

Chapter 10

Reigning Grace and the "Flesh"

13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Rom. 8:13, 14)

FLESH = UNREGENERATE



THE *Story*

The “flesh” is what God saves us from. The flesh is our old fallen identity in Adam’s transgression and our own individual and personal perpetuation of sinful acts and attitudes. God saves us from who we were in Adam and transfers us into what we are in Christ.

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AN INITIAL COMMENT

There are large segments of Christianity divided over this particular issue. Broad generalizations can be made, but it is detrimental to the overall health of the larger body of Christ. It is an issue that has a right and a wrong, and perhaps necessitates having distinct bodies of fellowship, but it is not an issue that should ever degenerate into name-calling or body-biting (Gal. 5:15). It is important to remember enmity, strife, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, and factions are just as wicked as immorality, impurity, drunkenness and things like these (Gal. 5:19-21). No one practicing these things will inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21). Let us continue to remember good men differ and unity with diversity without division is still possible where biblical love exists.



QUESTION:

Here are some questions asked of me years ago, but still reflects a common idea.

Dear John Berean,

Now you contend that there are *no* "carnal" Christians. How do you rectify that with Romans 7:14-25? In verse fourteen Paul says of himself (a regenerate man) that he is a slave to sin. The only out I

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see is verses 24 and 25 saying, this *would* be my state if not being rescued by Christ. Yet the experience Paul relates in v.19 seems to be consistent with the experience of most believers. I am rather befuddled. What are your thoughts?

- Timid Timotheus

Dear John Berean,

Call me chicken, but I am a little too aware of my own ignorance to dare raise my hand in your class. Your class has stretched me and has forced me to read my Bible to study out the things that have been new to me this year.

Today in class, (you taught on carnal vs. spiritual), I was just a little confused regarding the issue of, for lack of a better term, the backslidden. For example, let's say there is a man that professed Christ and produced fruit in his life for quite some time--then he backslides. . . he falls into sin patterns that he struggled with before his salvation, he never returns to the state he was in when he was first saved and one could say that sin characterizes his actions. Is this man saved? To me, I would call him carnal, but he was still saved. But then again, my use for the word "carnal" was different until I sat in your class. I was under the impression that the Christian could act and speak in the flesh. My inclination is that this backslidden person is saved. He believed and trusted Christ as his Savior, what more is needed for salvation?

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Forgive me if my question is unclear or ambiguous. Thank you for all you have taught this semester thus far. The Lord has used your class to change my thinking and therefore many of my actions. I enjoy your class immensely! Have a good day.



ANSWER

Several issues come into play concerning the answering of this particular question. **First**, what exactly is meant by the term, "Carnal Christian?" **Second**, is it possible for Christians to live in habitual sin? **Third**, is it possible for Christians to live in habitual victory with isolated individual acts of sin? My presupposition is that true believers cannot live *in a pattern of* sin. This will hopefully clarify the question even more. I do not wish to play name games, but I do wish to understand the significance of the question.

Perhaps we should begin by noting what we are not saying.

First, we are not saying that a believer never sins. As long as we occupy this body of flesh, we will sin. Neither position, as a whole, believes in what is called "sinless perfection."

Thus, believers do sin.

Second, we are not saying a believer loses their salvation when they sin. The position I maintain believes in eternal security (“once saved, always saved”).

Thus, believers will never face the second death and end up in the Lake of Fire.

Third, we are not saying that in the absence of visible fruit a person is not saved. We cannot be the final judge or jury as to whether someone is or is not saved. This is God’s prerogative alone.

Thus, God is always working in His people bringing to completion what He started.

Fourth, we are not saying that a believer can never fall back into a behavior of sin that is completely inconsistent with their position in Christ.

Thus, believers can exhibit a behavior of sin that is completely inconsistent with whom they are in Christ.

Fifth, we are not saying that sin does not matter. On the contrary, we do not separate what we are from how we behave. The individual who is saved from the penalty of sin will continually increase in nullifying the power of sin. This is the child of saving faith (James 2).

Thus, Christ is always working in and through His people.

With this in mind let us ask ourselves the question, “What exactly is meant by the term ‘Carnal Christian?’”



I. What exactly is meant by the term “Carnal Christian?”

Such a term commonly refers to those who profess Christ yet are currently living in a backslidden state or living in sin. There are several passages suggesting a Christian can act carnal (Rom. 7:14, 15, 17, 19, 25; 1 Cor. 3:1, 3, 4).

