

North Christian Church -

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5/15/16 - The Gospel, Salvation, and Sanctification - Part 86

Jas 4:6b [Message]

..."God goes against the willful proud; God gives grace to the willing humble."
"Willful" implies "full of human will", which points to the flesh "doing"; whereas, "willing" implies "not already full, but open to being filled", which points to the humble.

"work out your salvation"

Refers to your involvement in sanctification. Sanctification is salvation come alive in you, it is living in the Gospel reality, it is realizing God's eternal love for you. You do so "with fear and trembling" in awe of and respect for all that He's done.

Experiential Sanctification

By grace, God changes us. By grace, He's made us new creatures "in Christ". We have new natures that are perfect, therefore can only do His good will. The new "us" is "willingly humble" and supernaturally fellowships with God, making our fruit-bearing a collaborative, joint-labor.

Experiential Sanctification

To avoid assigning any creature credit in the production of divine good fruit in our lives, we simply refer back to scripture, which says, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1Co 15:10). God has qualified us to work with Him, "in Christ".

Experiential Sanctification

We are not somehow passive robots, whose free will is merely an academic construct that God invented to appease our flesh's desire for independence. At salvation, He literally changed us. It's because of that grace activity that we are able to join Him in accomplishing His will in time. We desire obedience!

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The Vine and the Branches

John 15 depicts the supernaturally wrought reality that is a believer's intimate relationship in/with their Savior. There is an eternal, familial relationship established between our Lord and His disciples.

"to will and to work"

God doesn't merely desire that His children "do" His will, He changes them so that they "will" to work for His good pleasure. This is one of the hallmarks of a true believer - their new creature desires to please God.

Php 2:12 [Amplified]

So then, my dear ones, just as you have always obeyed [my instructions with enthusiasm], not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation [that is, cultivate it, bring it to full effect, actively pursue spiritual maturity] with awe-inspired fear and trembling [using serious caution and critical self-evaluation to avoid anything that might offend God or discredit the name of Christ].

Php 2:13 [Amplified]

For it is [not your strength, but it is] God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work [that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfill your purpose] for His good pleasure.

The Parable of the Flower

Just like the flower and its growth is simply accomplished through God's grace, so goes the spiritual life. Intellectual striving is the antithesis of grace, and it leads to bondage, not clarity. Freedom is afforded to those with the faith of a child.

"in the defense and confirmation of the gospel"

This sums up the nature of Paul's ministry. He "fought the good fight" (2Ti 4:7) to preserve the Gospel complete and unstained. He preached "by grace through faith" (Eph 2:8-9) as the lynchpin of a believer's confidence in Christ. He just wanted others to know Christ (Eph; 1Co 2:2; 2Co 11:3).

The Book of Ephesians

There wasn't any primary point of contention in view, therefore, Paul was free to expand upon the glories of the Gospel in the lives of believers! It's a magnificent treatise on what living the Gospel looks like in a church that hasn't been overrun by the flesh.

The Book of Ephesians

In his "confirmation of the gospel" (ala Php 1:7), Paul refers to grace a LOT in the Book of Ephesians. This makes total sense, given the "stewardship of God's grace" was given to him to teach. Grace is the lynchpin of the Gospel, hence it was frequently extolled and defended by Paul and others.

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Grace Offends the Flesh

If it's by God's grace, then it is simple. Salvation is simple, as is sanctification. Man is responsible for complicating things.

1Co 14:33

for God is not a God of confusion [instability, confusion, disorder, tumult, disturbances] but of peace [welfare, peace, without disturbances], as in all the churches of the saints.

Striving for So-Called "Spiritual Maturity"

If one's pursuit of so-called "spiritual maturity" is the cause for anxiety, angst, increasing confusion, etc., it is fair to say that it is ungodly by nature (fruit of the wrong nature, aka OSN).

Synthesizing...

- Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
- 1Co 2:16 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

Doctrines Don't Mature, People Do

The Church isn't responsible for seeing to it that Christ's doctrines are "matured". His doctrines preexisted humanity (Jn 1:1). Paul and the other Apostles wrote about confirming and defending the Gospel (ala Php 1:7), not "maturing" it somehow, or suggesting their disciples "progress" it further through determination/striving.

Maturity

Maturity in Jesus' mind was opposite from His disciples' mind. There are multiple examples of Jesus having to readjust His disciples (e.g., Mk 10:13-16; Lk 9:46-48; 22:24-30; etc.).

Maturity

The most mature people in any church are the greatest servants (Mark 10:45). Look at your own heart and your desire to serve others rather than self; consider your deeds, even. (Lk 21:1-4; 2Co 8:12)