

CHAPTER IV

THE APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

The Important Question: "How Is The Christian Related To God?"

Christianity, we have seen revolves around the Person of Jesus Christ. We are not told in the Scripture to believe on the church, nor in our good works, nor in baptism or the Lord's Supper. We are to believe in Jesus Christ.

Because of Who Jesus Christ is and because of what He has done for us in His death, we are commanded to repent of our sins and to believe in Him as our Lord and Savior (Luke 13:3; 24:46, 47; Acts 26:20; Romans 10:9, 10; I John 3:23). This is the most important decision one may make. Without it one is still under the condemnation of God (John 3:18,36); he will be rejected by Christ (Matthew 7:21-29; John 8:24); and be eternally lost (Revelation 20:11-15).

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved ... " is the promise of God (Acts 16:31).

When we obey God by believing on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior then the Scripture describes our condition by such words as "saved," "adoption," "begotten," "redeemed," "forgiven," and "justified" (Ephesians 2:8; 1:5; I Peter 1:3, 18; Colossians 2:13; Romans 5:1).

Such words signify a standing before God. They indicate a spiritual position, a relationship which has been obtained for the believer by Jesus Christ through His death. the believer is seen as having received the benefits of the work of Jesus Christ. The value of Christ's work has been imputed to him and he is therefore "saved," "adopted," "begotten," etc.,

and brought into the relationship of salvation (Romans 5:1-11; 8:31-39; Ephesians 1:3-14; Colossians 2:10-15; I Peter 1:1-5; I John 5:9-13).

The Scripture describes all believers, therefore, as "complete" (Colossians 2:10). In the Greek, in which the New Testament was written, this word means "possess fully" and the grammatical construction indicated a finished product.

To explain what he meant in calling the Christian "complete" the Apostle Paul indicated that the believer in Jesus Christ "fully possessed" at least five things.

He has received a spiritual cleansing (Colossians 2:11). This means that the moral uncleanness which characterizes every non-believer (Isaiah 64:6), has been washed away. The believer, even though he may feel unclean, has been cleansed (I Corinthians 6:11).

The Christian, as "complete," has been "quickened" by God (Colossians 2:13a). The word "quickened" means "to make alive." This teaches the great truth that God has given eternal life to all who believe on His Son (John 3:16, 36; I John 5:11, 12). Though once dead to God (Ephesians 2:1), the believer now possesses life (John 10:28) and has experienced the New Birth (John 3:3, 5).

The third possession of the Christian is forgiveness (Colossians 2:13b). The Bible, by use of the word "all" emphasizes the universality of this forgiveness. This pertains to man's guilt (Romans 3:23) with its resultant condemnation (John 3:18) and death (Romans 5:12; 6:23). The believer is fully forgiven; he is no longer guilty, no longer under the sentence of condemnation and death (John 5:24; Romans 8:1).

The believer has also been justified (Colossians 2:14). As man's Representative, Jesus Christ satisfied the demands of God's law. This work has been imputed to the believer. On this basis the believer is looked upon by God as justified, i.e., as though he had perfectly obeyed God and was therefore perfectly righteous (Romans 5:1, 10; 8:1-4; 10:3, 4).

The final possession, which Paul indicates as belonging to every Christian, is that of freedom from Satan (Colossians 2:15). Christ came into our nature to free us from the Enemy (Hebrews 2:14, 15; I John 3:8). The value and power of His work has been imputed to us. The believer has been set free (Ephesians 1:19-2:6; Colossians 1:13). He no longer belongs to Satan - he belongs to God and irrevocably so.

The remarkable factor here is that the believer possesses all of these spiritual benefits completely. He is not half forgiven or half justified. This is what Paul meant by "complete." The believer "fully possesses" all of these benefits. Diagram 7 contrasts the completeness of the believer as he was before salvation and as he is after salvation.