Romans 7 is considered a classic passage as it relates to the Christian walk. The difficulty with seeing the individual in Romans 7 as saved is found in the phrase “sold under sin.” In verse 14, in contrast to the Law, “I am carnal sold under sin.” I argue that the experience noted in 7:15–23 is not to be the Christian’s normal experience. Alva J. McClain makes this insightful comment.

I am inclined to believe he was converted, and that we have here a picture of a saved man trying to be holy by keeping the law. **There is one view of this chapter that is terribly mistaken, and that view is the one that says what we find in here is the Christian’s normal experience.** That is the devil’s own method. No Christian need ever enter into the experience that is recorded here in the seventh chapter of Romans, if he only receives with the heart what the sixth chapter has to teach him.¹

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In Robert L. Reymond's Appendix F entitled, "Whom Does the Man in Romans 7:14-25 Represent?" he offers this initial thesis, "The Romans passage is *not* a description of the regenerate person's struggle against indwelling sin. [It] sets forth both the impotence of the *unregenerate* ego to do good against the power of indwelling sin and the 'inability' and 'weakness' of the law due to human depravity to deliver the unregenerate ego from sin's slavery."²

It is better, I would urge, to hold that Paul is describing his state prior to his conversion on the Damascus Road but, due to his conscience having been awakened to his sinfulness but still 'kicking against the goads' of Christ's gracious overtures (Acts 26:14), a state in which he is hopelessly struggling in his won power to be obedient to the law and thus to please God.³

His premise is that the "I" of Romans 7 is the unconverted Saul of Tarsus. This seems to be the point of Romans 6. Romans 8:8 makes a clear statement, "they that are in the flesh (i.e., carnal) cannot please God." However, Paul's conclusion concerning the believer, "ye are not in the flesh (i.e., carnal), but in the Spirit" (v.9) clearly identifies carnality and spirituality as antithetical. **Paul is not saying Christians cannot commit fleshly or carnal acts, but he does mean that Christians cannot *be* carnal.** To *be* carnal is to *be* unsaved. To be carnal is to be **identified** by one's position **in Adam**.

I find the subject matter always interesting especially in the way asked, “One who is truly saved cannot be carnal.” What if we were to ask the opposite question, “One who is truly lost cannot be spiritual?” The assumption I am making in the asking of my question is that carnal is the opposite of spiritual. In my usage, spiritual is the opposite of being lost. If you are asking me do I believe a saved person can be lost, then my answer is no (John 10:28-31). Yet, could we not equally be asking as to whether an unbeliever could act like a believer? The answer is sure (Matt. 7:21-23). But that does not make him a believer or spiritual. Could not the same be said in response to the question that is asked?

The issue in 1 Corinthians 3 is even more striking. There is a tendency in handling this passage to argue whether or not there is such a category in the Christian faith as a carnal believer. By arguing this idea, we are missing the primary point of the paragraph. Without question there was within the Corinthian fellowship those who were deeply involved in spiritual activity but were acting fleshly by their deep divisiveness and wretched factionalism. But by trying to figure out who these people were, we miss the point as to why they were being identified as such.

Paul’s concern is singular: not to suggest classes of Christians or grades of spirituality, but to get them to stop *thinking* like the people of this present age. He wants them to stop *behaving* like the

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people of the present age, which is the point at hand.⁴

First Corinthians 3 is part of one sustained argument that runs from 1:10 to 4:21.⁵

Chapter 3 continues with the idea begun in 1:10. Paul begins the letter by laying out the spiritual identity of his audience. In 1:10-17 he asks the penetrating question, “Is Christ divided?” It is the cross-work of Jesus Christ that has made us what we are (v. 17). To those who are perishing the cross-work is considered foolishness and a stumbling block (1:18-25). For those who are in Christ it is the power and wisdom of God. Those whom God chose to be the recipients of this wisdom are the foolish, weak, base, and despised (1:26-31). It is this message of Christ crucified that the apostle preached to his audience (2:1-5). Why would some consider the message of Christ crucified to be foolish whereas some see it as the wisdom of God? Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as the means whereby the word of the cross becomes the wisdom of God (2:6-16).

It is against this backdrop that Paul addresses his audience as acting fleshly. They were rejecting the centrality of Christ in the local assembly and splitting the body by polarizing around individuals, individuals who were identified as the foolish, weak, base, and despised.

