What the Bible Says About Salvation – Part 6

Randy Thompson
Valley Bible Church

Review / Introduction

Lesson 1

Salvation is wholly God's work where He saves sinners through Christ from the **penalty**, **power**, and one day the **presence** of sin. All people apart from God's saving work are **sinners with a sin nature** – **wicked**, **dead**, **blind**, **captive**, **darkness-loving**, **alienated-from and hostile-to-God**, **sin-slaves walking according to Satan's anti-God world system**. All are totally depraved, separate from God, completely unable to move towards Him on their own, destined for wrath, helplessness and hopelessness before Him. God, in His grace, must intervene. The only solution for sin is salvation.

Lesson 2

Atonement refers to Christ's work in his death to pay the penalty for sin. His sacrifice was a **penal substitutionary atonement**. The guilt of sin demanded the penalty of death atoned for through Christ's **vicarious sacrifice**. His sacrifice was **propitious** – it satisfied the demands of God's holiness and wrath toward sin. Sin placed us in alienation from and enmity with God and Christ's death **reconciled** us to God. Christ's death was the **ransom** price to the Father to redeem us from slavery to sin and the Law. Sin, death, and Satan were **defeated** by the atonement. Christ's sacrifice is of infinite worth but is only applied to the elect.

Lesson 3

All of humanity due to their own choice has rebelled against God and are therefore without hope in this life and destined for hell in the next. In eternity past, out of all underserving humanity of all time, God chose those on whom He would bestow His love, grace, and mercy according to the kind intention of His own will and for His maximum glory.

At God's perfect time, He brings the gospel to His elect, draws them to Himself convicting them of sin and the need for salvation and a Savior, and gives them the gift of saving faith.

Lesson 4

At the moment of conversion, God graciously performs supernatural acts in His elect which change them forever and cannot be undone. God brings new life to the believing sinner through **regeneration**. God **justifies** them, declaring the believing sinner righteous and placing their sin on Jesus and Jesus' righteousness on them. God **forgives** all their sin for all time removing the charges against them, cancelling the debt of the punishment for their sin. God **adopts** the believing sinner making them a part of His family with all the rights and privileges (and responsibilities) of an heir.

Lesson 5

At the moment of conversion, the elect are spiritually **baptized** being united to Christ's body in his death and resurrection and with His body the church. They are permanently **indwelt** with the Holy Spirit who helps, guides, teaches, and empowers their walk with Christ. They are **sealed** with the Holy Spirit, they are owned by God and given a foretaste (**pledge**) of glory. And they are uniquely **gifted** to serve their new spiritual family, the body of Christ.

In our order of salvation, in eternity past, according to the kind intention of His own will and for His glory God chose His individuals for salvation (item 1). At the moment one exercises saving faith (item 2), a supernatural conversion occurs (item 3), and God performs supernatural acts in the life of the converted (items 4). Some acts are unique; others are connected. But all, taken together paint a glorious picture of what God does supernaturally in the life of His elect.

1. Election
2. The gospel call, draw, and the gift of saving faith
3. Conversion

4a. Regeneration
4b. Justification
4c. Forgiveness
4d. Adoption
4e. Baptizing
4f. Indwelling
4g. Sealing
4h. Bestowing spiritual gifts
4i. Sanctification

5. Perseverance (or preservation)
6. Death
7. Glorification

Positional and Total Sanctification

The Greek word that is translated "sanctification" means separation from the secular and sinful and set apart for God's sacred, special purpose. It has the idea of being set aside for the use intended by the designer. Sanctification occurs because of Christ's atoning work.

There are three aspects of sanctification. First is **positional sanctification**. This is God's one-time work at conversion where He sets the believer apart from sin and eternal death for Himself.

> [13]But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because **God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth**. (2 Thess 2:13)

> [1]Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **who are chosen** [2]**according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit**, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. (1 Pet 1:1-2)

This one-time work connects to other salvation blessings like spiritual baptism.

There is also a future aspect – **perfect (or ultimate or total) sanctification**. This is when we enter glory where we will be completely separated from sin. We will look at that next time.

> [20]For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; [21]who will **transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory**, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Phil 3:20-21)

<u>Progressive Sanctification (or "Spiritual Growth")</u>

There is also a present aspect of sanctification where God progressively sanctifies the believer conforming them ever more into the image of Christ. **Progressive sanctification** is God's work where the believer cooperates in the process to more and more die to sin and live unto righteousness. This is progressively having your character, motives, thoughts, words, and deeds come closer to matching your position in Christ (becoming more like Him).

> [18]But 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 from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:18)

> [28]And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. [29]For those whom He foreknew, **He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; [30]and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom 8:28-30)

If you have surrendered your life to Christ, you have an amazing promise regarding your progressive sanctification. But you also have a solemn responsibility. God sanctifies, but He does so as you "cooperate" with Him. God does His part, and you do your part.

