

## Introduction

Many churches/Christians affirm that we are justified by grace apart from works, but they then teach or imply that we are sanctified by law through works--that as Christians we have the ability and the obligation to live the Christian life by our own resources. According to this view, if you don't grow, it is because you don't want to grow or because you didn't try hard enough. Others may be very passive and take no role in pursuing sanctification through faith. But Paul insists that sanctification, just like justification, is given to us by God's grace and received simply by faith.

Therefore balance is needed as we consider God's role and our role.

Some of the Galatians evidently felt that while they were justified by grace through faith, they now had to get sanctified by self-effort. Paul is horrified by this development!

**(Gal. 3:2, 3)** This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

The way we received Christ = the way we are to walk in him. Since we know that we are justified by grace through faith (Gal. 2:16), we are also sanctified by grace through faith.

**(Col. 2:6,7)** As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, (7) having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith,

This raises the important question: What does biblical faith look like?

### Definition of Biblical Faith

Biblical faith is a willingness to *act* according to God's truth with *dependence* on him to perform it for/through us. As we go through the passages tonight, you'll see there is ample biblical basis for this definition.

The Greek word *pisteuo* is translated as believe and faith. It has a clear connotation of personal trust.

### Illustration:

A tight-rope walker strung a wire across the Niagara Falls as a crowd gathered on both sides of the falls. First, he walked across using a balancing pole. Next, he walked back across with the pole. Then he wheeled a wheel-barrow across. On the other side, he shoveled 150 pounds of dirt and rock into the wheel-barrow and wheeled it back across the falls. The crowd's applause was louder than the roar of the falls! The man asked the crowd, "Who believes that I can wheel a man across the falls?" Everyone shouted their affirmation. Then he asked, "Who's going to get in the wheel-barrow?" The crowd dispersed immediately. The crowd had a certain kind of faith--mental assent. They intellectually agreed that the man was capable of wheeling a person across the falls. But they did not have another kind of faith--personal trust--because no one was willing to get in the wheel-barrow and entrust their lives to his expertise. Such a step would involve a definite *action*, but it would also involve genuine dependence on the tight-rope walker.

**(Luke 1:35,38)** And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God..." (38) And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

### As it relates to Justification:

On the one hand, we have to depend completely on Christ's death to pay for our sins because there is absolutely no way we can get rid of our own true moral guilt. On the other hand, we must do something to appropriate Christ's payment--receive Christ.

**(Rev. 3:20)** 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.

### Illustration:

You owe the IRS over a million dollars in back taxes. They have denied your request for an extension and informed you that an agent will be at your house at 11:59pm to impound your house unless you make full payment. You exhaust all of your resources and are able to come up with only \$433.16. At 11:00pm, your doorbell rings. Fearing the worst, you open the door to find a stranger who puts a check in your hand. The check is made payable to you, and is worth well

over one million dollars. What must you do to be freed from your debt? You would want to ascertain that funds were on hand to cover this check, and then you would have to endorse the check and deposit it in your account. In other words, you would have to take action--but you wouldn't say afterwards that you had delivered yourself from the IRS! Your action was really only appropriating the gift that was given to you.

### **As it relates to Sanctification:**

On the one hand, we have to depend completely on God's power to change our lives because there is no way that we can change ourselves. On the other hand, we must actively appropriate God's power for sanctification.

But whereas justification is appropriated once for all by one act of faith, sanctification must be gradually appropriated by ongoing decisions of faith. (see Francis Schaeffer's, *True Spirituality*, Chap. 5)

### **Example: Abraham & Sarah**

God justified Abraham the moment that he believed God's promise (Gen. 15:6). But Sarah conceived 25 years later, and God called on them to express their faith in him by having sex all those years.