Please note. In this paragraph, the carnal or fleshly are not those who are breaking some social taboo constructed by the church, but those who reject the cross-work in the unifying of His body and in so doing were divided over personalities and preferences.

Historically, we call someone carnal who is not following in what we believe to be biblical standards, but this is not the point of this paragraph. This paragraph says the carnal or fleshly person is the one who is dividing the body of Christ by forgetting the centrality of Jesus Christ in the midst of the local assembly.

If we back up to chapter two there is a contrast between the natural man and the spiritual man. The contrast is between the unsaved and the saved. This same contrast is being carried through in chapter three. The real weight of chapter three is not whether Christians can be carnal, but if those exhibiting carnality and professing Christ are actually saved (v.3). Both statements in verse 3 are present active indicatives. These “fleshly” people are characterized by it. They are following a pattern that is utterly inconsistent with their position of being spiritual. They are living lies. Such is not to be the case for any true believer.

The difficulty of the discussion lies in one's understanding of positional truth. We have become accustomed to using terms

without defining what is meant or the implications of our usage. To say someone can be a carnal Christian is to say one can be a "dark light" or "fleshly spirit" or an "unbelieving believer." Michael Wells believes in what he calls, "An unbelieving believer."⁶ Such talk is foreign to the writer of 1 John. His distinctions are very clear. You either are or are not walking in the light. **Anything else is darkness.**



Q. What do we call a believer who is acting carnally?

A. A believer who is acting carnally.

<u>The believer is . . .</u>	<u>A believer who is acting carnally is . . .</u>	<u>The unbeliever is . . .</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justified • Imputed with the righteousness of Christ • Redeemed • Reconciled • Forgiven • In the Spirit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Abiding ○ Walking in the Spirit ○ Living in the Spirit ○ Led by the Spirit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justified • Imputed with the righteousness of Christ • Redeemed • Reconciled • Forgiven • In the Spirit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Abiding ○ Walking in the Spirit ○ Living in the Spirit ○ Led by the Spirit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not right with God • Imputed with the sin of Adam • A slave to sin • Alienated from God • Not forgiven • In the flesh <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not abiding ○ Walking in the flesh ○ Living in the flesh ○ Led by the flesh ○ Doing the deeds of the flesh

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bearing the fruit of the Spirit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Walking in the light ➤ Confessing sin, etc. ➤ Obeying ➤ Keeping • Practicing righteousness • No longer the object of God's wrath (Propitiation) • In Christ • In Fellowship • Adopted • A joint-heir with Christ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bearing the fruit of the Spirit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Walking in the light ➤ Confessing sin, etc. ➤ Obeying ➤ Keeping • Practicing righteousness • No longer the object of God's wrath (Propitiation) • In Christ • In Fellowship • Adopted • A joint-heir with Christ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Walking in darkness ➤ Does not acknowledge sin ➤ Does not obey ➤ Does not keep ▪ Practicing sin ▪ The object of God's wrath ▪ In Adam ▪ Out of fellowship ▪ Non-adopted ▪ No inheritance
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Who or what you are vertically changes how you behave horizontally. How you behave horizontally cannot change what you are vertically. There is nothing you can do to undo what He has done. What you merit by grace cannot be maintained by works. A Christian acting carnally is not a second class citizen, or a subset called “non-overcomers,” or failing to live the victorious Christian life. There is always a real possibility that a professing Christian

who is falling into a pattern of sin is perhaps revealing an invalid confession of faith.

The question of whether or not one can be a carnal Christian is really to wonder whether the individual in question is even saved. That is the more pertinent question. This is seen when the sinning individual in 1 Corinthians 5 is addressed as a “so-called brother” (5:11).

But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one. (1 Cor. 5:11)

Condition of the third class, a supposable case.⁷

II. Is it possible for Christians to live in habitual sin?

I have qualified the question with the word *habitual*. This eliminates the demand for sinless perfection. It is God's desire “that we sin not” (1 John 2:1). Nevertheless, the reality of the Christian walk is that we “sin” (1 John 2:1). We will always do battle with the old nature as long as we occupy this physical body (Eph. 4:22-32).

Swindoll makes the following comment:

The Christian can be temporarily addicted to sin. It is called carnality.⁸

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I would concur with Swindoll's observation. When we make such a statement, there has to be Scriptural warrant for using such descriptions. The idea of living in *habitual* sin is again foreign to the walk of faith. This is the message of 1 John 3:4-10 (See also Gal. 5:19-21, and Eph. 5:1-5).

