

LOVE'S WORKMANSHIP

- A. Introduction: If you are going to be victorious in the midst of the trials of life you must know that God is for you and that He will help you. Many Christians struggle with believing that because they don't see God as He truly is and themselves as they truly are in relation to God.
1. They see God as someone to be afraid of and themselves as worthless, no good sinners who have failed God. Consequently, they are certain God won't help them. In fact, God may be behind their problems.
 - a. Yes, all men are guilty of sin before a holy God and deserving of punishment. But that is only part of the story. God did not make men to sin or for sin. He made men to be His holy sons. Eph 1:4,5
 - b. God made men knowing we would sin, but He had a plan in mind to deal with our sin and turn sinful men into holy, blameless, righteous sons of God. Rev 13:8; II Tim 1:9,10; Titus 1:2; etc.
 1. God's goal has never been to punish sin, but rather to remove it -- its cause, its consequences, its memory (Heb 9:26; Heb 8:12). We aren't saying there is no punishment for sin. All who reject the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross will be punished for sin (a lesson for another day).
 2. But, you must understand that the ultimate goal of salvation for all who bow their knee to the Lord Jesus Christ is to return and restore sinful men to the family of God and then transform those sinners into perfect sons.
 2. If you, as a Christian, are going to see yourself as you truly are in relation to God, you must understand that God's goal in your life is the removal of your sin and the transformation of your being from sinner to saint which will result in permanent transformation of your behavior from sinful to holy.
 - a. God's plan is for men to become sons like Jesus, the Perfect Son. We don't become Jesus, we become like Him in holiness, power, and love through the process of salvation. Rom 8:29,30
 1. God calls us, implying active effort on God's part to regain His lost family. God left heaven, took on flesh, and went to the Cross to suffer and die so that He could have His family.
 2. God justifies us. Through the Cross God satisfied the claims of justice against us for our sin so much so that He is able to declare us not guilty any more (justified) and in right standing with Himself (righteous) when we accept Jesus and His sacrifice.
 3. God glorifies us. Once we are justified, God can glorify us. To glorify means to transform with eternal life. God glorifies us or transforms us (or conforms us to the image of Christ) by giving us His eternal, uncreated life in every part of our being (spirit, soul, and body).
 - b. Full conformity to the image of Christ, full glorification in every part of our being is a process.
 1. At the new birth our spirit was instantly glorified, made alive with the life of God. II Cor 5:17
 2. At the return of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead our bodies will be instantly glorified or transformed into bodies like Jesus' resurrection body. Phil 3:20,21
 3. Right now, as we study and act on God's word, our mind, emotions, and behavior can and should be increasingly transformed by the life of God. James 1:21; Gal 4:19; II Cor 3:18
 3. Salvation (the glorification of your entire being) is a process. Right now, you are a finished work in progress: fully God's son through faith in Christ but not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ (fully glorified, fully alive with the life of God in every part of your being). I John 3:2
 - a. That does not mean there is doubt as to whether you are going to heaven. If Jesus is your Lord and Savior, you qualify for heaven.
 - b. But, the fact that you are a finished work in progress does affect your present relationship to God.
 1. God is now working in you, carrying out the process of salvation, as you cooperate with Him. God is aware of this ongoing process; He knows what is finished and what is not. Phil 2:12,13
 2. God now deals with you on the basis of the part that is finished because He knows the process begun at the new birth will be completed. Phil 1:6
- B. You must understand what you are now in relation to God: His workmanship, a finished work in progress.
1. In Eph 1:16-23 Paul prayed that the Christians at Ephesus would know the hope to which they were

called, the riches of their inheritance in Christ, and the exceeding greatness of God's power toward them. Then he went into some detail about what God's power had accomplished for them.

