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THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgement.

Centuries ago, the Shepherd of Hermas dreamed of a wrinkled old lady who had lived long. In his dream, as time passed, she began to change: while her body was still old and her hair white, her face looked younger. Eventually, she was restored to her youth.

T.F. Torrance likened the woman to the church. Christians cannot be static. If the Spirit of Christ reigns within (Rom. 8:9) they are in the process of change.

Paul said, "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27, RSV). Such a cleansing is the goal of the church. Hence, the believers comprising the church can testify that "though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day" (2 Cor. 4:16, RSV). "We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). This transformation is the ultimate internal Pentecost.

Throughout Scripture the descriptions of the believer's experience—salvation, justification, sanctification, purification, and redemption—are spoken of as (1) already accomplished, (2) presently being realized, and (3) to be realized in the future. An understanding of these three perspectives helps to solve the seeming tensions in emphasis relative to justification and sanctification. This chapter, therefore, is divided into three major sections, dealing with salvation in the believer's past, present, and future.

The Experience of Salvation and the Past

A factual knowledge about God and His love and benevolence is insufficient. Trying, apart from Christ, to develop the good in oneself is counterproductive. The experience of salvation that reaches deep into the soul comes from God alone. Speaking of this experience, Christ said, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of

God....Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, He cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:3,5).

Only through Jesus Christ can one experience salvation, "for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

The experience of salvation involves repentance, confession, forgiveness, justification, and sanctification.

Repentance

Not long before His crucifixion, Jesus promised His disciples the Holy Spirit, who would reveal Him by convicting "the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). When at Pentecost the Holy Spirit did convict the people of their need of a Saviour, and they asked how they should respond, Peter replied, "Repent!" (Acts 2:37,38; cf. 3:19).

1. What is repentance?

The word repentance is a translation of the Hebrew *nacham*, "to be sorry," "to repent." The Greek equivalent, *metanoeo*, means "to change one's mind," "to feel remorse," "to repent." Genuine repentance results in a radical change in attitude toward God and sin. God's Spirit convicts those who receive Him of the seriousness of sin by bringing them to a sense of God's righteousness and of their own lost condition. They experience sorrow and guilt. Recognizing the truth that "he who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Prov. 28:13), they confess specific sins. Through the decided exercise of their wills, they surrender totally to the Saviour and renounce their sinful behavior. Thus repentance reaches its climax in conversion—a turning of the sinner toward God (from the Greek *epistrophe*, "a turning toward," cf. Acts 15:3).

David's repentance of his sins of adultery and murder vividly exemplifies how this experience prepares the way for victory over sin. Convicted by the Spirit, he despised and mourned his sin and pleaded for purity: "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51:1,3,10). David's subsequent experience demonstrates that God's pardon not only provides forgiveness for sin but it reclaims them from sin.

Although repentance precedes forgiveness, the sinner cannot, by repentance, fit himself to secure the blessing of God. In fact, the sinner cannot even produce from within himself repentance—it is the gift of God (Acts 5:31; cf. Rom. 2:4). The Holy Spirit draws the sinner to Christ in order that he may find repentance, this heartfelt sorrow for sin.

2. Motivation for repentance.

Christ said: "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32). The heart is melted and subdued when we sense that Christ's death justifies us

and delivers us from the penalty of death. Imagine the feelings of the prisoner in death row awaiting execution when suddenly a pardon is handed him.

In Christ the repentant sinner is not only pardoned but acquitted—declared righteous! He does not deserve and cannot earn such treatment. As Paul points out, Christ died for our justification while we were weak, sinful, ungodly, and enemies of God (Rom. 5:6-10). Nothing so touches the depths of the soul as a sense of Christ's pardoning love. When sinners contemplate this unfathomable divine love, displayed on the cross, they receive the most powerful motivation possible to repent. This is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

Justification

In His infinite love and mercy God made Christ "who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Through faith in Jesus, the heart is filled by His Spirit. Through this same faith, which is a gift of God's grace (Rom. 12:3; Eph. 2:8), repentant sinners are justified (Rom. 3:28).

