

Overview of Previous Lessons

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[0 : 00] We've been involved in a study now for over two years called Salvation God's Way.

! Tonight was lesson 46. And by the way, it's going to be real brief tonight because we had all this going and clean up and we're going to pick it up with vigor next Monday.

But I thought I would just put out a couple of things to you and hope everyone will come back next Monday. And I think I can probably put together a little book for anyone who wants one with all the lessons.

And I'd be glad to do that if you'll give me time and if my wife agrees to help me. But based on my files, it does appear that we last met on March the 16th.

None of us could have predicted the spillover with what they're calling the pandemic and that it would cause us to cease our study and actually cease church for a while.

[1 : 20] Although we did church online. That was about 182 days ago when we were last here.

This is actually our first time in this room. When we finished last time we were talking about sanctification. The process of being made holy, being recreated in the image of Christ by the indwelling Holy Spirit of God.

That's sanctification. Now, it would be quite simple and easy to spend the rest of this year well into next year talking about sanctification.

I don't think we could ever plumb the depths. And you can never get enough exposure to the biblical topic of sanctification. And just to kind of summarize, reaching back into some previous lessons over time, there's three very important things that must happen to an individual in order to be saved. And I'm naming three. There's a lot more, but three that I'm going to focus on. And first of all, we must be born from above. Most people say born again, and that's not a bad term, but the Greek word anothene means born from above.

[2 : 59] A spiritual birth that comes down from heaven. It's got to happen. It's got to happen. We refer to that as regeneration. We refer to it as redemption.

We studied that at length by looking at the exchange of Jesus with his night visitor, Nicodemus, in the early chapters of John's Gospel.

Second, we must be justified. Justification is an act of God to the person he is saving. Here's a good definition for justification.

Justification by faith is a declaration by God that a person has been restored to a state of righteousness through belief and trust in the work of Christ rather than on the basis of one's own accomplishment.

God does the justifying. It's a legal declaration made by God to his children. And then the third part of the equation contained in Salvation God's Way is a topic we've been on for many, many months, and that is sanctification.

[4 : 21] Sanctification is the process of being recreated in the image of Christ, in his holiness.

It begins at salvation and progressively grows in the life of the believer until it is finally realized in glorification.

Now, let me say when I say it progressively grows, some people, their Christian life is two steps forward, one step back. Or in my case, two steps forward, three steps back.

But it's the direction that way. You're supposed to grow. And we don't realize it until glorification, which is heaven.

We're going to talk about that. That will be our last subject when we get to it. There are some denominations that believe in perfectionism, that they can be perfect in this life.

[5 : 26] And I have a lot of fun talking to those guys because by the time I'm through, they're so mad at me, they think they've lost their salvation. And they're just furious, you know, that they think

they can.

I mean, I tell them, read the first chapter of 1 John. And when he says he's without sin, it makes God a liar. You're not going to attain perfection in this life.

But it is to be the direction of our life. We're to work at it, to work at holiness, but as a direction not unto perfection, which is we'd like to.

But we're battling the world, the flesh, and the devil. And don't give a lot of credit to the world and the devil because mostly it's flesh. I know that's true in my life. Next point I'm going to make, and again, this is real brief tonight.

My brevities tend to drag out a little bit. But real important concept here. God never saves anyone that he does not justify.

[6 : 39] It's part of the salvation process. Further, God never justifies anyone that he does not intend to sanctify.

They're all linked. And let's just be honest, a lot of guys stop at praying the sinner's prayer, whatever that is. I haven't found that in the Bible.

But I'm still looking. But the fact is, God sanctifies those he justifies. And to be sure, there are many setbacks in the process of sanctification.

Again, caused mostly by unredeemed flesh. If you want to see an example of that, you go to the Apostle Paul. We would probably hold Paul out as being the greatest Christian that ever lived. He wouldn't do that. But we would. And yet he devotes Romans 6, and especially Romans 7, to the battle that he was fighting.

[7 : 52] And in his unredeemed flesh. And he got so intense in chapter 7 of Romans that he declares himself to be a most wretched man and the chief of sinners.

