

Accomplished Plan of Salvation (10)

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 Gotthold Beck

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Romans

6:1 What should we say, then? Should we go on sinning so that grace may increase?
 6:2 Of course not! How can we who died as far as sin is concerned go on living in it?
 6:3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into union with the Messiah Jesus were baptized into his death?
 6:4 Therefore, through baptism we were buried with him into his death so that, just as the Messiah was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too may live an entirely new life.
 6:5 For if we have become united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.
 6:6 We know that our old natures were crucified with him so that our sin-laden bodies might be rendered powerless and we might no longer be slaves to sin.
 6:7 For the person who has died has been freed from sin.
 6:8 Now if we have died with the Messiah, we believe that we will also live with him,
 6:9 for we know that the Messiah, who was raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has mastery over him.
 6:10 For when he died, he died once and for all as far as sin is concerned. But now that he is alive, he lives for God.
 6:11 In the same way, you too must continually consider yourselves dead as far as sin is concerned, but living for God through the Messiah Jesus.
 6:12 Therefore, do not let sin rule your mortal bodies so that you obey their desires.
 6:13 Stop offering the parts of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. Instead, offer yourselves to God as people who have been brought from death to life and the parts of your body as instruments of righteousness to God.
 6:14 For sin will not have mastery over you, because you are not under Law but under grace.
 [International Standard Version]

Romans

8:31 What, then, can we say about all of this? If God is for us, who can be against us?
 8:32 The one who did not spare his own Son, but offered him as a sacrifice for all of us, surely will give us all things, along with his Son, won't he?
 8:33 Who will accuse God's elect? It is God who

justifies!

8:34 Who is the one to condemn? It is the Messiah Jesus who is interceding on our behalf. He died, and more importantly, has been raised and is seated at the right hand of God.
 8:35 Who will separate us from the Messiah's love? Can trouble, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or a violent death do this?
 8:36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being put to death all day long. We are thought of as sheep headed for slaughter."
 8:37 In all these things we are triumphantly victorious due to the one who loved us.
 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,
 8:39 nor anything above, nor anything below, nor anything else in all creation can separate us from the love of God that is ours in union with the Messiah Jesus, our Lord.

The Bible, which consists of the word of God, is truly a wonderful thing. Without the Bible, there will be absolutely no hope for us. We will be totally hopeless and our future will be in total darkness. We will be totally lost and won't know which way to go. However, we have the word of God, which is a wonderful blessing. So, let me read some more verses.

John

15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vintner.
 15:2 He cuts off every branch that does not produce fruit in me, and he cuts back every branch that does produce fruit, so that it might produce more fruit.
 15:3 You are already clean because of what I've spoken to you.
 15:4 "Abide in me, and I will abide in you. Just as the branch cannot produce fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.
 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches. The one who abides in me while I abide in him produces much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.
 15:6 Unless a person abides in me, he is thrown away like a pruned branch and dries up. People gather such branches, throw them into a fire, and they are burned up.
 15:7 "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask for anything you want, and you will receive it.
 15:8 This is how my Father is glorified, when you produce a lot of fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

What is the way that leads to the sanctification? What is the secret to leading a sanctified life? What is the secret to bearing fruit?

It is the desire of the Lord that we are sanctified. What the Lord wants from us should be our own desire and prayer too; it is our continued sanctification. Our hunger and thirst for leading a sanctified life is a proof that the Holy Spirit is working within us.

Sanctification, or transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. Without a new life, there will be no sanctification. Unless you are born from above, there will be no transformation. Unless you are born, there will be no growth.

Sanctification is a continual refusal of our old man and its work. It is, furthermore, to continue to approve our new man, who was born from the Lord God.

However, how can these things be possible? Are these things truly attainable? I suppose that even most of the saved people do not have an answer to these questions. Still, so many people are struggling to sanctify themselves. They work so hard in order to make it happen. They fight with their full might. Nevertheless, the life of faith of such brothers and sisters constantly rises and falls and never becomes stable. Their lives are filled with disappointment and despair.

The way that leads to the sanctification is explained in John, chapter 15, verse 4;

John
15:4 Abide in me, and I will abide in you. Just as the branch cannot produce fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

In other words, we stay inside Jesus and Jesus lives in us; this is the way of sanctification.

For us, the first step of sanctification is to remain inside the Lord Jesus. When we reside within Jesus, the status of our faith is simply perfect. This actually has happened to many people already. An expression, "you are in Christ" can be seen in the New Testament as much as 130 times.

"To be in Christ." This must be one of the most important messages that is presented to believers in the New Testament. What does it mean to be in Christ Jesus? It refers to the new status that is given to us believers by the Lord God because of our faith.