The term "justification" is a translation of the Greek *dikaionoma*, meaning "righteous requirement, deed," "regulation," "judicial sentence," "act of righteousness," and *dikaiosis* signifying, "justification," "vindication," "acquittal." The related verb *dikaioo*, meaning "be pronounced and treated as righteous," "be acquitted," "be justified," "be set free, made pure," "justify," "vindicate," "do justice," gives additional insights into the term's meaning.

In general, justification, as used theologically, is "the divine act by which God declares a penitent sinner righteous, or regards him as righteous. Justification is the opposite of condemnation (Rom. 5:16)." The basis for this justification is, not our obedience, but Christ's, for "through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life...By one Man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:18,19). He gives this obedience to those believers who are "justified freely by His grace" (Rom. 3:24). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5).

1. The role of faith and works.

Many wrongly believe that their standing before God depends on their good or bad deeds. Addressing the question of how persons are justified before God, Paul unequivocally stated that he "suffered the loss of all things,...that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness,...but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil. 3:8,9). He pointed to Abraham, who "believed God, and it was accounted [credited, NIV] to him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3; Gen. 15:6). He was justified before he underwent circumcision, not on account of it (Rom. 4:9,10).

What kind of faith did Abraham have? The Scriptures reveal that "by faith Abraham obeyed" when God called him, leaving his homeland and traveling "not knowing where he was going" (Heb. 11:8-10; cf. Gen. 12:4; 13:18). That he had a genuine, living faith in God was demonstrated by his obedience. It was on the basis of this dynamic faith that he was justified.

The apostle James warned about another incorrect understanding of justification by faith: that one can be justified by faith without manifesting corresponding works. He showed that genuine faith cannot exist without works. Like Paul, James illustrated his point from Abraham's experience. Abraham's offering of Isaac his son (James 2:21) demonstrated his faith. "Do you see," James asked, "that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?" (James 2:22). "Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17).

Abraham's experience revealed that works are the evidence of a true relationship with God. The faith that leads to justification is, therefore, a living faith that works (James 2:24).

Paul and James agreed on justification by faith. While Paul addressed the fallacy of obtaining justification through works, James dealt with the equally dangerous concept of claiming justification without corresponding works. Neither works nor a dead faith lead to justification. It can be realized only by a genuine faith that works by love (Gal. 5:6) and purifies the soul.

2. The experience of justification.

Through justification by faith in Christ, His righteousness is imputed to us. We are right with God because of Christ our Substitute. God, Paul said, "made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). As repentant sinners, we experience full and complete pardon. We are reconciled to God!

Zechariah's vision about Joshua the high priest beautifully illustrates justification. Joshua stands before the angel of the Lord clothed in filthy garments, which represent sin's defilement. As he stands there, Satan calls for his condemnation. Satan's accusations are correct—Joshua does not deserve acquittal. But God, in divine mercy, rebukes Satan: "Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" (Zech. 3:2). Is this not my precious one whom I am preserving in a special way?

The Lord orders the soiled attire to be removed speedily and declares: "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes" (Zech. 3:4). Our loving, all-merciful God sweeps Satan's charges aside, justifying the trembling sinner, covering him with robes of Christ's righteousness. As Joshua's dirty robes represented sin, so the new robe represented the believer's new experience in Christ. In the process of justification, confessed and forgiven sin is transferred to the pure and holy Son of God, the sin-bearing Lamb. "The undeserving repentant believer, however, is dressed with the imputed righteousness of Christ. This exchange of clothes, this divine, saving transaction, is the Biblical doctrine of justification." The justified believer has experienced forgiveness and been purified of his sins.

The Results

What are the results of repentance and justification?

Sanctification.

The word "sanctification" is a translation of the Greek *hagiasmos*, meaning "holiness," "consecration," "sanctification," from *hagiozo*, "to make holy," "to consecrate," "to

sanctify," "to set apart." The Hebrew equivalent is qadash, "to separate from common use."