Boy, that's strong language coming from the Apostle Paul. And I love the way Romans 8.1 begins because there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

And you know, for me, the light bulb came on one day and I thought, Paul's just poured out his heart to the Lord, to the Holy Spirit, saying I'm a wretched man.

I'm a chief of sinners. I can't do it on my own. And it's like the Holy Spirit said, I know, Paul. Therefore, there's no condemnation if you're in Christ Jesus.

I'll take care of your condemnation at the cross. Because if God doesn't do it, it won't get done, right? I watched Dr. MacArthur, a video of him.

[9 : 01] Every now and then, on Sunday nights, they'll have questions and answers. And people stand waiting for their turn. There was this nice young woman, early 20s, and she was almost in tears.

I remember her name was Joy. And John stopped and said, you know, it must be hard being named Joy because people expect you to be joyful all the time, you know. But she had all these questions for him because she wasn't sure she was saved.

She said, I have bad thoughts. First time I've ever met a person who had bad thoughts. But she went on at some length. So John asked her a series of questions.

Do you desire this? Do you desire that? And said, do you desire to live a life of increasing holiness, pleasing to the Lord? And she says, yes, but I fail many times and I can't do it alone.

And John said, well, I know you can't. Welcome to the club. He said, none of us can. That's why we're all here. Because none of us can. We're getting strength from each other and strength from the Lord.

[10 : 07] But he said, welcome to the club. She really was very satisfied with John's answers to her. I thought it was really good. But here we got Paul, wretched man, chief of sinners, fighting this battle.

And we fight the same battle. We fight the same battle. And in many respects, we fight a more intense battle. Paul didn't have to put up on the internet, did he?

They'd never heard of Hugh Hefner in his lifetime. You know, I'm at the point, if I'm talking to somebody and they claim a relationship with the Lord, I want to ask them, where are you at in the sanctification process?

When were you saved? When were you, you know, where are you at in sanctification? And let me add something here. Remember, in sanctification, we all go at different speeds.

Never be critical because someone's lagging behind you and never be embarrassed because someone's way out in front. We go at different speeds. But I just want to ask people, oh, you're

saved, well, where are you at in sanctification?

[11 : 25] And you'll probably get a blank stare. Well, I never heard of that word. And some people may think, you know, if I spoke to a larger crowd like on Sunday morning, well, why don't we have plans and programs for our people to be sanctified?

Well, guess what? That's what it's all about. That's what we're doing in here. That's what Mike and Dan do Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night. This is why we're here.

That's why the ladies are down the hallway. doing their Bible study. That's part of the sanctification process. Now, we could go a long time, months more on sanctification, but I'll tell you what I'm going to do.

I'm going to declare victory and say we've studied it. And we're going to move into the next part of our study, and most of that will really begin with intensity next time.

but we're going to declare victory and one of the reasons I'm doing that is we're going to revisit sanctification a lot. I'm not even sure where we're going from here, but I've got some good ideas and we're going to be talking about sanctification.

[12 : 45] It's part of the sanctification process. So we're going to declare victory tonight and we're going to move into our next part of our study which will be the perseverance of the saints.

Reformers called it the perseverance of the saints. And an even better description, in my opinion, is the preservation of the saints.

Perseverance kind of implies well, God does His part and I'm sure doing mine. Preservation to me really speaks more to the truth that the Lord is doing the work.

He preserves us till we stand before Him. We're going to be looking at this in some detail.

I really appreciate the reformers and how they did that. And as far as sanctification, we'll be sanctified in glory.

[13 : 46] And again, glorification is the last thing we'll study. 1 John 3.2 Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when He appears we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is.

1 John 3.2 And that's reserved for that period called glorification. The last subject in our series. But before we get to glorification, we're going to examine the doctrine of perseverance.

And I'll plug in all kinds of names for this, but it's all the same. And you know, that is a subject dear to the hearts of Southern Baptists. Has been for a long time.

And we've come up with a lot of ways to describe that. Some good. Some a little bit on weak ground in my opinion. I'm going to spend some time here over the next few weeks. And if you grew up a Southern Baptist, which I did not by the way, but if you grew up a Southern Baptist, you heard terms like you need to be saved, be born again, born from above.

Of course, our all-time favorite, once saved, always saved. And I'm being real candid with you, that thing's been beat to death.

