



Salvation & Sanctification

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus . . . Ephesians 2:4-6 (NASB)

The Gift of Eternal Life

It was the day after Christmas at a church in San Francisco. The pastor of the church was looking over the nativity scene and noticed that the baby Jesus was missing. Earlier a little boy had been standing nearby. So the pastor hurried outside and found him with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the infant Jesus. So, the pastor walked over to the boy and asked, "Where did you get your passenger?" The little boy replied, "I got him from the church." "And why did you take him?" the pastor asked. The boy said, "Well, before Christmas I prayed to the little Lord Jesus. I told him that if He would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in it." The little boy received that wonderful Christmas gift and kept his promise.

Anyone who has been forgiven of their sins by God receives a tremendous gift, too! One such person was a young man named Sam. Sam was a high school student when he was invited to a Bible study. The Bible study included singing, the teaching of God's Word, and a fellowship time. Sam started attending when the group was studying the book of Revelation. He was interested in spiritual things and so he asked many questions about God and the Bible. Finally, one day he asked how he could have his sins forgiven and go to heaven. It was a great day for Sam and the young people in the Bible study.

There was rejoicing and excitement when Sam became a believer and obtained the gift of eternal life.

1. If you had been in the Bible study and Sam asked you how he could have his sins forgiven and go to heaven, what would you have told him? If Sam was told the wrong thing, that would have been a tragic mistake. What is necessary to have one's sins forgiven? Read Mark 1:15; Luke 8:15; John 1:12; and Acts 16:31.

2. What is necessary for someone to become a Christian according to John 3:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-2?

3. What two promises are given to someone who believes in Jesus Christ according to John 3:16.

4. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 says that is possible to believe in Christ in vain. What does that mean?

5. What does Romans 10:9 reveal will be true of someone who becomes a Christian?

Faith and Eternal Life

Sam became a Christian when he believed in Jesus Christ. At the very moment he believed in Christ, he realized his sin, repented, and humbly submitted to Christ. His faith was given to him by God as a gift (Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Peter 1:1), and the Holy Spirit motivated him to seek forgiveness.

Do You Believe in Jesus Christ?

What does it mean to believe in Jesus? Many Christians do not really know what it means “to believe.” In the Greek, the English terms “believe, trust, depend, confidence, faith, conviction, entrust, abandonment, guarantee, and persuade” all come from the same Greek word *pistis*. These are interchangeable words and concepts. If we say that we believe in Jesus, then we are trusting in Jesus. *Pistis* also has the meaning of obeying or submitting. Believing is more than an intellectual assent. James 2:19 says that even the demons know that Jesus is God. Those who truly believe have been persuaded and have abandoned or given themselves to Jesus. John 3:16 says that we must believe in Jesus and Romans 10:9 says that we must confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord. Those who have this saving faith will have their sins forgiven. That is all that God requires because there is nothing you can do to deserve or earn the forgiveness of your sins or eternal life with God.

1. What problem did Sam and everyone have (Romans 3:10-12, 23; 6:23)?
2. What did the Holy Spirit do to Sam according to John 16:8-10? Why?
3. What does Acts 10:43 say happens to a person who believes in Jesus Christ?
4. In the study “The Work of Christ,” we discovered that Jesus came to this earth for the purpose of dying in order to forgive our sins. God planned all of this. Why did God do all of this according to John 3:16?

Baptism – First Act of Obedience

Some time later Sam was baptized along with some other young people. Baptism is an important event for a Christian because it is an act of obedience that should occur after a person starts believing and depending on Jesus for the forgiveness of his/her sins. Some Christians are baptized by immersion into water. Others are sprinkled with water, or have water poured over them. However it is practiced, baptism does not forgive sins. It is only an outward evidence of an inward change. Baptism was a key part of John the Baptist’s ministry. Mark 1:4 tells us that John’s baptism was about repentance (admission and regret over one’s sin). Those who wanted to be baptized were indicating that they desired to not sin and to live a holy life. The Apostle Paul tells us that John’s baptism was about repentance. It did not forgive sins. It was a public declaration that one believed in the Messiah - Jesus Christ.

Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” (NASB) Acts 19:4

Some teach that baptism is necessary in order to have one’s sins forgiven. If this is true, then God should have repeatedly reminded us that baptism is necessary throughout Scripture. If we read the New Testament passages such as Mark 1:15; John 3:16; John 20:30-31; Romans 3:22 and 1 Timothy 1:16, we discover that only one thing is repeatedly mentioned as a requirement for salvation (see the chart “Only Faith in Christ is Required For Salvation”). What is consistently required?

How do the verses in “*Only Faith in Christ is Required For Salvation*” indicate that baptism is not necessary for the forgiveness of our sins?