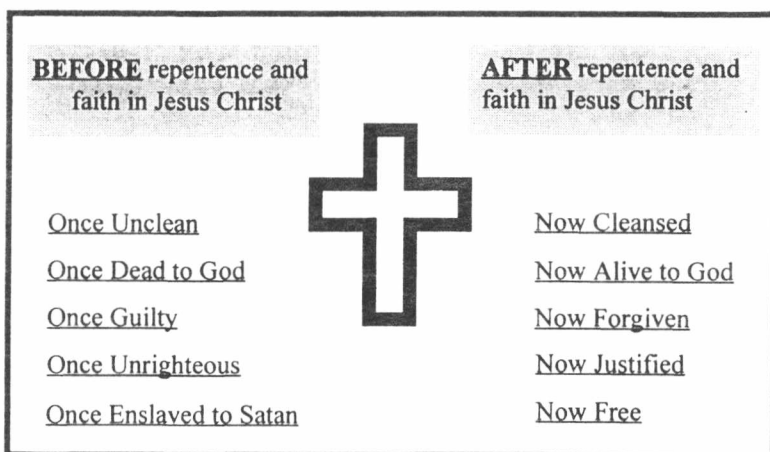


Diagram 7: The Believer's Standing - Complete in Christ

In sharp contrast the Bible exhorts the believer to "seek," "mortify," "put off," and to "put on" (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:1, 5, 8). There are many commandments which specify that the Christian is to "grow" (I Peter 2:2 II Peter 3:18), and to "work out your own salvation" (Philippians 2:12).

The Scripture, therefore, addresses the Christian in a two-fold manner. On one hand it instructs him in the permanence of his possession of salvation into which he has been fully brought. On the other hand it exhorts him to develop his "walk" and his "witness." In the former area he is reminded that he is "complete" and in the latter he is always "incomplete."

The instruction in all of this is to the effect that the believer has a two-fold relationship with God. There is the relationship of salvation, in which he is complete; and there is the relationship of sanctification, in which the believer will always be incomplete.

The Key To Success: Accept The Word Of God As Your Final Authority. Believe God Not Your Feelings Or Circumstances! If You Have Repented And Believed In Jesus Christ As Savior And Lord - You Are Complete In Him!

The Necessary Distinction: How Is Salvation Related To Sanctification?

In order to understand the Bible and to live successfully, we must clearly distinguish between our salvation and our sanctification. To confuse the two will bring uncertainty and ambiguity into all aspects of life and thought.

This distinction is necessary in order to understand the plan of salvation. The Bible is adamant in its denial that salvation is based on good works. It emphasizes in a great variety of ways that one does not achieve salvation by human endeavor of any type (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 18:9-14; Galatians 2:16; 3:11; Ephesians 2:8, 9). Salvation is the gift of God (Romans 6:23) and is received by faith (John 3:36; Ephesians 2:8, 9; I John 5:9-13).

It is also necessary to make this distinction in order to live the Christian life successfully. Salvation may be likened to the foundation upon which the Christian life is built as a superstructure. To believe that the foundation is defective, that it must continually be shored up, and that it is in constant danger of disappearing altogether would thoroughly discourage even the most committed Christian.

The Bible is emphatically clear on this point. God has promised to give eternal life to all who believe (John 1:12; 3:36). This life, or salvation, with all the benefits described earlier, is the present possession of all believers (John 10:28; I John 5:11, 12). The one who has received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is exhorted to take God at His Word in this matter of personal salvation and thereby be fully assured of his acceptance by God (I John 5:9-13). How we may personally feel about our relationship to God is entirely irrelevant. Our feelings are absolutely no standard whatsoever. The only standard is what God has said in His Word. "***These things*** have I written unto you that believe ... that ye may ***know*** that ye have eternal life ... " (I John 5:13).

At this point many earnest Christians confuse the witness of the Holy Spirit and their feelings. They believe, when they lose their "feeling" of assurance, that they have lost the witness of the Holy Spirit. The only conclusion they can draw is that they are not true believers. It is very important

for us to recognize that the witness of the Holy Spirit is not our feeling. The "witness" is the Holy Spirit's instruction to us that God has authoritatively spoken in His Word (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15; Romans 8:15, 16; Galatians 4:6; I John 5:9-13). The Holy Spirit has not been sent to make the believer "feel" that he is a Christian. He was sent to bear witness to Jesus Christ and the Scripture and on that basis to lead the believer into the assurance of salvation. Therefore, the Holy Spirit "witnesses" within the believer that the Scripture is true.

To doubt God's Word and work because of personal feeling is a very dishonoring thing to do. God is Truth. He is the Sovereign Lord. He is worthy of all trust and confidence. He has given us His Word. We must accept His Word, believe what He has said about us and our salvation, and obey His commandments. When we do so we are cooperating with the Holy Spirit.

Having recognized that the salvation foundation of our life is complete and permanent, we may then confidently assume responsibility for the superstructure.

The Biblical Description: The Characteristics Of Salvation And Sanctification.