### **Jn. 15:4-12 illustrates this.**

"Abide in me" is a synonym for sanctifying faith. In vs 4,5, Jesus emphasizes the "dependence" aspect by stressing that we can do nothing apart from the Vine. In vs 7-12, he emphasizes the "action" aspect by explaining that abiding involves the choice to remain in his Word, respond to his moral guidance, practice biblical love toward others, etc. These are the practical ways in which we lay hold of his sanctifying power.

Thus, the New Testament teaches that *sanctification is impossible apart from God's power, but it involves human volition and cooperation*. Let's see in more detail how the New Testament teaches this . . .

### **Indicative & Imperative**

The terms "indicative" and "imperative" refer to two different verb moods commonly used by the New Testament authors in their teaching on sanctification.

The mood of a verb describes the degree of certainty of the action. There are four main moods used in New Testament Greek. The two moods relevant to our discussion are:

Indicative - the mood of certainty, actuality ("He is running."). When we speak of theological indicatives, we are referring to what God has done, is doing, or will do for Christians (Phil 1:6 "He who began a good work in you..."). These indicatives are sometimes declarative statements, and sometimes unconditional promises.

Imperative - the mood of command ("Go run!"). When we speak of theological imperatives, we are referring to what God calls on us to do ("Abide in me . . . abide in my word . . . love one another . . ."). These imperatives are usually straight-forward commands (eg "Love one another..."). Sometimes imperatives are implied as examples (eg. Paul says "...imitate me as I imitate Christ." in 1 Cor 11:1. Therefore he serves as an example and his actions serve as implied imperatives).

### **What does all this have to do with biblical faith?**

In fact, God's indicatives and imperatives are impacting us daily, whether we acknowledge this or not.

The indicatives provide the content for the "dependence" aspect of sanctifying faith. What are we supposed to depend on God for? The New Testament indicatives, as illuminated by the Holy Spirit, provide concrete opportunities to depend upon him rather than on self, others, feelings, human wisdom, etc.

The imperatives provide the content for the "action" aspect of sanctifying faith. How are we to actually step out to follow God? The New Testament imperatives, as applied by the Holy Spirit, provide concrete opportunities to act in faith.

### **Imperatives are based on indicatives.**

**Explanation:**

What God commands us to do (*imperative*) is based upon what he has done, is doing, or will do (*indicative*).

Examples: In the following verses, put parentheses around the indicative portion, underline the imperative portion, and circle the words that identify the relationship between these two portions (in these notes between <>).

**(Eph. 4:32)** Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, <just as> (God in Christ also has forgiven you).

**(Rom. 12:1)** I urge you <therefore>, brethren, (by the mercies of God,) to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

**(1 Jn. 4:11)** Beloved, <if> (God so loved us), we also ought to love one another.

**(Phil. 2:12,13\*)** 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; <for> (it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure).

**Note:** "Work out" (*katergazomai*) was used by the Roman historian Strabo to refer to mining operations. It assumes that something is already inside; the idea is to bring it out into view. "Fear and trembling" connotes recognition of powerlessness (see 1 Cor. 2:3) and sincerity and respect (Eph. 6:5).

**(Matt. 28:18-20)** "(All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth). Go <therefore> and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and (lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age).

**(2 Peter 1:2-7)** Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.<sup>3</sup> (His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.<sup>4</sup> Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises), so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.<sup>5</sup> <For this very reason>, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;<sup>6</sup> and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;<sup>7</sup> and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

[Teacher's Note: Verse 4 is in the subjunctive mood, it's not an indicative. It is the mood of possibility -- if they live out the indicatives by doing the imperatives -- not certainty.]

**(Heb. 10:19-25)** Therefore, brethren, <since> (we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh), and <since> (we have a great priest over the house of God), let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, (having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water). Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, <for> (He who promised is faithful); and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 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.

**(Col. 3:1-15)** <Therefore if> (you have been raised up with Christ), keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. <For> (you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory).