When we, believers of the Lord, believed in Jesus, we entered into Christ. People in Corinth were far from model believers. Nevertheless, Paul could write these words to them;

1 Corinthians
1:30 It is because of God that you are in union with the Messiah Jesus.

This is an immovable fact. When we believed in Jesus and accepted him as our savior, we became a part of his body. That is to say, just like branches of a vine tree, we were connected to Jesus. Although we did not realize it when it happened and may be still uncertain of it, this fact is absolutely immovable. When the Lord Jesus died, we died together.

Galatians
2:19 I have been crucified with the Messiah.

This was the confession of Paul. "I have become nothing now. There is no meaning in my existence since I was crucified," so confessed Paul in this verse.

All believers already have experienced the same thing in the past. This is the incident that occurred once and for all throughout history. It occurred equally to all Christians. This is the everlasting truth that will never be forgotten.

As we see the saved people, we realize that there are certainly two kinds of Christians. Some Christians are filled with joy day to day, are delighted to serve the Lord and testify for him. Another kind of Christian are in despair, disappointed and seem to have lost energy.

Where does this difference arise? Christians who are filled with joy are leaning on the fact that their old man was already crucified. Contrary, disappointed and disheartened Christians do not believe in this fact; instead, they are still looking into themselves.

If we refuse to act based on the truth, no matter how great that truth is, it is useless. Even if you have 50 million yen of deposit in your bank account, you cannot buy anything unless you withdraw it from the bank. To be in Christ refers to the joy of being liberated from your old self and from your old man who was crucified along with Jesus. Being in Christ is the new status that is given to all Christians.

All Christians have been crucified along with Jesus. This was the secret that supported the victory of Paul who said, "I have been crucified with the Messiah." He did not say, "I became someone now." Instead, he said, "I died. This is the end." This actually opened a way to a wonderful liberation for Paul.

Romans
6:8 Now if we have died with the Messiah, we believe that we will also live with him.

We were crucified with Jesus and died with Jesus. As is written in Romans, chapter 6, verse 4, we were also buried with Jesus.

Romans

6:4 Therefore, through baptism we were buried with him into his death so that, just as the Messiah was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too may live an entirely new life.

All Christians were resurrected and raised up along with Jesus.

Ephesians

2:6 (God) ...raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly realm in the Messiah Jesus.

Furthermore, it is stated that all saved brothers and sisters will share in the glory of Jesus.

Romans

8:17 Now if we are children, we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with the Messiah—if, in fact, we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

This is a remarkable promise. It is beyond our comprehension and understanding. Still, this is absolutely true. The old man of believers was crucified with Jesus, died and was buried. The new man of believers will be resurrected, raised up and glorified along with Jesus. In actuality, all of these things have already happened to us. For us, all Christians, the status of being in Christ is completely unshakeable.

Hebrews

10:14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

"It is because of God that you are in union with the Messiah Jesus." Here, Paul wrote that, when we have believed in the Lord Jesus and accepted him, we already have entered in this status. We may not have conviction yet that we are living the life of victory every day.

All Christians will realize sooner or later, that their real life is totally detached from this ideal status of perfect believers. Right after the rebirth, the difference between the ideal status and your real life is extremely huge. As time goes by, after you are born from above, this difference gets smaller and smaller; this is what is called the sanctification.

How can the image of Christ be formed within us?
How can we be transformed to the image of Jesus?
How does this transformation actually occur? How does our real status match the ideal and perfect image that is revealed by the Lord God?

I would like to continue the discussion in order to find the answer to these questions; the fact that Jesus dwells within us forms the second stage of the sanctification. Jesus transforms us gradually through

the Holy Spirit.

What can make this happen in our lives? Needless to say, it is the cross. When we entrust all things, all of our thoughts, our emotions and our desire with the control of the Holy Spirit, Jesus begins to become more and more real to us and the Bible will have a more vibrant meaning in our lives.

Alongside, the power of prayer and testimony will increase. However, this is just the beginning of so-called sanctification. The Holy Spirit continues to work through the cross. Our sins are cleansed on the cross, to which we sinners are nailed. The cross also helps us realize how useless our old self is.

Many Christians serve the Lord by their innate strength, in other words, by their own strength. There are quite a few Christians who thoroughly depend on the strength of the Lord alone and are motivated by the Holy Spirit. Those who truly rely on Jesus alone may not be taken well by other Christians.

Certainly, all Christians have a desire to live in the Christ and live for the Christ. However, only a few brothers and sisters can say confidently that, "For to me, to go on living is the Messiah" as was written in the Philippians, chapter 1, verse 21.