[15 : 11] That's been, I don't use it. I'm sorry. I have fun with my Armenian brothers at VOM, most of them Wesleyan, and one of them in particular, I won't call his name, but he said that we were on a break in a board meeting and he said, well, they called me chief still.

Chief, I understand, I assume, being Southern Baptist, you believe in once saved, always saved. And I said, no, I don't believe that. And oh my gosh, I thought you were going to fall out of the chair. He said, I can't believe you'd say that. I wasn't expecting that. what do you believe? I said, once truly saved, always saved. And he said, well, we believe that.

I said, well, good, you should. You should. Once truly saved, you'll be kept by the preserving or perseverance of the Lord.

But in order to understand the doctrine of perseverance, which we're going to really unfold in the next coming weeks is we must first try to understand what it is not.

[16 : 27] It does not mean that everyone that has prayed some form of a prayer, call it a sinner's prayer or anything else, is saved. It doesn't mean that. It does not mean that everyone who professes faith in Christ or has professed a faith in Christ in the past is saved and secure in Jesus.

I've been wondering when I was going to make this vitally important statement and I think now is as good a time as any. True Christianity is not based upon a profession of faith.

True Christianity is based upon a possession of faith. we possess the faith that God has given us.

Big difference between the two. A lot of people made professions. I've got family members. Diane's got family members. Oh, I took care of that in 1919. Don't bother. I don't want to hear that Jesus

stuff anymore.

I took care of it. Eh, not with that attitude. Additionally, being saved or having eternal life is not guaranteed just because you join a church.

[17 : 41] We know that. Add your name to the church role. Dr. Billy Graham once said the most fertile ground for evangelism is found on the membership roles of churches.

And actually, I think he said it's Baptist churches because he was a Baptist. Fertile grounds for evangelism. A number of years ago, and this actually predates Pastor Mike, although we have done it under him as well and I applaud him for that, the leadership of our church decided we'd go through a process of reviewing and if necessary purging the church roles.

And this was basically with people that we'd not heard from in decades and had no clue where they were at, didn't know how to get a hold of them. Don't even know if they're alive.

And we did it under Dr. McBride and coming forward and Mike, we went through that. We made attempts to contact them. We wanted to know what their preference was.

But many of them had simply disappeared. They were gone. If we'd not done that, we would today have multiple thousands of people on the church role.

[18 : 56] And a lot of them probably dead. church membership, as important as that is, is not the criteria for assurance of salvation. What did the Lord have to say about the identity of His true followers?

And this is really instructive. And quite honestly, this is not a passage we use regularly. But we're going to be really looking at it here and referring back to it.

In the eighth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, the Lord Jesus had this to say. John 8, verse 31-32. So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, listen to this, if you continue in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.

And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. And all of a sudden, we come face to face with a term seldom referred to in any type of evangelistic or witnessing process that I'm aware of.

[20 : 19] And I've looked at a lot of them over the years. And it's this term continuance. I mean, when's the last time anyone ever told you that? We could even refer to it as the doctrine of continuance.

Jesus laid down this truth. He who continues in My Word. So the Lord in this passage has established a criterion by which true disciples might be distinguished from false disciples. That criterion is continuance in the words of Jesus. We find another passage in Matthew. Matthew's Gospel, chapter 10, verse 22.

You will be hated by all for My namesake, but the one who endures to the end will be saved. Wow. And you know, at VOM, we deal with a lot of people that are hated because of their love for Christ. And why are they hated? Because they love Jesus. People hate Jesus.

[21 : 27] They can't get to Him but can get to us. Same criterion was set down by the writer of the book of Hebrews. I wish Lee was here. I would add whoever that was, but that's an inside deal.

Hebrews 4.14, Since then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens. Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Hold on to your confession. Another great passage on continuance is found in John 15 where we read about the vine and the branches.

You remember that? John 15.6, If anyone does not abide in Me, that's continue in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers.

Elsewhere he says he's thrown into the fire. This is a crucial test here as to our eternal security or our perseverance.

[22 : 32] The crucial test is endurance to the end, abiding in Christ and continuing to the end. And remember, the Apostle Paul used that analogy and he said, look, Christianity is a race.