⁴ “Everyone who **practices** (present active participle) sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. ⁵ You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. ⁷ Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who **practices** (present active participle) righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸ the one who **practices** (present active participle) sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ No one who is born of God **practices** (present active indicative) sin, because His seed abides in him; and he **cannot** (**ou dunatai**) sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰ By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not **practice** (present active participle) righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:4-10).

What is the big idea? It is found in the word “practice.” Throughout the passage, there is the constant emphasis of a pattern, habit, and life-style. **There is a big difference between a point in time and a pattern of life.** Because of our old nature the believer still sins, but because he is born of God, he is not characterized as a sinner.

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The verb usage is very instructive in the passage before us. Verse six uses the present active indicative (“sins not”) and present active participle (“whosoever sins”). Both structures stress the habitualness of the offense. Both accent that which characterizes one's life. Again, verse eight uses the present active participle (“practices sin”). Verse nine uses the present active indicative (“does not practice sin”) and the present middle indicative (“cannot sin”). Thus, no one who is truly born-again can live in *habitual* sin. Nowhere in the Scripture is the demand for sinless perfection. **Those who are truly born-again are not *sinless*, BUT they do *sin less*.**

Our difficulty lays in quantifying what habitual looks like. We define habitual by duration in time, but objective assessing is impossible. It is impossible for us to conclude every addict is an unbeliever, yet addicts are in bondage to sin. Rather than causing us to be overly judgmental and harsh with those in bondage, we should cultivate an attitude of endurance and patience. Often the addict/addiction is the one exposed as to those who are in bondage to sin privately.

Whatever Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 3 he can't contradict 1 John 3. He said he wouldn't even contradict himself in Romans 8 where he said there are only two spheres, flesh and Spirit, two destinies, life and death. The child of God is one indwelt by the Spirit, and that indwelling severs

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him from the flesh. He can't contradict Galatians 5 where he says the works of the flesh will have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. By what he says in 1 Corinthians 3, I'm not going to contradict what he says anywhere else. ⁹

This is also part of the qualifier in Romans 8:1, 4 when it says, "who are walking (present active participle) after the flesh. Throughout chapter 8:1-13 the verb usage speaks of the continual habitual nature of the action.

Not only does the concept of a believer living in habitual sin contradict the tone of Scripture, but it also minimizes the understanding of the work of Christ in the believer's life. There is a Scriptural example of two individuals, who seemingly were believers, but questions are raised because of their lifestyle. The individuals are Hymenaeus and Alexander. As we examine why these individuals can be considered as unbelievers, we will also understand why all living lifestyles of habitual sinning should equally not be considered believers (1 Tim. 1:18-20).

This passage creates a question that needs to be addressed. Were Hymenaeus and Alexander two wolves in sheep's clothing (Acts 20:29) or were they two sheep returning to a dog's vomit (2 Pet. 2:22)? There are certain presuppositions necessary to note as we consider this idea of the carnal believer.

A. I believe in Christ's ability to keep the saint (John 6:37, 39, 40; 10:27, 28; 17:12; Rom. 8:31-39; 1 Pet. 1:4, 5).

For those of us who believe in eternal security, this is the bedrock of our position. We are kept by the power of God. Others, who do not read the text as we, say it is possible for the believer ***to take himself out of*** the hand of God. In addition, in the case of Hymeneaus and Alexander that is exactly what we have. Thus, man's free will has the power to override God's omnipotence. Somehow, the individual is able to resist so completely the work of the abiding Holy Spirit and their position in the resurrected Christ as to cause themselves to become shipwreck. This I do not believe.

B. I believe in Christ's ability to perfect the saint and complete the work (1 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 2:4-10; 5:26, 27, Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:15, 26; Col. 1:22; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23, 24; Heb. 13:20, 21; and Jude 1:1, 24).

What God has begun, He will finish. The ultimate glorification of His people is certain.

C. I believe in the perseverance of the saint in the pattern of Christ (Matt. 7:18; Acts 4:20; Rom. 6:2; Gal. 5:17; 1 John 3:7-10; 5:4, 18).