Our souls are willing to serve the Lord. Souls are capable of serving through many different things. The Lord God may bless such people for a while. Nevertheless, very often, his blessing is suddenly cut off. Why is that?

It is because the Lord God is seeking a spiritual man who can bring a spiritual outcome. The Lord God desires to use a spiritual man who makes a spiritual effect. Anything resulting from the service of the strength of souls and our innate ability does not bear a fruit that is expected as the outcome of the work of the Holy Spirit.

We ought to continue to wish to be chosen by the Lord to serve him. Although we all admit the fact that our evil selves were crucified along with Jesus, we are reluctant to admit that our good selves were crucified together.

In order for us to accept that our good selves had been crucified too, we need the Holy Spirit to work in the deeper part of our hearts. In some cases, this work of the Holy Spirit takes years to complete. Our arrogance and the lack of sincere dependence on the Lord are the worst obstacles in our lives of faith.

When we admit our arrogance and realize how the Lord despises such arrogance of humans; furthermore, when we understand that the Lord was crucified with our arrogance, we are compelled to thank him. Jesus completely relied on his Father

God. He has never acted on his own accord; instead, he always prayed and waited for the answer. This is explained in the gospel according to John, chapter 5, verse 19;

John

5:19 Jesus told them, "Truly, I tell all of you emphatically, the Son can do nothing on his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing, What the Father does, the Son does likewise."

Have we already stopped relying on ourselves? Jesus made it very clear that apart from him, we can do nothing. Now that Jesus stated so in his own word, this is absolutely true.

Therefore, we do not need to make any more attempts on our own. When we depend on ourselves and attempt the salvation on our own, we are committing an unacceptable sin. If the cross of Jesus has become a reality in our life, every time we are faced with some problems, we should pray, "I cannot do anything and Lord, I entrust everything on you."

It would be a wonderful blessing if you could reach this state of mind. We may, one day find how arrogant we have been and we have not been depending on the Lord enough, but we do not need to feel shameful. This is a normal stage of growth for Christians.

Colossians

1:27 (his saints) to whom God wanted to make known the glorious riches of this secret among the gentiles—which is the Messiah in you, our glorious hope.

The Lord Jesus dwells in our Spirit by the Holy Spirit. However, how much part does Jesus dominate within us? It is what matters. The intention of the Lord is that Jesus fill up every corner of our hearts.

This is just one step of a long process. You surrender yourself to the Holy Spirit instantaneously. Contrarily, "to be filled with the Holy Spirit" does not occur in a short term, but it refers to a lifelong process.

The fulfillment by the Holy Spirit can be compared to a 'watershoot' that is connected to an everlasting fountain. Water continues to flow out through this watershoot. Many Christians see the fulfillment by the Holy Spirit as water in a bottle with tight lid.

However, the process of being filled with the Holy Spirit refers to a series of events. In actuality, it is a process in which the Lord is always present and you constantly rely on the Lord. Jesus is there to sanctify us and fill us.

As long as we rely on Jesus, he will always fill us. At the very moment we believed in Jesus, we had the

Holy Spirit. And as far as we continue to believe, we are constantly filled with the Holy Spirit.

This exactly is the secret of the victory which should never be forgotten. The cross is like a knife that is held in the hand of the Holy Spirit; it is a knife that governs our entire life. This is another fact you should always keep in mind.

Moreover, the life of the glorified and resurrected Lord is very much like a fountain that will never dry up no matter how much water is pumped, from which the Holy Spirit takes and gives us water for our flesh, soul and spirit, as much as we need. Brothers and sisters who believed in Jesus and accepted him had become one with Jesus and died for their sins.

They no longer rejoice in sins. Whoever believed in Jesus and accepted him has become one with Jesus. They no longer need to suffer from being controlled by their ego. Furthermore, all brothers and sister who believed in Jesus and accepted him have received the power to win the victory over the devil for they are now one with Jesus.

How about us? Have we found the way that leads to the victory over the devil? What is important for us is to realize the fact that Jesus has already won the victory over the devil. This is the victory that has been accomplished in times past.

Jesus was raised up high, which means that he has completely defeated the devil. These verses tell us that Jesus' victory is perfect and he strikes the head of the devil to pieces every day.

Ephesians

1:19according to the working of his mighty strength,

1:20 which he brought about in the Messiah when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realm.

1:21 He is far above every ruler, authority, power, dominion, and every name that can be named, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come.

1:22 God has put everything under the Messiah's feet and has made him the head of everything for the good of the church,

1:23 which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills everything in every way.

(The speaker reads a letter from sister Toyoko Shigeta.)

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