The accompanying truth of God's sanctifying work is that you are commanded to strive and work hard at spiritual growth and by doing so display the subjective evidences of salvation.

> [6]For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus**. (Phil 1:6)

> [12]So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling**; [13]**for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.** (Phil 2:12-13)

> [10]Therefore, brethren, **be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble**; [11]for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Pet 1:10-11)

This striving, pressing on to be like Christ is for all believers – young in the Lord, old in the Lord, very mature, or less mature. Look at what Paul says in Philippians 3:12-14 about not yet obtaining full maturity. The most mature believer of all time thought this…

> [12]Not that I have already obtained *it [i.e., fully knowing Christ; fully experiencing His resurrection power over sin]* or have already become perfect, but **<u>I press on</u>** so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. [13]Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: **<u>forgetting what *lies* behind</u>** and **<u>reaching forward to what *lies* ahead</u>**, [14]**<u>I press on</u>** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:12-14)

God calls each of us to evaluate our own sanctification process. We are each called to strive to not allow the past to affect your pursuit of Christ in the present – either the discouragement of failures or laurel-siting of successes. We are each to reach forward, straining to become like Christ. We are each to press on, pursuing the goal of Christlikeness with energy and passion. We are each to NOT think more highly of yourself than you should. And we are each to not grow weary in pursuing sanctification.

- **Are you striving, pressing, reaching in your walk?**

<u>Assurance of Salvation by Objective Truth and Subjective Evidence</u>

The assurance of salvation involves two aspects: objective truth and subjective evidence.

The objective basis of assurance is the finished work of Christ and His promise to those who exercise true saving faith. John's writings give a plethora of objective truths (e.g., John 3:15-16; 3:36; 5:24; 6:47; 11:25-26; 1 John 5:1), for example.

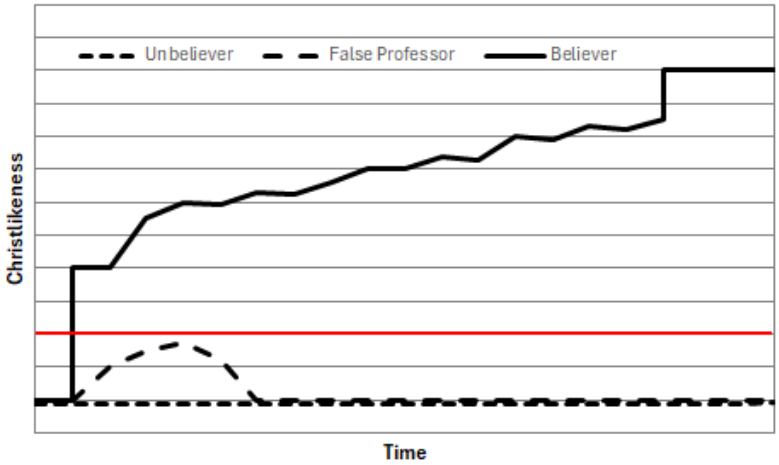
> [47]Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. (John 6:47)

- **Do you believe His promises?**

The Scriptures are clear that true salvation is accompanied by a changed life. Those who are truly saved will be progressing in sanctification because of God's work in their life and because they are striving in the power of Spirit to glorify God and grow in their relationship with Christ. True believers will have a desire to know their Redeemer more and more.

The subjective evidence for assurance is progressive sanctification and includes things like the witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:16; 1 John 3:24), fellowship with God's people (1 John 1:3), walking in the light (1 John 1:6-7), hatred and confession of one's own sin (1 John 1:5-2:2), walking in obedience (1 John 2:5; 3:5-6), walking like Christ (1 John 2:6), not loving the world (1 John 2:15), purity (1 John 3:3), love (1 John 3:14; 18-19), overcoming the world (1 John 5:4), etc. A profession of salvation without the evidences that flow from salvation is self-deception.

There are three paths that people are on as shown below.



The unbeliever has no heart-level sanctification in their life. There may be moments of self-improvement and fleshly growth, but since they are not regenerated (below the red-line which represents regeneration) and are therefore a dead sin-slave, there is no heart-level sanctification.

The false professor (one who claims to have believed in Christ but is either externally or internally deceived) starts with a connection to the body and things of Christ but ultimately falls away and either actively or passively denies Christ. There may be moments of self-improvement but since they are actually not regenerated and are therefore a dead sin-slave, there is no heart-level sanctification.

The believer (one who has exercised true saving faith, surrendering their life to Christ) often demonstrates significant changes at or around salvation then a continued upward trend of progressive sanctification throughout their life, culminating in glory.

