

# The Benefits of Salvation Series

## Progressive Sanctification Part Two

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We are saved by grace through faith and given grace to obey through faith which works by love. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Grace. God is the God of all grace. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Thus we are exhorted not to insult the Spirit of Grace in Hebrews 10:29. Once justified freely by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation, we are to yield to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. God ordained means through which He confers grace to His people. We are to avail ourselves of the means of grace, those outward and ordinary means ordained by God as Christ mediates the benefits of salvation provided in the New Covenant.

So we have this gift, Christ and eternal life in Him.

**The Agents and Instruments effecting the sanctified life.** Christians can no more sanctify themselves by their own efforts than can sinners justify themselves by their own efforts. God must effect the believer's sanctification by His own grace and power:

John 17:17 Sanctify them in/through Your truth; Your Word is Truth.

Romans 8:13, 14 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ESV

1 Thessalonians 5:23: Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18: And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

The Christian, however, is not passive in his/her growth in grace. On the contrary, one is to be fully alert and consciously active in one's spiritual growth, utilizing the means of grace. Peter calls upon the believer to be "diligent to make his calling and election certain" by practicing moral excellence, self-control, perseverance, godliness, and brotherly kindness (2 Peter 1.5-10). Paul counsels the believer to "...work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil.2.12).

Even so, Paul reminds the Philippians that "it is God who is working in you, both to will and to work in behalf of His good pleasure" Phil 2.13.

God works in us and we also work; but the relation is that **because** God works, we work. All working out of salvation on our part is the effect of God's working in us, not the willing to the exclusion of the doing and not the doing to the exclusion of the willing, but both the willing and the doing. (John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, pp. 148-149)

And it's not that a believer can sit back and say, "Well, the Spirit isn't moving me." We are not to grow negligent as if not bound to perform any duty unless upon a special motion of the Holy Spirit. Rather we are to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God within. What God expects we should by faith avail ourselves of the means to that end. **The primary means of grace include:**

**1. The reading and preaching of the Word of God** (Acts 20:32). The Word of God as a means of grace is comprised of Law and Gospel.

The Law serves (a) to bring a person under conviction of sin (Romans 3:20) in order to make one conscious of a total inability to meet the demands of the Law; (b) to lead a person to the necessity of Christ (Galatians 3:24); and (c) to serve as a guide to believers as to "what love looks like." The Holy Spirit uses the Law to restrain sin/evil and promote righteousness in a nation, a family, a person.

The Gospel declares the good news of Christ as the only way back to the Father, that Jesus lived a perfect life, fulfilled all righteousness, died to pay the penalty for sin, and rose again from the dead. The Gospel exhorts those to come to Christ in faith and repentance, and to rely and trust in Christ alone as the only hope of salvation. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. (Romans 1:16, 1 Cor. 1:18)

The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to enlighten, convince, humble, and build up believers in holiness, grace, comfort, etc. as the Word is faithfully read, preached, and searched. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to draw people to the Truth, to conform believers to the image of Christ, and to strengthen faith such that believers "grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18)

**2. The receiving and attendance upon the sacraments of the church** (Gal 3:27; Romans 6:3, 11; 1 Cor. 11:24, 25). **The sacraments of Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper** do not save anyone in and of themselves, but these are means of grace to the believer as they are received. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) includes baptism. Baptism is the outward sign of the work of the Holy Spirit in a person's life and it demonstrates faith as old lives/sin nature are left behind and new life in Christ is acknowledged. (Romans 6:4; Col. 2:11-13; 1 John 3:2, 23) In the Lord's Supper we join ourselves with the Blood covenant and proclaim Christ's death until He comes. (1 Cor. 11, Matthew 26:28; Exodus 24:8; Isaiah 53:12; Revelation 19:6-9)

**3. Prayers of adoration, confession thanksgiving, and supplication.** Through **prayer** we actively communicate with the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. We come boldly to the Throne of Grace to obtain mercy and to find favor, or grace to help, in a timely way. (Hebrews 4:16) We talk, we listen, we worship, we express our wonder, we share our feelings and thoughts and all we are with all God is. In addition God has ordained certain means by which His grace is improved in us. For example, as we embrace **proper worship** and partake in praise as individuals, as families, and corporately as the family of God, we grow in grace. **Honoring the Sabbath, receiving the Word read and expounded, offering prayers, singing songs to God, reaffirming our faith, pronouncing blessings, bringing the tithe and offerings, guardedly administering the sacraments, and giving sacred oaths and vows** all contribute to growth in grace. (Acts 2:37-42; John 16:8) **Subduing the flesh through fasting and abstinence encourages humility as an act of worship and means of grace.** (James 4:6; see also Isaiah 58)

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live in community and oneness, and we also are brought into the community of the covenant people of God. **“One anothering,”** mutually caring for the members of Christ’s body through regular fellowship (Hebrews 10:23-25) and actively participating in “good works wrought in God” (John 3) affirm the Lordship of Christ in our lives. **Witnessing the gospel to others, giving glory to God through testimonies of God’s grace, and involving ourselves in communication that gives/ministers grace to the hearers** (Ephesians 4:29) all honor God and encourage growth in grace. Through these the Holy Spirit renews us and glorifies Christ. (Ephesians 2:10; Col. 1:10; John 15:8)

**4. The fellowship of the saints** (Acts 2:42, 46; Hebrews 10:24, 25); and

**5. All of the providences of life which God works together to perfect in the believer that which He has predestinated for them, namely, their conformity to the image of His Son (Romans 8:28, 29, 35-39).**

Dr. Wayne Grudem lists the following as specific means of grace: **Teaching of the Word; The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; Prayer; Worship; Church discipline which maintains the purity of the Church and encourages holiness of life; Giving (graciously, gladly, generously, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit); operating in one’s Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12; 1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-16); Fellowship; Evangelism which ministers the message of saving grace; Personal Ministry to Individuals, including the laying on of hands.** (Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Leicester, Great Britain: Inter-Varsity Press, and Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.)

After Paul argues for justification by faith in Christ alone for salvation; that it is by grace we are saved and that because of God, not the will of man or by blood, or by the will of the flesh (cf. John 1:12), he says this in Romans 12: 1, 2:

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (or spiritual worship, or spiritual service of worship), and be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*  
*Romans 12:1, 2*

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- Reymond, Robert L. *A New systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998.
- Shorter Catechism*, Question 35

## PRAY:

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. ESV Lord, grant that we might cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. Grant us what we need to not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. ESV

Let us grow so that we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, may we grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. ESV

Philippians 1:9-11: May our love abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that we may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. ESV

Philippians 3:13, 14: Lord, let us not regard ourselves as having laid hold of what You desire for us yet; but, as Paul said, "one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." ESV

Colossians 1:9-12: We ask that to be filled with the knowledge of Your will, O Lord, in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that we will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. ESV

1 Thessalonians 3:12, 13: and may the Lord cause us to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, so that You, Lord, may establish our hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. ESV It is in Jesus' Name that we ask it, Amen.

*Mary Craig, D. Min.*

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