True repentance and justification lead to sanctification. Justification and sanctification are closely related, distinct but never separate. They designate two phases of salvation: Justification is what God does for us, while sanctification is what God does in us.

Neither justification nor sanctification is the result of meritorious works. Both are solely due to Christ's grace and righteousness. "The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven."

The three phases of sanctification the Bible presents are: (1) an accomplished act in the believer's past; (2) a process in the believer's present experience; (3) and the final result that the believer experiences at Christ's return.

As to the believer's past, at the moment of justification the believer is also sanctified "in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). He or she becomes a "saint." At that point the new believer is redeemed, and belongs fully to God.

As a result of God's call (Rom. 1:7), believers are called "saints" for they are "in Christ" (Phil. 1:1; see also John 15:1-7), not because they have achieved a state of sinlessness. Salvation is a present experience. "His mercy," Paul said, has "saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5), setting us apart and consecrating us to a holy purpose and walk with Christ.

[Adopting into God's family.](#)

At the same time new believers have received the "Spirit of adoption." God has adopted them as His children, which means that believers are sons and daughters of the King! He has made them His heirs, "joint heirs of Christ" (Rom. 8:15-17). What a privilege, honor, and joy!

[Assurance of salvation.](#)

Justification brings also the assurance of the believer's acceptance. It brings the joy of being reunited with God now. No matter how sinful one's past life, God pardons all sins and we are no longer under the condemnation and curse of the law. Redemption has become a reality: "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

[The beginning of a new and victorious life.](#)

The realization that the Saviour's blood covers our sinful past brings healing to body, soul, and mind. Feelings of guilt may be dispensed with, for in Christ all is forgiven, all is new. By daily bestowing His grace, Christ begins transforming us into the image of God.

As our faith in Him grows, our healing and transformation progress, and He gives us increasing victories over the powers of darkness. His overcoming of the world guarantees our deliverance from the slavery of sin (John 16:33).

[The gift of eternal life.](#)

Our new relationship with Christ brings with it the gift of eternal life. John affirmed, "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1

John 5:12). Our sinful past has been cared for; through the indwelling Spirit we can enjoy the blessings of salvation.

The Experience of Salvation and the Present

Through Christ's blood bringing purification, justification, and sanctification, the believer is "a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

A Call to a Life of Sanctification

Salvation includes living a sanctified life on the basis of what Christ accomplished at Calvary. Paul appealed to believers to live a life consecrated to ethical holiness and moral conduct (1 Thess. 4:7). To enable them to experience sanctification, God gives believers the "Spirit of holiness" (Rom. 1:4). "According to the riches of his glory," Paul said, God "may grant you to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:16,17, RSV).

As a new creation, believers have new responsibilities. "Just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness," Paul said, "so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness" (Rom. 6:19). Now they are to live "in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25).

Spirit-filled believers "do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1, cf. 8:4). They are transformed, since "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6). Through the indwelling of the Spirit of God they "are not in the flesh but in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9).

The highest goal of the Spirit-filled life is to please God (1 Thess. 4:1). Sanctification is God's will, Paul said. Therefore "you should abstain from sexual immorality" and "no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter....For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness" (1 Thess. 4:3,6,7).

The Internal Change

At the Second Advent we will be changed physically. This corruptible mortal body will put on immortality (1 Cor. 15: 51-54). However, our characters must undergo transformation in preparation for the Second Advent.

Character transformation involves the mental and spiritual aspects of the image of God, that "inner nature" that is to be renewed daily (2 Cor. 4:16, RSV; cf. Rom. 12:2). Thus, like the old lady in the Shepherd of Hermas story, the church is growing younger within—each fully surrendered Christian is being changed from glory to glory, until, at the Second Advent, his or her transformation into the image of God will be completed.

1. The involvement of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Only the Creator can accomplish the creative work of transforming our lives (1 Thess. 5:23). However, He does not do so without our participation. We must place ourselves in the channel of the Spirit's working, which we can do by beholding Christ. As we meditate on Christ's life, the Holy Spirit restores the physical, mental, and spiritual faculties (cf.