It's a race. And I usually tell people, and it's not a sprint. I told my oldest boy, you know, about the fourth time he got saved, I said, look, it's not a sprint, it's a long distance run.

You've got to pace yourself. And we're waiting for that fifth time now. And, you know, Paul said, Christianity is a race and we must finish the race.

We may cross that finish line bloodied and bowed. Jesus may have to drag us or pick us up and carry us across that finish line.

We've got to finish the race. And believers will finish the race. Every true believer will finish the race. And I need to add a comment here and I've used this so many times.

[23 : 41] You should have it memorized by now. You are not saved because you continue. You continue because you are saved.

Major distinction. You don't get up in the early morning and have a quiet time with the Lord and grunt and groan and strain. I just want to continue today.

Boy, help me to continue. No. You continue because you are saved. Now, does the Bible have anything to say about those who drop out of the race?

Who return to the world? Was it James that talked about the dog returning and the hog returning? What about those that return?

Well, the Bible does say something. They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they'd been of us, they would have continued.

[24 : 39] There's that word. There's continuance. If they'd been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out. that it might become plain that they are not of us.

And you know, Mike Durstman, we can testify and there's others in here, but we all joined around the late 70s, early 80s here. We've had a lot of people just, well, they're gone.

They didn't continue. They didn't, and it's not the grass was greener at Good Shepherd or First Baptist. They just left. They just left. And we see this with increasing frequency.

I've seen it in my own family. Diane's seen it in her family. Diane's seen it in her family too. I've got one more passage and then we'll dismiss, but very popular, very famous.

You've got it memorized. Matthew 7, right at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, starting in verse 21, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

[25 : 47] Okay, Lord, well, who will? The one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. He's going to enter in. On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and cast out demons in Your name and do mighty works in Your name?

And golly, that used to bother me because guys, I don't prophesy. I've never cast out a demon and I don't do mighty works in the name of the Lord.

And then I will declare this is Jesus talking, I will declare to them, I never knew you. Wouldn't that be chilling to hear? A lot of people are going to hear that.

I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand and the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell and great was the fall of it.

[27 : 11] So here we have probably the most frightening passage found anywhere in Holy Scripture. The people referred to here are very active religiously, aren't they? Of course, if you pick up, there's a little thing in there because when the Lord says not everyone's going to enter, it's interesting to me, they say, Lord, did we not do this and did we not?

Wait a minute. Is that salvation? What you've done for the Lord? Someone asked me, what would you do if you stood before Jesus and He wanted to let you into heaven?

Well, I would tell him that I was a Sunday school teacher for 40 years and all of a sudden I was overwhelmed. I said, what am I even thinking? I'd say, if I'm going to be there, it's Your grace, Lord. I have nothing to offer. The only thing I brought to the cross was a bucket full of sin. It took two buckets. Big ones. Big ones. But these guys have done some amazing things and they're very proud of it.

They prophesied, cast out demons, did mighty works, and they are depending on these accomplishments to get them into the kingdom of heaven. Never happens like that.

[28 : 31] It's all of grace. But the key to understanding this portion of Scripture is found in verse 24. And then, everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them, and let me add something here, and continues to do them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Well, what's the rock? Well, of course, the rock spoken of here is Jesus. He's described as the rock, right? But also, it's His Word.

That's also the rock. The only wise man builds his house upon the rock of the words of Jesus Christ.

And let me remind you that those are not just the ones in red letters. Okay? The words of Jesus are found in Genesis 1-1 till the end of Revelation just before you get to the maps.

Once you get to the maps, you've left the inspired words, but till then, that's all the words of Jesus. Every bit of them. I love what Dr. DeHaan used to say.

[29 : 51] Jesus is in every verse. Sometimes out front, sometimes in the shadows, but until you've found Him, you haven't understood that verse. That's a pretty bold statement. Building on the rock is equivalent to obeying God's Word.

Continuing in God's Word with an attitude of obedience. Guys, the only validation that we have that we are saved is a life of obedience.

There's nothing else. Not a time of decision. Anything else. It's obedience. And again, we don't obey so we can be saved.

We obey because we are saved. And such obedience is another example of continuance. The United States