- a. When Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God they (we) were raised up together with Him and given the same position of authority as Jesus at the right hand of the Father. Eph 2:4-6
 1. This was done, v7, "in order that...he might display in the ages to come the boundless wealth of his loving-kindness by his goodness to us in Christ Jesus" (20th Cent).
 2. We did nothing to cause this to happen. It is the result of God's loving kindness (grace). v8,9
 - b. In this passage Paul gives a description of what they (we) were before they (we) came to Christ when they (we) were still in the pigpen of rebellion, sin, and death. Eph 2:1-3
 1. We were dead in our sins, cut off from God and eternal life, followed the ways of the world, and "obeyed its unseen ruler" (Phillips), the spirit who works in those who don't believe.
 2. We followed the impulses and imaginations of our evil nature (Phillips). Our very nature exposed us to Divine wrath (20th Cent). The word nature means growth and, by implication, natural production or lineal descent. We were sinners by our first birth. Rom 5:19
 - c. Then Paul says that they (we) are God's workmanship (Eph 2:10), referring to the transformation that takes place in us at conversion. Workmanship is POIEMA, meaning which is made. It is translated handiwork, design, masterpiece, artistry.
 1. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (New Living Translation)
 2. For he has made us, creating us through our union with Christ Jesus for the life of goodness which God has predestined us to live. (Goodspeed)
 3. No one can pride himself upon earning the love of God (v9). The fact is that what we are we owe to the hand of God upon us. We are born afresh in Christ, and born to do those good deeds which God planned for us to do. (Phillips)
 4. No, we are God's artistry, his creative work produced by our relationship to Christ, so that we express the kind of life God originally intended. (Johnson)
 - d. Notice that the good works don't produce a transformation in us, they follow the transformation produced by a new birth. The end result is the fulfillment of God's original plan: holy sons.
2. One of the hallmarks of salvation, of true Christianity, is union with Christ. At the new birth our spirit is united to the life in Christ, eternal life. That life produces transformation by regenerating (or making alive) and glorifying our spirit.
 - a. II Cor 5:17--Therefore, if anyone is in union with Christ he is a new being (20th Cent). New (KAINOS) means new as to form or quality, of different nature from what is contrasted as old.
 1. A new creature is not someone who never existed before. It is a person whose spirit has been made alive with the life of God, someone whose spirit has been glorified.
 2. It is a person whose spirit has been transformed from unrighteous to righteous which begins the process of being fully made right, fully conformed to the image of Christ. II Cor 5:21
 - b. Through our union with Christ we become partakers of His nature. II Pet 1:4--sharers (partakers) of (Amp); sharers in a divine nature (Rotherham); participate in the divine nature (20th Cent).
 1. I Cor 6:17--But the man who is in union with the Lord is spiritually one with Him (Williams); becomes one spirit with Him (Amp).
 2. I Cor 1:30--So you owe it all to him through union with Christ Jesus whom God made our wisdom, our means of right standing, our consecration, and our redemption ... (Williams)
 3. In I Cor 15:45-47 Jesus is called the Last Adam and the Second Man. Jesus went to the Cross as the Last Adam, the representative of a fallen, rebellious race, judged by God in and through our Substitute.
 - a. Jesus rose as the Second Man -- the head of a race of men, new creatures, perfect, holy sons. Rom 8:29--Those whom He has foreknown He also has predestined to share the likeness of His Son, that He might be the Eldest in a vast family of brothers (Weymouth).
 1. Jesus is God become a man without ceasing to be God. Jesus is the representative man, the

