

Salvation—Sanctification (7th)

(Today we will begin study the *experimental* aspect of sanctification in the life of the believer as he lives here on earth. We will begin looking at the new birth in this lesson.)

In our previous studies on the subject of sanctification we presented the aspects of *eternal* and *judicial* sanctification. These characteristics of sanctification are often ignored in discussing this topic. As stated before, “a rich legacy is robbed from the Lord by omitting” these vital issues. Nevertheless, we now turn our attention to the *experimental* or *experiential* phase of sanctification. In the first two features of sanctification the child of grace is totally passive and does not contribute anything to his sanctification, but with this feature he is active and in part passive at the same time. In other words, the regenerated child of grace does not sanctify himself independently from the inward working of the Holy Spirit. Equally, it should be obvious that the providence of God contributes greatly to the sanctification of the believer. This is because for him to be born again and made alive spiritually his pedigree must be preserved so that he will be born to be the person that he is. Furthermore, he must be kept alive not only until the time of his regeneration but afterwards as well, so that he will fulfill his ministry and/or calling as he lives out his life on the earth. The language of J. C. Philpot is delightful in addressing this matter regarding Jude 1.

What a mercy it is for God’s people that before they have a vital union with Christ, before they are grafted into him experimentally—they have an eternal, immanent union with him before all worlds. It is this eternal union that brings them into time existence. It is by virtue of this eternal union that they come into the world at such a time, at such a place, from such parents, under such circumstances, as God has appointed. It is by virtue of this eternal union that the circumstances of their time-state are ordained. By virtue of this eternal union they are preserved in Christ before they are called; they cannot die until God has brought about a vital union with Christ. Whatever sickness they may pass through, whatever injuries they may be exposed to, whatever perils assault them on sea or land, die they will not, die they cannot, until God’s purposes are executed in bringing them into a vital union with the Son of his love. Thus, this eternal union watched over every circumstance of their birth, watched over their childhood, watched over their manhood, watched over them until the appointed time and spot, when “the God of all grace,” according to his eternal purpose, was pleased to quicken their souls, and thus bring about an experimental union with the Lord of life and glory. *Through Baca’s Vale*, “January 11.”

Much could be written regarding this but I will simply leave you to contemplate on the providence of God to this time, as well as the future, regarding your own life for your personal edification knowing that “he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ,” Philippians 1:6. With this being said, we will begin the *experimental* phase of sanctification with the new birth.

It is self-evident from the Scriptures that the new birth produces a change in the life of an individual. I John 5:4-5 says, “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”

Notice that it did not say that “whatsoever is born of God” *ought* or *should* overcome the world. Too often this is what is preached from such verses, but the Word of God plainly states that he that is born of God overcomes the world. Additionally, it is to be noted that this verse does not teach that the one born of God sometimes overcome the world, but according to the verb tense he that is born of God habitually overcomes the world. It is “overcometh.” While the Greek verb tense is present active indicative, the “th”

on the end of the word overcome equally testifies in the English to the fact that overcoming is a way of life or, as stated above, “habitually overcomes the world.” This does not mean that the believer always does that which is right, nor does it mean that he does not sin. As recorded in I John 1:8, 10, the believer is not only guilty of committing sin in the past, but he currently has sin. Though a believer, he is a sinner. Romans chapter seven clearly outlines the struggles of a child of grace as he lives in this world. Even Galatians 5:17 testifies to this battle by proclaiming that not only does the “flesh lusteth against the Spirit,” but the Spirit lusteth “against the flesh” so that we “cannot do the things that” we “would.” In other words, we not only do not live as godly as we would because of our sinful flesh, but we do not go into the depths of sin that we would because of the Spirit of God that dwells and works within us. Here we must be clear. We cannot identify how much one may falter or overcome. We are individuals and the Lord in His providence does not deal identically with each child of grace. Thankfully, the Lord does not allow each of us to be tried as Job was nor live as Manasseh did prior to his conversion. However, after the Lord changed the heart of Manasseh, he “humbled himself greatly before” God, “prayed,” “took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD,” “repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel,” II Chronicles 33:12-16. In other words, after he was “born of God” he overcame the world. Likewise, every child of grace overcomes the world.

It should be pointed out that the reason one overcomes the world is not because the believer is strong in himself or has more intelligence or spirituality than others. I John does not say that “the victory that overcometh the world” is because the individual is superior to another in some special way. No. It says, “this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.” In other words, the faith given to us by God (Ephesians 2:8) is not a dead and inactive faith; it is the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:22. Living or godly faith is not dead. It produces works; it overcomes, see James 2:17-26. Additionally, as testified in I John 4:4 it is “because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” Yes, we (the believer; the sheep) overcome the world, but it is because of the Spirit of God working in us. This is what God declared in Philippians 2:12-13: “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.” This is often referred to in theology as the responsibility of man and the sovereignty of God.

Often the question is asked, “How do we know where the sovereignty of God begins or stops and where the responsibility of man begins or stops?” While the Scriptures declare that both are true, I do not believe man is wise enough to answer this question. Theologians often become entangled in theological controversies discussing the pros and cons of each proposition and, in my opinion, produce more confusion and division than answering the questions. Certainly, wisdom does not stop with me, but I like to try to explain this with the example of making biscuits. Depending on the recipe of the individual, allow me to supply the following ingredients: flour, milk, baking powder, egg, shorting, and salt. Obviously, no one ingredient will produce a biscuit. All of the ingredients are to be mixed together properly and cooked to produce biscuits. After the ingredients are mixed together we are unable to say where the flour stops and the egg begins, or where the milk begins and the baking powder ends; in fact, we are unable to determine where any ingredient begins or ends. Equally, it takes all of the ingredients working together to produce the finished or final product. Likewise, it is with the responsibility of man and the sovereignty of God. Man is to read, study, believe, and obey the Scriptures and as God works in His providential dealings with man, he (the man) overcomes and obtains the victory. When man sins, the fault is his and when man is blessed to overcome it is “because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world,” I John 4:4.

Too often one focuses on either the responsibility of man on the one hand or the sovereignty of God on the other. But we must constantly remind ourselves that God is not going to read the Bible for us; neither is He going to shove our nose into obeying His Word. True, He may chasten us so that we realize

that we are to keep His commandments and prove our love to the brethren accordingly. See I John 5:2. The truth of the matter is that it is not an either or situation; it is both (that is, the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man) working together. It is expressed well in John 14:21, 23; 15:4-5: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

Dear child of grace, quit trying to figure out how it is that God works in us the willing and doing “of *his* good pleasure,” and be busy working out your “own salvation with fear and trembling.” See Philippians 2:12-13. (I hope by substituting the infinitives “to will” and “to do” for the gerunds “willing” and “doing” that it gives you a better understanding and meaning of the text.) Also, I might add that in Romans chapter nine, where Paul discusses the sins of Pharaoh and the sovereignty of God over him, the question was raised, “Why doth he (that is, God—JKB) yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?” Instead of giving some detailed answer to distinguish between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, the Divine answer is “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?” No, the answer resides in God and not in the wisdom and philosophy of man.

We have completed our allotted time for today. The Lord willing, we will continue this study in our next podcast. Farewell.