<Therefore> consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. <For> (it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them). <But now you also>, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, <since> (you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him--a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all) . . . <So>, (as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved), put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; <just as> (the Lord forgave you), so also should 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 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

### **Significance:**

This means that sanctification is not something we do by ourselves. God is with us, and he is going to give us all the resources and motivation we need to live for him and do his will. If we understand this, it will build our confidence and motivation to live for God (2 Pet. 1:3,4). It also provides us with the proper reasons/motive for following God. In other words, the more we focus and reflect on the indicatives, the more hope we have that God can change us, the more motivated we will be to follow him, etc.

This also helps us to view God's imperatives properly--not as impersonal orders to be obeyed out of fear and/or duty, but as invitations to experience more of God's love, goodness, faithfulness, redemptive power, etc.

What do we call a Christian walk that is ignorant of or neglects this relationship? This is a primary form of legalism--just focusing on what God commands us to do without any dependence on him. Note the relationship in John 8:11 in Jesus' encounter with the adulterous woman.

### **What would it look like to cultivate dependence?**

- Think

Meditating on indicatives--especially those that speak to your present difficulties.

- Thank

Thanking God in prayer for indicatives and his past faithfulness.

- Ask

Petition God for empowerment, wisdom, etc. situation by situation.

- Acting on God's commands

This is obedience to God. It should *follow* or *be part of* "thinking" "thanking" and "asking". This is the way we express our trust and experience his goodness and faithfulness. We develop this in the next section.

**Note:** Since we tend to be self-sufficient (the opposite of dependent), God allows various sufferings into our lives to teach us our need for dependence (more on this later in this unit). This is why "failure is often the back-door to success."

### **Healthy experience flows from active faith**

In the first part of this lecture we talked about the relationship between indicatives and imperatives. What God commands us to do (*imperative*) is based upon what he has done, is doing, or will do (*indicative*). Now we're going to examine a different relationship between experience and active faith. By experience we're not necessarily talking about dreams and visions or other dramatic experiences in our Christian lives. Instead we refer to the experiences of: relational healing, cleansed conscience, character transformation, feeling God's heart of compassion and love for other people, and other experiences that the Bible emphasizes.

### **Explanation:**

In many cases, our *experience* of God's blessing follows our willingness to *act* on the imperatives by faith. The Bible expresses this relationship in the form of conditional promises (e.g., Matt. 6:33; Rom. 8:28).

### **Significance:**

This corrects a common *misconception* among Christians: "that even after we have understood God's promises, we should wait until we experience God's power, forgiveness, etc. before we act on his imperatives." In other words, that our feelings should be the basis for our actions.

### **Biblical Order:**

Thus, the biblical order is not Learn--Experience--Act, but rather Learn--Act--Experience.

- **Learn** about God's promises and provisions for our growth.
- **Act** by living constantly with what we've learned.
- **Experience** God's blessing.

(God's part, unconditionally given if we are Christians - but we must learn) --Act (our part - to act consistently with who we are and the imperative's direction) -- Experience (God's part, but conditional on our acting).

This dynamic in action:

**(Josh. 3:13-16)** And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD--the Lord of all the earth--set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap." (14) So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. (15) Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, (16) the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea ) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. In Josh. 3:13-16, God called on the Israelites to "in prayer, in study of his word, in serving others, get their feet wet" before he acted to stop the waters. By doing this, God called on them to act in faith before they experienced his power.

See 1 Samuel 15 for an interesting contrast where at the very place of the blessing above, Saul ignored this dynamic out of greed and lack of faith in Lord's promise for blessing.

God may allow us to experience his empowering before we witness, but normally he waits until we step out in faith to witness before we experience his empowering.

God may take away the desire to get even with someone before we forgive him, but normally he asks us to turn away from vengeance and choose to forgive by faith (against our feelings)--then we experience his liberating power to love someone who has wronged us.

We should draw near to God in prayer, in study of his word, in serving others, even though we don't feel close to him.

### **Biblical Examples**

In the following passages, underline the imperative involved, put parenthesis around the blessing promised, and circle (in these notes between <>) the words that identify the relationship between these two (if applicable). While you're at it, identify which of last week's three aspects of spiritual maturity do these passages emphasize?