❖ **Which best describes you?**

There is also a caution regarding the subjective evidences. Subjective evidences are a result of walking in the Spirit. We must be careful to ensure that subjective evidences are not self-works or legalism.

> [3]Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Gal 3:3)

So how do we go about progressing in sanctification or growing spiritually? Through the Holy Spirit's power.

<u>Power Through the Holy Spirit</u>

The Christian life is not lived in one's own strength. It is a life lived filled by the Spirit as the life of Christ flows through you (Gal 2:20).

> [20]I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, **but Christ lives in me**; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20)

God has described Spirit-filling several ways in the Scriptures to allow us to fully understand it: "<u>abiding in Christ</u>" (John 15:1-11), "<u>setting apart Christ as Lord in your heart</u>" (1 Pet 3:15), "<u>living by faith in the Son of God</u>" (Gal 2:20), "<u>presenting your bodies a living and holy sacrifice</u>" (Rom 12:1-2), "<u>let the word of Christ to richly dwell within you</u>" (Col 3:16), and "<u>be filled with the Spirit</u>".

The classic passage is found in Ephesians 5:18+.

> [17]So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. [18]And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled with the Spirit**, [19]speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; [20]always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; [21]and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ… ([22]Wives..., [25]Husbands..., [6:1]Children..., [4]Fathers..., [5]Slaves..., [9]Masters...) (Eph 5:17-6:9)

"Be filled" has the sense of being influenced, dominated, and controlled. The contrast is clear. Someone who is drunk is under the influence of alcohol – they have surrendered control to alcohol. Believers should only be influenced by the Spirit.

The Greek for "filled" is a passive, present tense imperative (something that you are commanded to continually let happen to you). It is literally "let yourselves be kept being filled with the Spirit". You are commanded to allow the Spirit to fill or influence you.

The implication is that the usual, expected position of the believer is to be filled with the Spirit. The believer in a right relationship with God will be filled or influenced by the Spirit.

❖ **What is your usual condition?**

Being filled with the Spirit is equivalent to letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you.

> [16]**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you**, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [17]Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. ([18]Wives..., [19]Husbands..., [20]Children..., [21]Fathers..., [22]Slaves..., [4:1]Masters...) (Col 3:16-4:1)

"Letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you" produces the same result as "be filled with the Spirit": Christ-like words, worship, reactions, and relationships.

	Ephesians 5:18-21	**Colossians 3:16-4:1**
Command	do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit	Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you
Words	speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs	with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs
Worship	singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord	singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God
Reactions	always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father	Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.
Relationships	and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ… Wives…, Husbands…, Children…, Fathers…, Slaves…, Masters…	Wives…, Husbands…, Children…, Fathers…, Slaves…, Masters…

You are commanded to be filled. You are commanded to let the word of Christ to richly dwell within you. But how specifically do you walk in the Spirit?

The filling of the Spirit is not some magical, super-spiritual experience. It occurs when you, in response to God and what He has done for you in Christ, bring your entire life under submission to Him as He as revealed to do in His word. The fruit of this filling is a tangible manifestation of your connection to God through Christ displayed as Christ-like strength, attitudes, behaviors. The filling of the Spirit is brought about by:

1. Repenting of any known sin – An attitude of the heart that is willing to always come under the Holy Spirit's conviction of sin and genuinely repent. This doesn't mean you are perfect, but that you are not choosing to sin.

> [29]Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. [30]**Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [31]Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. (Eph 4:29-31)

2. Yielding to God in every area of life – An attitude of the heart that yields to God's word. We are not to throw water on the Spirit's work in our hearts by despising the word of God.

> [16]Rejoice always; [17]pray without ceasing; [18]in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. [19]**Do not quench the Spirit**; [20]**do not despise prophetic utterances**. [21]But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; [22]abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thess 5:16-21)

3. Immersion in the word – Comparing Eph 5:18-21 with Col 3:16-4:1 – The Spirit of God uses the word of God to produce the will of God in a believer's life.

Walking in the Spirit is a moment-by-moment decision to recognize, repent, and confess sin; yield your will to God's word; and allow the word to richly dwell within you.

❖ **How would walking in the Spirit change your view of difficulties?**

The remedy for walking in the flesh (i.e., sinning) is not self-effort. It is Spirit-filling, walking in the Spirit. The Spirit enables a life that is in accord with God's word. The Spirit is powerful. God's word is powerful. Therefore, the believer in the direst, seemingly hopeless circumstances can be encouraged, comforted, and changed as the Spirit applies the word to their heart.

How can you discern if you are filled with the Spirit, or walking in the Spirit? God has given two ways, one negative and one positive. The negative way…

> [19]**Now the deeds of the flesh are evident**, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20]idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, [21]envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal 5:19-21)

"Evident" means made visible as an external manifestation to the senses. The Greek reads "evident now are the deeds of the flesh…" emphasizing the visibility of these deeds. A rebellious heart is demonstrated in external, rebellious actions.