This does not negate the believer's responsibility to deny the old man, nor does it deny the old man's existence. Nevertheless, it does emphasize the old man's true inability in the life of the believer. I do not believe the profession of one's lips is the guarantee of man's salvation, but the practice of one's life. **This does not negate the idea that the practice of one's life is a result or consequence of the relationship, not the cause for the relationship.** Indeed, faith without works is Moreover, that work is the fruit of the Christ life.

D. I believe it is possible for a pig to be washed, for a dog to walk away from his vomit, and for a wolf to parade in sheep's clothing. Yet, I am equally convinced that the pig will return to wallowing in the mire, the dog will return to its own vomit, and the wolf will attack and devour the true sheep (Prov. 26:11; Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:28, 29; 2 Pet. 2:17-22).



III. Is it possible for Christians to live in habitual victory with isolated individual acts of sin?

The short answer is yes. It is unfortunate but most Christians do not see themselves as living the victorious Christian life. This, however, is the message of John the apostle (1 John 5:4, 5; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). The believer is an overcomer. As already

noted we will sin (1 John 2:1), but this sin does not rob us of the victory we are to enjoy in Christ.



IV. It is impossible to determine what constitutes long-term disobedience.

No one living in habitual disobedience can have the satisfaction of knowing with certainty his or her standing before God. Neither you nor I are capable of determining who is or is not saved. Scripture does tell us that we might know them by their fruit, but such “judgments” cannot be dogmatic or final. Only God knows for sure.

Most Christians have robbed themselves of all that is theirs in Christ by making a third category called, “the carnal Christian.” We must stop living low lives and start living our position. Yes, my practice will *sometimes* contradict my position. But it is my position that impacts my practice. My practice can never alter my position. **Because of how we define what it means to be a carnal Christian, we become a slave to our experience instead of allowing our theology to define and dictate our experience.** Again, it is possible for a Christian to *do* carnal things, but it is impossible for a Christian to *be* carnal. Just as it is possible for a non-Christian to *do* spiritual things, but it is impossible for a non-Christian to *be* spiritual (unless he/she becomes saved).

The statements of Scripture appear to put a dichotomy between the carnal and the spiritual. You cannot be both. You are either one or the other. To live any other way than after the Spirit is to be living a lie.

What then are we to do with those who appear to be in a backslidden state?

The reality is there is no backslider. There may be someone who has forgotten his total forgiveness and falls back to trust in his obedience to the law to gain God's favor. Again he becomes sin focused instead of walking by faith.¹⁰



V. In light of Christ's provision as delineated in Romans 3:21-5:11 what should be considered a proper mindset to have concerning progressive sanctification?

All of the topics we have considered from progressive sanctification, the role of the New Testament commands (i.e. imperatives), walking in the Holy Spirit, and now the believer acting carnally are all tied into the work of God in and through His people. How are we to understand all of this?

A. I always begin with the work of Christ as it relates to my relationship with God the Father.

I believe within the doctrine of justification I am declared righteous before God. This has no bearing on being made righteous, but I am declared right as I am found in His Son (Rom. 3:21-26). Thus being right with God comes from my position in Christ and not in my ability to perform or obey.

I believe we have separated our justification from our sanctification. This is an unfortunate theological mistake. In so doing we have made progressive sanctification an unstable condition that one must be continuously maintaining moment by moment, and if lost can, nevertheless, be recovered immediately. This I do not believe.

I do not believe our justification can be divided from our sanctification. You cannot have one without the other. There is no such thing as justification that does not issue in sanctification. Sanctification is inevitable, though it is not automatic; it involves our “responsible participation.” God works in and through my will His will thus guaranteeing my “responsible participation.” There is real victory over sin for all justified persons. Sanctification for the believer is unavoidable (Rom. 8:30). However, sanctification is not automatic; it requires our strenuous participation, all the time battling the world, the flesh, and the devil (Eph. 6:12).

B. I am equally convinced in the doctrine of imputation I have been given the righteousness of Christ.

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I am not only declared right in the doctrine of justification, but I am also given the righteousness of Christ in the doctrine of imputation (2 Cor. 5:21).

C. Because of being in Christ my fellowship with God has now been established.

I believe fellowship refers to salvation. I do not believe my fellowship is based on my obedience. The term I use is important. Though I do not believe my fellowship can be broken because of it referring to my salvation, I do believe my practice can and often is out of harmony with my position. Thus sin keeps me from **enjoying all I already have** in Christ and because of Christ. The emphasis is on my enjoyment and not on God's attitude or actions toward me. I can enjoy it, I simply choose not to because of choices made.