**(John 13:17\*)** "If you know these things, (you are blessed) <if> you do them."

**(Rom. 12:2)** . . . do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, <that> (you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect).

**(2 Peter 1:8-11)** For <if> these qualities are yours and are increasing [see imperatives in previous verses], (they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ). 9 <For> he who lacks these qualities (is blind or short-sighted), having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 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).

**(Jas. 1:21-25\*\*)** <Therefore> putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, (which is able to save your souls).

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. <For> if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, (this man shall be blessed in what he does).

**(Ps. 1:1-3)** (How blessed is the man) who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. And (he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers).

This relationship focuses us on the *action* part of sanctifying faith.

## Application

- Obedience is an opportunity to experience God's goodness.

Qualification: Experience does not always follow obedience.

This does not mean that every time I am involved in some godly activity that God will in turn respond by giving me an experiential moment with him. But rather, as he deems best, he will provide these times.

Even when an experience does follow, there often is not an immediate experiential response.

Sometimes it happens later, or gradually.

e.g. Sometimes our consistent study of the Bible yields a gradual experience of deeper excitement for the Bible, as well as the gradual experience of character transformation.

- We need to regularly choose against our feelings  
This corrects the thinking, "Since I don't feel like going to central teaching tonight (or this class, home group, a ministry opportunity, etc.), it will be legalistic for me to do so -- or there is something wrong with my relationship with God or else I would feel like it. It is possible for us to feel aversive to God's will, and yet choose by faith to do it for the right reasons. The alternative is to become a slave to your fallen feelings!  
Qualification: Chronic negative feelings associated with serving God may indicate a deeper problem.
  - This is not to say that our subjective state has no bearing at all on our spiritual state of health. When certain feelings persist over a long period of time, we should reflect on whether our walk needs adjustment. For example, if we are chronically plagued by anxiety, we may need to revisit the Bible's promises that God will provide for our needs (Phil. 4:6,7). Chronic aversion to prayer or close fellowship may indicate a hardened heart, or failure to understand grace. In sorting out these matters, the input of other mature Christians is often very helpful.
- Willing to step out of our comfort-zone by taking *scary steps of faith*.  
Stepping out of our comfort zone involves serving others and obeying commands that go against our habits and feelings (e.g., apologizing for our part in a fight instead of withdrawing, rationalizing, punishing, etc.).  
One way we can assess our spiritual health, therefore, is to ask ourselves, "Over the last few months, what scary steps has God called on me to take? What was my response?"  
The specific steps will vary as we grow, but this will be a consistent feature of following God. "Yesterday's faith won't fight today's battles." (Francis Schaeffer, *True Spirituality*)  
Qualification: This is a relational process between you and God.  
Often, our personal relationship with God dries up because we aren't stepping out in faith, following him out of our comfort zones (above). This is not an impersonal, legalistic "Just follow the rules!" issue. God knows what steps we are able to take, and he personally convicts and guides us to these decisions.

**(For your personal study) Look for indicatives, imperatives and blessings in these passages and the way they interact with each other.**

**(Josh. 1:5b-9)** "Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. (6) Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. (7) Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. (8) This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. (9) Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

**(1 Pet. 1:23-2:3)** . . . for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God . . . (3) Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

## **Conclusion**

Christians tend to be in a perpetual state of flux in their understanding of God's responsibility and our responsibility (Illus: Like a pendulum that constantly swings, passing through it's state of equilibrium. The goal for the Christian is that these swings become less extreme, and the time in equilibrium gradually increases). When we note (or a Christian point it out to us) that we are to one extreme or the other, we should correct it by emphasizing the complementary truth. Helping other Christians do this is an important aspect of ministry. This growing understanding is a part of sanctification.

## **Memory Verses**

**Phil. 2:12,13\***

**Jn. 13:17\***

**Jas. 1:22-25\*\***