In salvation the Christian has a "standing" before God which is complete (Colossians 2:10). In contrast, the daily life of sanctification is not complete and may be described as his "state." The believer's "standing" is based on the divine work of imputation. That is, God simply gives the believing sinner all the salvation benefits purchased for him by Jesus Christ. The believer's "state" is based on the divine work of impartation. Here God continually gives to the believer those virtues and enablements which he is spiritually able to receive and practice.

The first characteristic which enables one to distinguish between salvation and sanctification is that **the former is a gift while the latter is earned must be appropriated by Faith.**

The benefits of salvation, some of which have been listed earlier, are freely given to all who believe on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They cannot be purchased, or merited, nor are they the product of some natural endowment or heritage. They can only be personally received (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8, 9).

In contrast to the benefits of salvation, those of sanctification must be appropriated. We receive such virtues and abilities only as we learn how to put them into practice by faith and love (Romans 6:16; I Peter 1:22). An illustration of such a benefit would be the ability to resist temptation. We earn this ability by truly desiring it, by claiming the provision and promise of God (I Corinthians 10:13), and then by making use of it in acts of faith (Matthew 4:3-11; Hebrews 2:14-18; James 1:2, 12-14; I Peter 1:6, 7; II Peter 2:9).

The second characteristic indicates that **the benefits of salvation admit of no degrees, while the benefits of sanctification, by contrast, do admit of degrees.**

Such a benefit of salvation as forgiveness, is fully given by God. To possess forgiveness at all, in the area of salvation, is to possess it fully (Colossians 2:13; Hebrews 10:19). All believers possess forgiveness in the same degree - completely. This is also true for justification, eternal life, adoption, and all such benefits.

That which the believer possesses by way of sanctification is never complete. Whatever the benefit may be, it is only partially known and utilized. One Christian may possess the ability to resist temptation only in a very small degree while

another may possess it in a much larger degree. All Christians have some ability to resist temptation, but all in a different degree.

The third characteristic distinction between the provisions of salvation and sanctification is that **the former are permanent and the latter may be transitory.**

The provisions of salvation are, happily, permanent. We receive these benefits as a gift, they admit of no degrees, and they are ours permanently. This comforting truth is implied in the type of life which God gives to those who believe: it is "eternal" life. Jesus Christ said, "*and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish ...*" (John 10:28). We do not merit these benefits of salvation nor do we keep them by merit.

By comparison, the virtues and abilities of sanctification are not necessarily permanent. It is very possible to attain a high degree of progress in some area of Christian practice and then to lose it through neglect. It is debatable whether one may lose any benefit of sanctification absolutely. Undoubtedly this would not be true. Every Christian, however, has experienced remarkable growth in some area only to find a stunting of that growth, and a decline in ability, due to carelessness (I Corinthians 3:1-4; 5:1-13; 6:1-8; 11:18-22; II Thessalonians 3:6-15; II Timothy 4:10).

The fourth characteristic which distinguishes between the benefits of salvation and sanctification has to do with their source. **The benefits of salvation depend only on the Person and work of Jesus Christ.** Through His representative work, which has been considered earlier, He obtained all the provisions of salvation. These are given to all who believe, as a gift. They admit of no degrees; they are ours permanently, and they depend only on Jesus Christ (Romans 3:20-31; 5:6-11; 8:1-4,31-39; Phil. 1:6).

In sharp contrast, **the benefits of sanctification depend not only on Jesus Christ and His work, but also upon the spiritual cooperation of the believer.** It has been pointed out earlier that one must desire and learn how to utilize these benefits. This must also be emphasized here. The provision has been made by Jesus Christ so that His people may live successfully. The Holy Spirit has been sent to teach and anoint the believer. But it is clear from the Scripture and from the experience of every Christian, that our cooperation is necessary.

When we desire to obey God, learn how to submit to His authority and how to put the Bible into daily practice, then the grace and power of God will flow into our lives. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:17, 18).

These contrasts between The Believer's Standing and his State are depicted in Diagram 8

The Key To Success: Do Not Confuse Your Relationship With God In Salvation Which Is Complete ... And Your Relationship With God In Sanctification Which Will Never be Complete In This Life.

The Believer's **STANDING** (Salvation)

All
Benefits
Are -



- 1. A Gift
- 2. Without Degrees
- 3. Permanent
- 4. Based only on the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

The Believer's **STATE** (Sanctification)

All
Benefits
Are -



- 1. Earned
- 2. With Degree
- 3. Transitory
- 4. Based on the Person and work of Jesus Christ and the Believer's Cooperation.

Diagram 8: The Believer's Standing and State Contrasted