

Doctrine #5- of Perserverance. Part 1

Written by Calvin Fox
Monday, 29 September 2008 20:40 -

In this Series, I have tried to explain, in short and simple outline, that God, in His Sovereignty, before Creation, pre-destined, unconditionally, particular sinners to be members of His Covenant People, the Elect, the Church and to ultimately share in His Glory. He effectively called these people through their hearing of His Word (the Law and the Gospel) and in so doing regenerated them, freeing their will from its bondage to their fallen sin nature and thus enabling them to choose Christ. And then to choose daily to obey Christ as His Disciple.

This begins the process of Salvation [have been saved, am being saved, shall be saved]. There is an order to this process: Regeneration, Faith, Repentance, [Conversion], Union with Christ, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification and Glorification.

Much frustration, failure, disappointment and discouragement with Christians and with the Christian Life comes from failure to know about this process and its stages. And in my experience, almost no laypeople have this knowledge, especially today's young people

Let's go over a few basics more deeply.

Saving faith is not a spiritual feeling. It has an object and content. It involves the mind, heart and will-

1.) I believe in my mind without reservation that the Message about Jesus, that He is the Christ, is true. I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Prophet, Priest and King. His death was a full atonement for my sins.

He has risen and now reigns from heaven over all.

I am convinced that all of this is true

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2.) I want to entrust or commit my heart and life to Jesus as my Prophet, Priest and King.

3.) I have decided to obey and follow Christ, unconditionally.

Repentance is the other side of saving faith. They are inseparable, but faith comes first. Faith gives the reason for repentance. Repentance is not the same as regret or sorrow about sin which could and usually does come before faith. Faith leads the sinner to want to change [his] mind about the direction and purpose of [his] entire sinful life. The Believer turns to living for Jesus from living for self and sin. That is Biblical repentance.

I have decided to turn from sin and living for myself to obey and follow Christ, unconditionally.

This combination of faith and repentance is the Biblical meaning of "Conversion". It is associated most often in the Bible with turning from the worship and service of idols to the worship and service of the true God.

Union with Christ

This essential step is often omitted. Upon Conversion, the Holy Spirit places the convert into a vital relationship with Christ and His Body, the Church and the Holy Spirit enters the inner life of the convert. This is known as the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Everything, all of life, is to be lived out of this reality. Union with Christ is far more central and fundamental to Salvation and the Christian Life than Justification itself. (Check out the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians)

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This union is both forensic and experiential. We have a “legal” standing before God, by virtue of our union with Christ. “In Christ”, not only do we have the gift of forgiveness (release from the guilt and consequences of sins committed), we also have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. Inasmuch as we are in vital union with Christ, God sees us as clothed in His righteousness. In His Son, God accepts us as his sons (children). He adopts us and we have all the privileges and responsibilities thereof. As human beings, we bear the image of God. That was our identity: persons, created to be like God. We are still that, plus now we are the children of God as well.

This is our identity now in Christ: redeemed human beings. That means redemption includes our human faculties of rationality, creativity, morality, communality and spirituality. (How could we be redeemed human beings, if our human faculties are not included?) We said earlier that Death (the consequence of the Fall) is separation and alienation within ourselves from God, from each other, from the rest of Creation and ultimately from our physical bodies.

In Christ, we have Life.

Redemption means that these dimensions of Death are reversed. Our bodies, however, along with the rest of creation, will have to wait for the Second Coming and Resurrection for their redemption.

Between now and then, we continue to deal with the “Curse” in our daily lives.

In Christ we are new creatures or, if you prefer, in Christ we are the New Creation, the New Humanity! We are ready to fully engage the Cultural Mandate. We are no longer separated and alienated and the process of healing all those fractured relationships is now possible. That possibility, of realizing (actualizing) all of this in practice, is very exciting and challenging for every Christian.

The good news is this process, once begun, is irreversible.

That should be obvious.

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It is not possible for it to be undone.

The regenerated can not become un-regenerated.

The born again can not become unborn.

God's work of Grace can not and will not be derailed.

He sees to it that the Believer's faith and sanctification will persevere all the way into Glory.

The Believer is eternally, unconditionally secure.