daily choices to become more and more like Jesus Christ. [1 Peter 1:15-16](#) reminds us, "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." Our goal every day should be to yield more of our body and mind to God for His purposes.

Thus when we read what God's Word says He desires and prayerfully respond to Him saying that is what I want in my life. I want Your way and not mine, and God's Spirit pours out in us the grace or power to do make that response. God's grace energizes or works in us to produce "love, joy, peace" or "loving our husbands and children" and "being kind"

Progressive sanctification **starts** with God who makes His will known, **it continues** when we agree and ask for His will to be done in us—**it transforms** us step-by-step as we obey and submit and follow God's way, walking in the power or energizing strength of the Spirit.

Grace-Energized Sanctification is A Continuing Process

"As Christians, we realize shortly after we have been saved that there is a new inner battle being waged within us - a battle between our old sin-lead nature and new Spirit-lead nature. Paul in Galatians best describes this inner struggle in [Galatians 5:17](#):

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. NKJV

Like Paul, our heart's desire is to please and obey God, but our flesh is weak making sin difficult to resist. Yet, it is in our continual struggle with sin and obedience to God that sanctification does its work.

The effects of living in a fallen world have harmed everybody differently. We all face different issues, struggle with sin, and past hurts of varying degrees, hindering our ability to live the life God desires for us. Once we accept Jesus Christ into our lives, the Holy Spirit enters our life to start a transformation process (progressive sanctification).

He convicts us on areas that need to be changed, helping us to grow in holiness. We begin to view the world, people, and personal difficulties from a more biblical perspective. Our choices begin to be motivated by love and truth and not selfishness. For instance, we may have misplaced our confidence and security on beauty, wealth, and materialism, but God may ordain difficult circumstances to liberate us from these growth-hindering snares. The transformation process may be painful, but it is always motivated by God's love for us.

Sanctification is not about trying to be sinless in order to earn the favor of God. Rather, sanctification is for our own benefit. God commands us to pursue sanctification so that through it we may be blessed.

Sanctification is one of the most challenging aspects of the Christian walk. Our natural tendency is to embrace sin, yet God in His divine wisdom has chosen to give us the responsibility of working out our own sanctification.

"Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work," says [2 Timothy 2:21](#).

But how do we pursue sanctification? How are we personally responsible? Lovingly, God has sent His Holy Spirit and His written Word, the Bible, to guide us. Though every person's sanctification is unique and personal, there are common disciplines in the pursuit of sanctification that are unchanging[6][6]."

Grace-Energized Sanctification is the Key to Spiritual Growth

Sanctification is both a position as well as a progression. We were positionally sanctified the instant Christ has saved us, yet sanctification progresses as each grace-energized choice we make transforms us unto the likeness of Christ. Personal sanctification is our responsibility.

Choices to pursue sanctification make positive growth occurs. Our pursuit involves surrendering our will to the leading of the Holy Spirit. This takes time and cannot be hurried. Just as newborn babies gradually mature unto adulthood, so God seeks to mature life of every believer. God's work of sanctification will be finished in every believer's life only when they see Jesus Christ face-to-face.

Grace-energized living means our personal, daily application of spiritual discipline.

That is what God states in our passage this morning, both His work and ours, side-by-side: "Work out your own salvation.... For it is God who works in you" ([Phil. 2:12-13](#)).

God has left something for us to do. Our instantaneous justification launched what God describes as a life-long arduous struggle to work out our own salvation and that is called **grace-energized living**.

Titus Two is Part of God' Plan

Paul puts it best in his epistle to the Thessalonians: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" ([1 Thessalonians 5:23](#)).

Women who are highly useful to God have these characteristics. The long-term goal of their lives is geared towards being useful to God. Parents who want their children be useful for the Lord begin early on to point their children towards the high calling and great joy of being a Titus 2 woman and the Titus 2 man.

The whole goal of a Titus 2 woman is to train younger women in Biblical, simple-to-measure, Spirit-

empowered, love-based living.