Passage	Only Faith in Christ is Required For Salvation			
	Believe	Repent	Confess	Baptize
Mark 1:15	✓			
Luke 8:12	✓			
John 1:12	✓			
3:16	✓			
3:36	✓			
5:24	✓			
6:40	✓			
11:25	✓			
20:31	✓			
Acts 2:38	-	✓		✓
16:31	✓			
19:4	✓	✓		✓
Rom. 3:22	✓			
4:3	✓			
10:9	✓		✓	
Gal. 3:3-9	✓			
3:22	✓			
Eph. 2:8-9	✓			
1 Tim. 1:16	✓			
James 2:23	✓			
1 John 3:23	✓			

Repentance, confession of sins, and a desire to obey by being baptized will be present if the person has genuine belief.

The forgiveness of our sins is called salvation because God rescues us from eternal punishment in hell. Salvation is not about actions or deeds such as baptism, repentance, or confession of sins, but about *believing* in a person named Jesus Christ. If we truly believe Jesus is God and that He died for our sins, we will repent over our sins because we realize we are sinners and want to be forgiven. We will also confess our sins. Baptism is an act of obedience because God wants us to do that. It is a sign to others that we have truly believed in Jesus. This is the response of true faith. Now explain in your words, “Why baptism does not save a person from hell.”

Sanctification – Position and Practice

At the moment Sam believed in Jesus, God gave him spiritual life. John 3:3 says he was born again. The literal Greek says he was born from above. Imagine God giving him spiritual life that he did not have before. So, we are told that each believer is a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17), a new self (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10), and a new creation (Galatians 6:15). This means that even though Sam was still living in his old body, God had given him spiritual life, and the Holy Spirit was now living within him.

Some amazing things were now true about him that he did not initially realize. One example is that God the Father had decreed that he and every believer were righteous, that is, without sin (Romans 10:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Yet, he and other believers are still committing sins. So, God calls believers to live righteously. That is, because of our position in Christ, the Father considers us to be perfect. But He knows that we still sin. 1 Corinthians 1:2 calls us saints or holy ones, but we still sin and need daily to confess our sins to keep our relationship with Him clean (1 John 1:9). Positionally we are holy, but our practice or behavior is not holy. Believers are like a baseball pitcher. His position is that of a pitcher, but his practice may reveal that he is not a very good pitcher. Sanctification refers to the process of our practice becoming more like our position. That is, we become better pitchers. Sanctification is like a race to become holy and blameless. In the table below are some examples of a believer’s position and practice. The first two are completed as examples.

Position in Christ

What Do You Need to Do?

Spiritually alive	Ephesians 2:4-5	Romans 8:12-14	<u>Put to death the deeds of the body.</u>
Dead to sin	Romans 6:11	Romans 6:12-13	<u>Do not let sin reign in your body.</u>
Forgiven	1 John 2:12	1 John 1:9	_____
New life	2 Corinthians 5:17	Romans 6:4	_____
Seated in heaven	Ephesians 2:6	Colossians 3:1-2	_____
Light to the world	Matthew 5:14	Ephesians 5:8	_____
Holy and blameless	Ephesians 1:4	1 Peter 1:15-16	_____
Freedom from Sin	Romans 6:6-7	Romans 6:11	_____
Salvation is secure	1 Peter 1:5	2 Peter 1:10	_____
Unity in the Spirit	Ephesians 4:4-6	Ephesians 4:3	_____
Work out our salvation	Philippians 2:12	Philippians 2:13	_____
Empowered to serve	Ephesians 3:16	Ephesians 3:20	_____
Love shed in hearts	Romans 5:5	1 Peter 1:22	_____

When anyone believes in Jesus, they have been given an amazing gift. It is an unexpected gift. The gift is simply this: we are already in heaven with Jesus,

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus . . . Ephesians 2:4-6 (NASB)

Wow, this is a great positional truth. While believers are living here on earth, God has positionally placed every saint in heaven. Now that is spiritual security! We are saved only once. Glory be to God!

Sanctification – Path to Spiritual Growth

Sam knew very little about God and was struggling with a number of sin issues, but he was eager to learn about God and the Bible, and wanted to please God by not sinning. He did not yet understand that the defining characteristic of every believer is that he or she will sin less and less in the months and years ahead, but will never stop sinning (Romans 8:13-14). In addition, he did not understand how to become a spiritual father in the faith (1 John 2:12-14). He did not understand the principles of sanctification, that is, becoming more like Christ.