The Holy Spirit never led anyone into sexual sin, idolatry, relationship strife, or intoxicated license. If you are involved in sexual immorality (heart or deed), exalt anything above God; have heart-level or actual broken relationships; or lose control of yourself in thought, word, emotion, or deed then you are not filled with the Spirt. You are not walking in the Spirit. You are walking in the flesh.

The positive way is to discern if the fruit of the Spirit is present or not.

> [22]But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23]gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23)

"But" contrasts the deeds of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. This is a completely opposite life of the evident deeds of the flesh – an outwardly manifested changed heart that is the opposite of the world.

These are the "fruit" of the Spirit. "Fruit" is singular, not plural. One fruit is manifested by nine characteristics. A supernatural response to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

- **How might the absence of these qualities inform your walk ?**

So, you are filled with the Spirit for power to live in a way that is honoring to God, and you can discern clearly either negatively or positively if you are filled or not.

You have been set free from the power of sin (Rom 6). Yet you still fight the old, sin nature (Rom 7). You are free to choose righteousness but require the power to do it. The Spirit gives this power as He applies the word to your heart. Not only can you choose righteous one time, but you can grow and change at the heart level.

What is involved in the striving, pressing, and reaching? Obviously, the Bible is a big part.

> [2]**like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation**, (1 Pet 2:2)

Training, practice, and discipline are also a part.

> [11]Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is* hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. [12]For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. [13]For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. [14]But **solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil**. (Heb 5:11-14)

> [7] But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, **discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness**; [8]for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come. (1 Tim 4:7-8)

And the body of Christ plays a part.

> [23] Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; [24] and **let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds**, [25] not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging *one another***; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Heb 10:23-25)

- **How are you doing in your training ?**

<u>Putting Off and Putting On</u>

The growth process, maturing, also involves putting off sin and putting on righteousness. The Bible gives the method of overcoming sin.

> [20]But you did not learn Christ in this way, [21]if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, [22]that, in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside the old self**, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, [23]and that you **be renewed in the spirit of your mind**, [24]and **put on the new self**, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Eph 4:20-24)

Paul spends the first three chapters of Ephesians detailing the blessings of salvation. Then in chapter 4, because of that salvation, believers are to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called". Do not be like you were before, be something different. The method of change or sanctification is 1) put off sin, 2) renew the mind, and 3) put on righteousness.

"Lay aside" (or "put off" in the ESV) means to cease doing what you were previously accustomed to doing; stop doing it; throw it off like filthy, foul-smelling clothes; be done with it. It is a metaphor like having your clothes soaked with sewage and stripping them off and throwing them away and never taking them back. Like repentance from sin – you strip the sin off and never take it back.

- **Do you throw off sin with the intent to never pick it up again ?**

Putting off presupposes something. Just like in the context in Ephesians, there is a known sin that is desiring to be laid aside. This requires that you actually know what sin is, which you find in the Bible. It requires that God is showing you your sin.

> [23]Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; [24]And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way. (Psa 139:23-24)

> [2]Examine me, O Lord, and try me; Test my mind and my heart. (Psa 26:2)

- **Is this your prayer ?**

"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" – your mind is made new as you fill it with the word of God. It is not about covering up sin with something that smells good. It is about being transformed so that the sin is no longer a part of you. God's Word is the tool that God's Spirit uses to produce God honoring change in God's child. Let's look at other places were Bible authors use the put off sin, be renewed, and put on righteousness pattern.

> [1]Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **<u>present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice</u>**, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. [2]And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may **prove what the will of God is**, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:1-2)

> [1]Therefore, **putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander**, [2]like newborn babies, **long for the pure milk of the word**, so that **by it you may grow in respect to salvation**, [3]if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. (1 Pet 2:1-3)

> [6]**Be anxious for nothing**, **but in everything by prayer** and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7]And **the peace of God**, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7)

So, we see that the "renewing" part of this process has to do with a dynamic, intimate relationship with God through the word and prayer.

- **Are you striving in that relationship?**

"Put on the new self" – Paul continues his clothing metaphor. The idea is "sinking into a garment". It is like sinking into a new, warm coat when it is freezing outside. This is making a choice to obey, to do righteousness, to replace the sin that you "put off" with obedience in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **Is your purpose to glorify God through obedience?**

Conclusion

At the moment of conversion, the elect are sanctified positionally, set apart from sin for God. They will be sanctified in the future when they will enter glory and be completely separated from sin. And they are currently being sanctified, progressively conformed ever more into the image of Christ. Pursuing a vibrant relationship with Christ through the Scriptures, prayer, and body involvement are necessary for progressing sanctification.