

“...walk worthily...” from the Book of Philippians

Scripture Block: Pp 1:1-11

Theme: GOD’S EXPECTATION OF FRUITFUL SERVICE

Life verse: Pp 1:9-11

Today’s passage: Pp 1:6

Notes

Keeping Things in Balance

8. The truths associated with sanctification, both positional and experiential, are key in helping us avoid all kinds of doctrinal error. In today’s lesson we will consider just a few.

a. Solid grace teaching, like that associated with the concept of our positional sanctification and related security, is sometimes used as an excuse to live a “sloppy” Christian life. I am using the term sloppy as descriptive of nonchalance with respect to sin—almost as if grace were a license to sin! Of course this is the farthest thing from the truth. Although God’s grace does provide an allowance for a believer who has failed to recover, our study of the topic of sanctification makes it very clear what the “target” is for the Christian: conformity to the image of Jesus Christ (Rm 8:29) and a holiness that is comparable to God’s holiness (1Pt 1:15). Both impossibly high standards, which is why the Christian way of life must be by means of grace—we could never accomplish it on our own and must be brought off from trying to do so. It is only achievable via the provision of God.

b. There are those who point to failure, especially big failures, as cause for God revoking salvation. Although eternal security is not directly the topic under study, positional sanctification does apply. Entry into the family of God through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ establishes a family relationship. No matter what the failure—family ties are not severed! What’s more, the intimacy of our relationship with Christ: made alive with him; raised up with him; and seated with him in the heavenlies, all testify to the permanency of our relationship with God. Sin on our part cannot sever what we did not work to accomplish to begin with. Under a system in which you can lose your salvation, is not that salvation ultimately based upon what we do—upon works? If so, then it is not by grace.

c. There are also those who would use perseverance in the Christian Way of Life as the test of salvation. In other words, failure to steadily progress in experiential sanctification establishes that a person was never saved to begin with. One theologian has described this as “back-loading” the

Gospel¹, and is really just another way of making works a criteria for salvation—again moving away from a grace-based salvation. Of course those who promote this view will claim that I am simply using grace as an excuse for sin. On the contrary—we have been very clear: our position is in Christ; and God’s intent is that our experience match the position we have in our perfectly holy Savior. What’s more, as we shall see in the verses ahead, God has provided everything necessary—that’s grace again, for us to progressively become conformed to the image of his Son. Should we fail, by succumbing to temptation and the lusts of the flesh, our secure position remains as an anchor point from which we can recover and continue once again the process of experiential sanctification.

Application

By way of application, let’s apply our understanding to the life of David. His affair with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of Uriah require an analysis of a number of possible outcomes: 1) David lost his salvation as the result of his sin; 2) It demonstrated David was never saved to begin with; or 2) David’s willful sin led to terrible discipline from the Lord, but as a saved individual, he was able to confess his sin, and return to fellowship with the Lord and back to the process of ongoing sanctification. Only one of these options fits the clear Biblical account. The same is true of the lives we lead—avoid discipline and work with the Lord toward conformity to our great Lord and Savior.

¹ Dr. Joseph Dillow