Titus 3:5). The Holy Spirit's work involves revealing Christ and restoring us into Christ's image (cf. Rom. 8:1-10).

God desires to live within His people. It was because He had promised "I will dwell in them" (2 Cor. 6:16; cf. 1 John 3:24; 4:12) that Paul could say: "Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20; cf. John 14:23). The Creator's indwelling daily revives the believers inwardly (2 Cor. 4:16), renewing their minds (Rom. 12:2; see also Phil. 2:5).

2. Partaking of the divine nature.

Christ's "exceeding great and precious promises" pledge His divine power to complete the transformation of our characters (2 Peter 1:4). This access to divine power allows us diligently to "add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love" (2 Peter 1:5-7). "If these things be in you, and abound," Peter says, "they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind" (2 Peter 1:8,9, KJV).

a. Only through Christ.

What transforms humans into the image of their Creator is the putting on or partaking of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:14; Heb. 3:14), the "renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). It is the perfecting of God's love in us (1 John 4:12). Here is a mystery akin to that of the incarnation of the Son of God. As the Holy Spirit enabled the divine Christ to partake of human nature, so that Spirit enables us to partake of the divine character traits. This appropriation of the divine nature renews the inner person, making us Christlike, though on a different level: Whereas Christ became human, believers do not become divine. Rather, they become Godlike in character.

b. A dynamic process.

Sanctification is progressive. By prayer and study of the Word we constantly grow in fellowship with God.

A mere intellectual understanding of the plan of salvation will not suffice. "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood," Christ revealed, "you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:53-56).

His imagery vividly conveys that believers are to assimilate Christ's words. Jesus said, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63; see also Matt. 4:4).

Character is composed of what the mind "eats and drinks." When we digest the bread of life, we become transformed into the likeness of Christ.

3. The two transformations.

In 1517, the same year in which Luther nailed his 95 theses to the castle-church door in Wittenberg, Germany, Rafael began painting his famous Transfiguration picture in Rome. These two events had something in common. Luther's act marked the birth of Protestantism, and Rafael's painting, albeit unintentionally, epitomized the spirit of the Reformation.

The painting shows Christ standing on the mountain with the demoniac looking hopefully to Him from the valley (cf. Mark 9:2-29). The two groups of disciples—one on the mountain, the other in the valley—depict two types of Christian.

The disciples on the mountain wanted to remain with Christ, seemingly unconcerned about the needs in the valley below. Through the centuries many have built on "mountains" far removed from the needs of the world. Their experience is prayer without works.

On the other hand, the disciples in the valley worked without prayer—and their efforts to cast out the demon were unsuccessful. Multitudes have been imprisoned either in the trap of working for others without power or in that of praying much without working for others. Both of these kinds of Christian need to have the image of God restored in them.
a. The true transformation.

God hopes to change fallen beings into His image by transforming their wills, minds, desires, and characters. The Holy Spirit brings to believers a decided change of outlook. His fruits, "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22,23), now constitute their lifestyle—even though they remain corruptible mortals till Christ's return.

If we do not resist Him, Christ "will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service."
b. The two destinations.

Christ's transfiguration reveals another striking contrast. Christ was transfigured, but, in a sense, so was the boy in the valley. The boy was transfigured into a demonic image (see Mark 9:1-29). Here we see illuminated two contrasting plans—God's plan to restore us and Satan's to ruin us. Scripture says God is able to keep us "from falling" (Jude 24, KJV). Satan, on the other hand, does his utmost to keep us in a fallen state.

Life involves constant change. There is no neutral ground. We are either being ennobled or degraded. We are either "slaves of sin" or "slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17,18). Whoever occupies our minds occupies us. If, through the Holy Spirit, Christ occupies our minds, we will become Christlike people—a Spirit-filled life brings "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). But to be without Christ cuts us off from the source of life and change and makes our ultimate destruction inevitable.

The Perfection of Christ

What is Biblical perfection? How can it be received?

Biblical perfection.