D. It is when my practice strays from my position that I need to confess my sin before God and put it off and endeavor to make no provision for its expression.

Confession of sin is a work of the Spirit. Confession is a fruit of the Spirit in and through His people. It is an unavoidable activity.

E. I do not believe God's opinion of me ever changes as He sees me in His Son.

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I do believe my opinion of Him can be wrong. I believe the tension I experience is always generated from me toward God, never from God toward me. Sin clouds and confuses my understanding of who God is, what He has done and who I am in Him.

F. I have said that if you believe fellowship refers to salvation, then fellowship cannot be broken.

However, I do recognize that some use the word fellowship to describe the tension in one's communion with God, so I do understand why the word is used, although I believe it is being used inappropriately. Regardless as to what term one might use, the doctrine of positional truth and relational security must be preached.

G. Sin does cause me to live in a way that is inconsistent with my position.

It is this I believe I need to make right. I need to make my practice right with my position. Nevertheless, if I am declared right in justification, I do not see how I can be declared wrong through my practice, except that my practice is not right with my position. I do not know where in the New Testament the church's language of "restoring fellowship with God" and "getting right with God" comes from.

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Some have described the believer's relationship with God in this way. "Perhaps I have felt I have wronged someone, but the person wronged is unaware of it. I feel tension toward them, but they do not have the same feeling as I have. When I go to them for restoration, it is solely on my part, not on their part. In fact, they are not even aware that such a tension exists." I believe this is how it is with believers. My sin causes a strain in the relationship, but it is not a strain between God and me, but rather me and God. I do not believe, however, that this *supposed* tension between God and me actually exists or has to exist. God sees the sin because of His omniscience, but He does not credit the sin to my account. The sin question as it relates to me and my relationship with God has been answered in full in His Son at the cross.

H. I do not believe there can be a true sense of sin's sinfulness until I am confronted with the truth about God.

I believe that we often stress the sinfulness of one's practice without the security of one's position. Such preaching will result in a defeated Christian walk.



SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

1. We have lost the certainty of progressive sanctification for those who are called to glorification.

Such progression for the Christian is certain for those who have been predetermined by God for glorification. Such is the thrust of Ephesians 1:4. I believe we do a disservice to the Christian community when we see man's perseverance apart from the certainty of divine will. The process of progressive sanctification is rooted in the certainty of God's program (Phil. 1:6; 2:12, 13; 1 Cor. 1:10, 30; 5:7; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24; Rom. 8:29, 30; Eph. 1:4; Gal. 5:25 ["Since"/NIV]). When we fail to speak both truths, our perseverance becomes fragile and tentative. For the Christian, the perseverance passages speak of God's faithfulness to perform His work in him and through him.

2. I do not see nor understand how the teaching of salvation and one's standing before the Father in Christ would lead to a sinful life style.

I believe Paul's response to such thinking is clear (Rom. 6:1, 2, and 15). I have often had people weep openly at the sense of relief they had when taught such wonderful truths. Such truth should always lead to a greater sense of gratitude and a deeper humility. What I

think happens is in much preaching there is a using of terms that need to be expanded on but because of a lack of time such defining is incapable of happening.

3. The message communicated by many places great stress on their walk but little is said of the security they have in Christ and all the blessings that are found in Him.

There is a tremendous need to hear of a believer's position in Christ versus his practice. In the absence of our standing before the Father because of the cross, many see their relationship with God as being tentative and fragile. **Obedience is a key, but they must see their obedience against the backdrop of grace. To detach it from grace is to make the obedience a cause of the relationship instead of a consequence of the relationship.**

As in all discussion, my quest is to know Him. One day all of this will give way to Him. Until that day it is my desire to see Him more clearly and to enjoy Him more fully.

¹ McClain, *Romans*, 150.

² Robert L. Reymond, Appendix F, 1127

³ *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 1131

⁴ Gordon Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 122.

⁵ D.A. Carson, *The Cross*, 69.

⁶ Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 38 and following and page 117.

⁷ A.T. Robertson's *Word Pictures* on 1 Cor. 5:11.

⁸ Charles Swindoll, *Grace Awakening*, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 139.

⁹ "Carnal Christian?" by Albert N. Martin, *A Puritan's Mind* Website.

¹⁰ Bob George, *Faith That Pleases God*, (Harvest House Publishers: Eugene, 2001), 117.