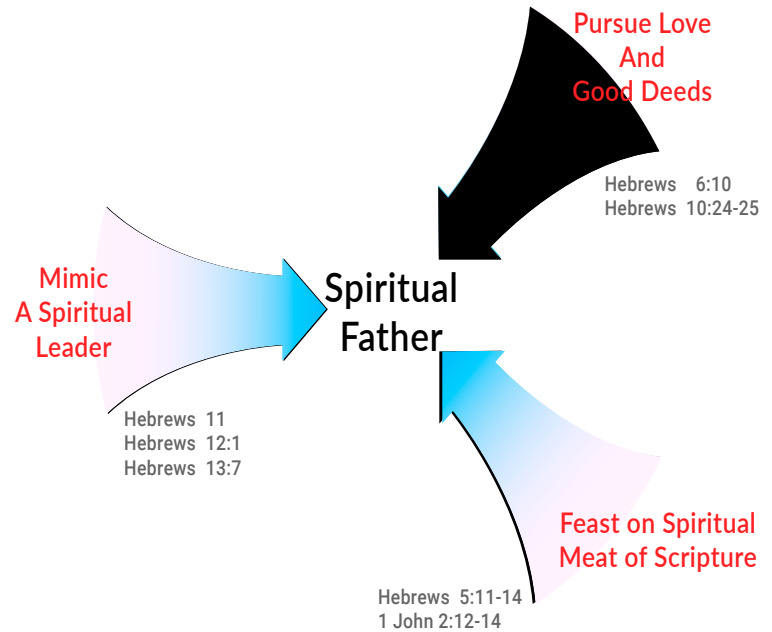
So, what are the principles of sanctification? Sanctification begins at the moment someone becomes a believer. That is called positional sanctification. That is, each believer is sanctified positionally. Progressive sanctification is the process of becoming more like Christ. A believer will sin less and less, become stronger in the faith, and will increasingly know God the Father. When a believer finally goes to heaven, that is called ultimate sanctification or sanctification perfected. It refers to a believer finally becoming perfect.

The following questions provide some helpful guidance about progressive sanctification or how to grow spiritually. The following questions are about progressive sanctification.

1. Believers are God's children. One of the most important aspects of any family is mutual encouragement. Hebrews 10:24-25 explains how we are to support one another. How does God want us to support the saints? Why is it necessary to meet together? What is the advantage?
2. 1 Corinthians 12:8-25 and Hebrews 6:10 tell us what the saints should be doing with one another. What did you discover in these verses?
3. Hebrews 5:11-14 tells us that some Christians are drinking milk and others are eating solid food. Are you on a diet of milk or solid food? Are you a spiritual baby or a maturing Christian? How do you know?
4. What are the marks of a maturing Christian according to Hebrews 5:11-14 and 1 John 2:12-14?

5. What encouragement is given to us in Hebrews 12:1 and Hebrews 13:7. Hebrews 13:7 is the key passage. It encourages us to be taught by someone. What are the criteria for the mentor that a saint should select?

Path of Spiritual Growth



6. What should be the goal of every saint? The answer is found in 1 John 2:12-14.

7. So, how does Philippians 1:6 say that God the Father helps believers in the process of sanctification?

God Loves Every Believer . . .

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12-13 (NASB)

God tells us in this passage that anyone who wants Christ to save them from their sins and believe in Him will become a child of God. They will become members of God's family with all of the privileges of a family member. Can you think of anything better than that gift? Then we are told that anyone who makes that decision does so because it was the will of God. Therefore, Scripture teaches that God chooses who will believe in Christ and we also choose. Both decide!

Ephesians 1:3-5 adds that God chose individuals to become believers from the beginning of time because He loved them. John 6:65, 44, and 37 teach the same principle as that given in John 1:12-13. God chooses people to become believers or Christians. In fact, Ephesians 2:8-9 and 2 Peter 1:1 teach us that God gives the gift of faith to men and women so that they will believe in Christ. In one moment in time, a person will believe in Christ, repent, admit they sin, and submit.

Only God knows how both can be true—we choose and He chose. This is an antinomy. We do not understand some things in Scripture, such as the Trinity, the virgin birth, and how God took on flesh and blood. But the simple truth is that God selected us, and we choose Him. Only God knows how all of this works together.

But we know why God chose who believe in Christ. He loves us!

Things To Ponder

1. What is the goal in the Christian life according to Jeremiah 9:23-24 and 1 John 2:12-14?

2. What “position and practice” in Christ had the greatest meaning for you?

3. Which of these marks are evident in your life? Are you sure that you are a saint?

Fruit of the Spirit	Galatians 5:22-24	_____
Understand spiritual things	1 Corinthians 2:14	_____
Confessing your sins	1 John 1:9	_____
You obey Jesus	Luke 6:46	_____
Love for others	1 John 4:8, 18-20	_____
Grow spiritually	1 John 2:12-14	_____
Desire to read His Word	1 Peter 2:2	_____

4. What does it feel like to know that you are forgiven and already seated in heaven?

5. What area of spiritual growth is missing in your life?

Salvation & Sanctification

Answer true (T) or false (F) to each of the following statements:

1. People can earn eternal life by doing good works. _____
2. God is good and so are most people. _____
3. Romans 3:23 says that some people have sinned. _____
4. Every person who does not believe in Christ is a slave of sin. _____
5. Because every person has sinned, they deserve spiritual death or hell. _____
6. Baptism is required in order to have eternal life. _____
7. A person can have vain faith, that is, their faith does not save them from hell. _____
8. Position versus practice reveals how the Father views us even though we are not perfect yet. _____
9. Positional sanctification refers to their spiritual reality in Christ, even though they are still living on earth. _____
10. Progressive sanctification includes becoming like Christ, which includes sinning less. _____
11. Ultimate sanctification refers to a believer going to heaven, and finally becoming completely perfect. _____