- representative of glorified humanity -- the first man who was under the dominion of death, but has been made alive, brought out of death, by the glory of the Father. Rom 6:4
2. That is the life we are given at the new birth. That is why our glorified, recreated spirit is identical to the human spirit of Jesus.
 - b. Your union with Christ and the transformation it produced is the basis of your relationship with the Father. It is the defining factor as to what you truly are in relation to God. God now deals with you on the basis of the part of you that is already conformed to the image of Christ.
 1. Rom 5:2--By whom we have an introduction through faith into this state of God's favor in which we safely stand. (Williams)
 2. Eph 3:12--And in union with him, and through our trust in him, we find courage to approach God with confidence. (20th Cent)
 3. I John 4:17--So our love for him grows more and more, filling us with complete confidence for the day when he shall judge all men -- for we realise that our life in this world is actually his life lived in us. (Phillips)
 4. God is well aware that a process is underway. He devised the process and is working to carry it out.
 - a. Titus 2:11-14--God's loving kindness has brought us salvation and teaches us to live righteously in this life as we await the return of the Lord. Notice, it is God who purifies us.
 1. v14--He it is who sacrificed himself for us, to set us free from all wickedness and to make us a pure people marked out for his own, eager to do good. (NEB)
 2. v14--Who gave himself up for us to redeem us from all iniquity and secure himself a clean people, with a zest for good deeds. (Moffatt)
 - b. Eph 5:25,26--Jesus gave himself to sanctify and cleanse the church. So that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. (Amp); To make her holy, after purifying her (20th Cent).
 1. v27--His intention is himself to bring the church in all her beauty into his own presence with no spot or wrinkle or blemish of any kind, but, on the contrary, holy and faultless. (20th Cent)
 2. Heb 10:14--By a single offering he has made perfect for all time those who are being purified (20th Cent); For by one offering he hath perfected for evermore them who are being made holy (Rotherham).
 5. The full salvation provided at the Cross involves a process of transformation that comes to us in stages and by degrees.
 - a. Your spirit is instantly glorified at the new birth. Your body will be instantly glorified at the return of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead. As we study and obey God's word our mind, emotions, and behavior are progressively changed.
 - b. II Cor 3:18--And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor as from one degree of glory to another; [for this come] from the Lord [who is] the Spirit. (Amp)
 6. In this life, we are supposed to take on the traits of the part of us that is changed (our spirit) in the parts of us not yet changed (our soul and body).
 - a. Eph 4:24--And put on the new self, which is created to be like God, righteous and holy in truth. (Beck); Which was created to resemble God with the righteousness and holiness springing from the Truth. (20th Cent)
 1. Notice the next few verses (v25-32) all state specific sinful behaviors new creatures are no longer to practice: don't lie, steal, speak ill of or to each other, be bitter or wrathful, etc.
 2. God is aware that the unchanged parts of us have the potential to act up and dominate us.
 - b. When you (Christian) sin, you are a new creature who is acting like an unchanged man. The church at Corinth was plagued with problem -- division and strife, abusing spiritual gifts, drunkenness and gluttony at communion, overlooking a man sleeping with his father's wife.

1. Paul wrote to rebuke and correct them. He began his letter: I Cor 1:2--To the church (assembly) of God which is in Corinth, to those consecrated and purified and made holy in Christ Jesus...(Amp); who have been consecrated by union with Christ Jesus (20th Cent).
2. Paul's approach to them was: Why are you acting like this? This is not what you are! I Cor 3:3--Are you not worldly-minded and do you not behave like the unconverted (Berkeley); like mere (unchanged) men (Amp).

C. Conclusion: To walk in victory, you must see yourself as you truly are in relation to God. You are a finished work in progress -- fully God's son but not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ. God deals with you on the basis of the part that is finished because He is confident the process of salvation, glorification, and conformity to the image of Christ will be complete.

1. Does this mean we can live any way we want to live? Of course not. We are supposed to live lives of holiness. That is our created purpose -- to be holy sons of God. But, the emphasis in scripture is not: Live right to be right. It's: Because you are right, live right.
 - a. Rom 5:19 says that through the obedience of Christ men were made righteous. My obedience is not the basis of my righteousness. Jesus' obedience is the basis of my righteousness. Union with Christ is the basis of my righteousness. That righteousness will make me right in my entire being.
 - b. What you do (sin) does not change what you are (a holy son of God). But what you are can and will change what you do. What you are and what you do are two different things.
2. II Cor 5:17 (If any may be in Christ he is a new creature) is preceded by two important verses.
 - a. II Cor 5:15--Christ died for us all, so that being alive should no longer mean living with our own life but with his life who died for us and has risen again. (Knox)
 - b. Jesus died to remove our sins so that God could give us His life, so that we could become sons by new birth and then live like the Perfect Son by the power of His life.
 - c. The entrance of that life into our spirit began the process of transformation that will ultimately make us like Jesus in every part of our being. We are now to assess ourselves in terms of the part of us that is changed. II Cor 5:16
 1. And therefore, henceforward, we do not think of anybody in a merely human fashion. (Knox)
 2. Consequently, from now on we estimate and regard no one from a [purely] human point of view -- in terms of natural standards of value. [No] even though we once did estimate Christ from a human viewpoint and as a man, yet now [we have such knowledge of Him that] we know Him no longer [in terms of the flesh]. (Amp)
 - d. If that is how you are supposed to assess yourself, then that must be how God assesses you.
3. God's plan for His family was conceived in love (Eph 1:4,5), it was carried out in love (John 3:16), and it will end in love (Eph 2:7). What are you in relation to God? You are love's workmanship.