The words "perfect" and "perfection" are translations of the Hebrew tam or tamim, which mean "complete," "right," "peaceful," "sound," "wholesome," or "blameless." Generally the Greek teleios means "complete," "perfect," "full-grown," "mature," "fully developed," and "having attained its purpose."

In the Old Testament, when used of humans, the word has a relative sense. Noah, Abraham, and Job were each described as perfect or blameless (Gen. 6:9; 17:1; 22:18; Job 1:1,18), though each had imperfections (Gen. 9:21; 20; Job 40:2-5).

In the New Testament perfect often describes mature persons who have lived up to the best available light and attained the potential of their spiritual, mental, and physical powers (cf. 1 Cor. 14:20; Phil. 3:15; Heb. 5:14). Believers are to be perfect in their finite sphere, Christ said, as God is perfect in His infinite and absolute sphere (cf. Matt. 5:48). In God's sight, a perfect person is one whose heart and life are wholly surrendered to the worship and service of God, who is constantly growing in divine knowledge, and who is, through God's grace, living up to all the light he has received while rejoicing in a life of victory (cf. Col. 4:12; James 3:2).

Full perfection in Christ.

How may we become perfect? The Holy Spirit brings to us the perfection of Christ. By faith Christ's perfect character becomes ours. People can never claim that perfection independently, as if it were their innate possession, or theirs by right. Perfection is a gift of God.

Apart from Christ human beings cannot obtain righteousness. "He who abides in Me, and I in him," He said, "bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). It is Christ "who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

In Christ these qualities constitute our perfection. He completed, once for all, our sanctification and redemption. No one can add to what He has done. Our wedding garment, or robe of righteousness, was wrought out by Christ's life, death, and resurrection. The Holy Spirit now takes the finished product and works it out in the Christian's life. In this way we can "be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19).

Move on to perfection.

What role do we, as believers, play in all of this? Through the indwelling Christ we grow up to spiritual maturity. Through God's gifts to His church we can develop "to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). We need to grow beyond our spiritual childhood experience (Eph. 4:14), beyond the basic truths of Christian experience, moving on to the "solid food" prepared for mature believers (Heb. 5:14). "Therefore," Paul said, "leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection" (Heb. 6:1). "This is my prayer," he said, "that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:9-11, NIV).

The sanctified life is not a life without severe difficulties and obstacles. Paul admonished believers to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." But he added the encouraging words, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12,13).

"Exhort one another daily," he said, "lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end" (Heb. 3:13,14; cf. Matt. 24:13).

But, Scripture warns, "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sin is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment" (Heb. 10:26,27, NIV).

These exhortations make it evident that Christians "need more than a purely legal justification or sanctification. They need holiness of character even though salvation is always by faith. The title to heaven rests on the righteousness of Christ only. In addition to justification, God's plan of salvation provides through this title a fitness for heaven by the indwelling Christ. This fitness must be revealed in man's moral character as evidence that salvation 'has happened.'"

What does this mean in human terms? Continual prayer is indispensable for living a sanctified life that is perfect at every stage of its development. "For this reason we...do not cease to pray for you,...that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:9,10).

Daily Justification

All believers who are living the Spirit-filled sanctified life (Christ-possessed) have a continuing need for daily justification (Christ-be-stowed). We need this because of conscious transgressions and because of errors we may commit unwillingly. Realizing the sinfulness of the human heart, David requested forgiveness for his "hidden faults" (Ps. 19:12, RSV; cf. Jer. 17:9). Speaking specifically of the sins of believers, God assures us that "if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

The Experience of Salvation and the Future

Our salvation is finally and fully accomplished when we are either glorified in the resurrection or translated to heaven. Through glorification God shares with the redeemed His own radiant glory. This is the hope that all of us, as God's children, anticipate. Said Paul, "And we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2, RSV).

It is fulfilled at the Second Advent when Christ appears "to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him" (Heb. 9:28, NIV).

Glorification and Sanctification

The indwelling of Christ in our hearts is one of the conditions for future salvation—the glorification of our mortal bodies. "Christ in you," Paul said, is "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27), explaining in another place, "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11). Paul assures us, God "chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth...for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:13,14).