Titus 2 women have in their wake a grateful army of **husbands who feel deeply loved by their wives**. What was the first thing that the Holy Spirit chose to have taught to the young married women believers? LOVE THEIR HUSBANDS. Can you imagine what a deep and lasting impact upon this local body of Christ's church to have men coming home to a wife who is earnestly being taught how to love her own husband. In a world where women are being pressed into the mould of the worldly, self-seeking, independent, do-their-own-thing women. If nothing else, every family at TBC would be enriched if every younger woman was taught in a practical, simple, and personal way how to love their own husband.

Titus 2 women train younger women in one of the hardest and yet most rewarding investments in life—**children who feel deeply loved by their mothers**. The key the Holy Spirit emphasizes very clearly that the key to children is LOVING them. Titus 2 women train, teach, model, and mentor moms into the deepening of love for their children that can be felt. One of the most common complaints of 21st century children is that don't feel loved. Most mothers love their children, but many children are not feeling that love. Titus 2 women are coaches that tutor and mentor young moms in ways to show love that can be felt.

Titus 2 women train younger women to be **discreet, sensible, wise in the decisions and choices they make**. What a rich resource for new marriages and families to have a young woman walked through those days side-by-side with a godly, Spirit-filled woman who will regularly, personally, individually mentor, mother, coach, and cheer on younger women in skillfully living as a wife, mother, and woman of God on a day to day basis. A Titus 2 woman isn't found in a classroom or lecture hall—they are in the kitchen with a younger woman, in the dining room, in the nursery, at the grocery store. Titus 2 women are hands on tutors; and they nurture younger women in the laboratory of life—walking through life together praying, sharing, learning, and loving.

Titus 2 women train younger women in the **holiness and purity that pleases God and unleashes the power of the Spirit**. The training that a Titus 2 older woman gives is a seven-part package, that is immensely practical not theoretical. Modesty, purity, chaste behavior must be learned, modeled, and practiced. The power of a godly, Spirit-filled woman of Biblical maturity sitting over a cup of tea discussing what pleases God in dress, in behavior, conduct, and so on. Modesty is understood through Bible study that applies God's Word to daily life.

Titus 2 older women teach younger women the **centrality in God's plan of a woman's priority being her home**. Home making is a learned art and so many women never have the hands on training that is needed. Life is so full, our culture has moved away from homemaking and few young women get mentored in the godly, Biblical art of home making. If the highest calling in the Titus 2 list is to love husbands, and to love children, and younger women are called to be homemakers then that is exactly what the grace-energized woman, in step with God's Spirit wants to be.

Titus 2 older women teach younger women the **utter necessity of kindness being the law of her tongue and the flavor of her life**. Since everything will be measured by Christ as whether or not it was done for His good, and for His glory—she learns that means being done in Christ-like goodness and kindness. Her husband, her children, and her friends see a growing kindness that spreads through all her life.

[1][1] Definition: Grace is God's favor through Christ to people who deserve His wrath.

[2][2] Adapted from ideas by Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Ephesians—The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997. [122 words]

[3][3] Energized # 1754 "work, effectual fervent work"; God energizes us: **Philippians 2: 13** for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. NKJV; **Colossians 1: 29** To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. NKJV; God energizes us through His Word: **1 Thessalonians 2: 13** For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. NKJV; God energizes us through prayer: **James 5: 16** Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. NKJV. Energized # 1753; **Ephesians 3: 7** of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. NKJV

[4][4]Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

[5][5]Evans, William, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press) 1998, c1994. [272 words]

[6][6] <http://www.allaboutfollowingjesus.org/sanctification.htm> [413]

[i][i] WWT Sanctification: We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (**Acts 20: 32; 1 Cor. 1: 2, 30; 6: 11; 2 Thess. 2: 13; Heb. 2: 11; 3: 1; 10: 10, 14; 13: 12; 1 Pet. 1: 2**). We teach that there is also by the work of the Holy Spirit a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the likeness of Christ through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (**John 17: 17, 19; Rom. 6: 1–22; 2 Cor. 3: 18; 1 Thess. 4: 3, 4; 5: 23**). In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (**Gal. 5: 16–25; Eph. 4: 22–24; Phil. 3: 12; Col. 3: 9, 10; 1 Pet. 1: 14–16; 1 John 3: 5–9**).