In Him, we are already in the throne room of heaven (Col. 3:1-4). Those who are "partakers of the Holy Spirit" have in actuality tasted "the powers of the age to come"

(Heb. 6:4,5). By contemplating the Lord's glory and fixing our eyes on the attractive loveliness of Christ's character, we "are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory" (2 Cor. 3:18, NIV)--we are being prepared for the transformation we will experience at the Second Advent.

Our final redemption and adoption as a child of God takes place in the future. Paul says, "The creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God," adding that "even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:19,23; cf. Eph. 4:30).

This climactic event takes place at "the times of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21). Christ calls it "the regeneration" (Matt. 19:28; "renewal of all things," NIV). Then "the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21).

The scriptural view that in one sense adoption and redemption—or salvation—have "already" been accomplished and that in another sense they have not yet been accomplished has confused some. A study of the full scope of Christ's work as Saviour provides the answer. "Paul related our present salvation to the first coming of Christ. In the historic cross, resurrection, and heavenly ministry of Christ our justification and sanctification are secured once and for all. Our future salvation, the glorification of our bodies, Paul related, however, to the second coming of Christ.

"For this reason Paul can say simultaneously: 'We are saved,' in view of the cross and resurrection of Christ in the past; and 'we are not yet saved,' in view of the future return of Christ to redeem our bodies."

To emphasize our present salvation to the exclusion of our future salvation creates an incorrect, unfortunate understanding of Christ's complete salvation.

Glorification and Perfection

Some incorrectly believe that the ultimate perfection that glorification will bring is already available to humans. But of himself, Paul, that dedicated man of God, wrote near the end of his life, "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. 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, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12-14).

Sanctification is a lifelong process. Perfection now is ours only in Christ, but the ultimate, all-comprehensive transformation of our lives into the image of God will take place at the Second Advent. Paul cautions: "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). The history of Israel and the lives of David, Solomon, and Peter are serious warnings for all. "As long as life shall last, there is need of guarding the affections and the passions with a firm purpose. There is inward corruption, there are outward temptations, and wherever the work of God shall be advanced, Satan plans so to arrange circumstances that temptation shall come with overpowering force upon the soul. Not one moment can we be secure only as we are relying upon God, the life hid with Christ in God."

Our final creative transformation is accomplished when incorruptibility and immortality become ours, when the Holy Spirit completely restores the original creation.

The Ground of Our Acceptance With God

Neither Christlike character traits nor faultless behavior is the ground of our acceptance with God. Saving righteousness comes from the one righteous Man, Jesus, and is conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit. We can contribute nothing to Christ's gift of righteousness; we can only receive it. No one other than Christ is righteous (Rom. 3:10); independent human righteousness is only filthy rags (Isa. 64:6; see also Dan. 9:7,11,20; 1 Cor. 1:30).

Even what we do in response to Christ's saving love cannot form the basis of our acceptance with God. That acceptance is identified with the work of Christ. In bringing Christ to us, the Holy Spirit brings that acceptance.

Is our acceptance based on Christ's justifying righteousness or His sanctifying righteousness or both? John Calvin pointed out that as "Christ cannot be divided into parts, so the two things, justification and sanctification, which we perceive to be united together in him, are inseparable." Christ's ministry has to be seen in its totality. This makes it paramount to avoid speculation about these two terms by "trying to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification....Why try to be more minute than is Inspiration on the vital questions of righteousness by faith?"

Just as the sun has light and heat—inseparable, yet with unique functions—so Christ has become to us righteousness as well as sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30). Not only are we fully justified but also fully sanctified in Him.

The Holy Spirit brings the "It is finished" of Calvary within, applying the only experience of God's acceptance of humanity to us. This "It is finished" of the cross calls in question all other human attempts to gain acceptance. In bringing the Crucified within, the Spirit brings the only ground of our acceptance with God, providing the only genuine title to and fitness for salvation available to us.