TITLE: The Next Step!

TEXT: Lev. 11:44; Phil. 3:12-15; Is. 42:6-7; Lu. 4:18-21; Gal. 5:1; 1 Jn. 3:1-10; 2 Co. 5:17; Ro. 8:1-4

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about the next step. You may be thinking the next step after what? Or what is the 1st step.

 The first step is salvation. Coming to that place in our life where we are convicted by the Holy Spirit for our sin. Out of Godly sorrow for our sinning against an all holy all righteous God we humbly embrace Gods offer of forgiveness through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. With a repentant heart ask Christ to forgive us our sins and then invite Him into our heart to become the Lord and savior of our life. This is our salvation experience.

 Salvation is often a process until it happens or is fulfilled in our life. Once we ask Jesus into our lives as Lord and Savior then the process of salvation ends. What I mean by that is once it is done it need not be continually done over and over again. When we by faith accept and embrace Gods means of forgiveness and atonement for our sin, once we truly make Jesus the Lord of our life, we are immediately saved.

 Salvation then ceases to be a process. Once we embrace it, it then becomes an established thing. And that is the first step.

 But there is a next step that must follow that is more processional in nature, and that is what I want to talk about this morning.

After salvation the next step in our complete redemption is Sanctification.

 Sanctification means to be “set apart unto God”.

 It is sanctification that is being talked about when God says in:

 **Leviticus 11:44 (NIV)** **44I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy….**

**Sanctify yourselves and be Holy because I am holy say-eth the Lord!**

***Sanctify= kaw-dash'***

**to *be* (causatively *make*, *pronounce* or *observe* as) *clean* (ceremonially or morally):— consecrate, dedicate, hallow, (be, holy, keep holy, prepare holy , proclaim holy , purify, sanctify one self),**

The word used for Holy here is:

***kaw-doshe',* *kaw-doshe' (same root as sanctify)***

***sacred* (ceremonially or morally); *God* (by eminence), an *angel*, a *saint*, a *sanctuary:—*holy (One).**

So what God is calling us to be is Holy just as He is Holy. Our calling, after we are saved, is to be dedicated to God and strive to become as He is.

This is not a onetime happening as salvation is, but it is a continuing process.

This is what The Apostle Paul is talking about when he says in:

**Philippians 3:12 - 15 (NIV)** **12Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.** **13Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,****14I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.** **15All of us who are mature should take such a view of things.**

 Paul is not talking about salvation as a stand-alone thing here but he is talking about the process of sanctification that was meant to follow it.

**12Not that I have already obtained all this..**

What is the “this” that Paul is talking about?

Paul was already saved so what was the “this” that he had not yet completely obtained? The “this” was Sanctification!

He says: **nor have I already been made perfect!**

 If Paul was saved and salvation was a whole work within itself with nothing to follow, then why would he say that he has not yet been made perfect?

 He said it because perfection, like sanctification, being holy just as God is Holy, is not a onetime happening but it is a continual process.

 So Paul says: **(so) I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.**

Why did Jesus take hold of him? Why does Jesus take hold of us? To deliver us from sin! Jesus came to set the captive free! He came to deliver us from sin!

 Not just past sin through forgiveness, but, just as importantly, from future sinning by empowering us to overcome and conquer sin in our own life.

Paul says:

**13Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.**

The “it” Paul is referring to here is not salvation but sanctification!

**But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,  14I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

The goal Paul is talking about here is sanctification, being made holy as God is Holy. The prize to be won is an eternity with Christ in heaven.

Too many people today see Gods completed act of redemption as just a one step process and it is not.

Salvation is where it all starts but our salvation is not the sum of the whole in regards to our complete redemption.

 Salvation is the starting block, sanctification is the race we are to run and the end goal is eternity with Christ in heaven.

 Again, too many professing Christians lay the claim to salvation but have went no further. They have looked upon salvation as the end of the means instead of the means to get to the end!

 And that is not just dangerous territory to be in but it is also unscriptural and shows a lack of any kind of spiritual maturity!

Paul says: **15All of us who are mature should take such a view of things.**

 In other words if you do not take this view then you are not mature!

 If Christ died on the cross just to take away past sin then what He did on the cross was an incomplete work!

 Scripture says that Jesus came to set the captive free!

 The Lord God in speaking about the coming of Christ says:

 **Isaiah 42:6 - 7 (NIV) 6“I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness;  I will take hold of your hand.  I will keep you and will make you  to be a covenant for the people  and a light for the Gentiles, 7to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison  and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.**

Jesus one day is speaking in the synagogue and picks up a scroll and reads from Isaiah 61:1

 **Luke 4:18 - 21 (NIV)** **18“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.  He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,** **19to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”**

**20Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him,** **21and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”**

**1The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,     because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.  He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  to proclaim freedom for the captives  and release from darkness for the prisoners…**

**Galatians 5:1 (NIV) 1It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**

 Jesus came to set us free from all sin! Past, present and future!

 Free us from past sin through forgiveness and free us from present and future sin through giving us the ability to go and sin no more.

 We see this beautifully illustrated in Jesus encounter with the woman who was brought before him who had been caught in the act of adultery….

 After her accusers who had brought her to Jesus had been convicted by the words of the Lord, when he said “let he who is without sin cast the first stone”, and they all dropped their rocks and left, what is it that Jesus says to the woman?

**Neither do I condemn you, now go and sin no more!**

 Jesus just illustrated what we are talking about here!

Neither do I condemn you= Forgiveness for past sin..

Now go and sin no more= deliverance from present and future sinning..

 The ability to do the second part came after He sent the Comforter, the Holy Spirit to indwell the believer’s heart.

Turn with me to:
 **1 John 3:1 - 10 (NIV)** **1How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.**

**2Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.** **3Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.** **4Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.** **5But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.** **6No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.** **7Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.** **8He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.** **9No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.**

**10This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.**

This is pretty powerful stuff here!

Listen again to what the Word of God says…

**3Everyone who has this hope in him** ( the hope of salvation) **purifies himself, just as he is pure.**

**Jesus… appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.**

 **6No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. 7Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.**

 **8He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.  9No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.**

 Do you notice a repetitious phrase that Paul uses here? The phrase, “in Him”?

**3Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.**

**In him is no sin.  6No one who lives in him. 9No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.**

 This phrase “in Him” is a very important phrase in Biblical terminology.

 When the phrase “in Him” or “In Christ” is used it speaks of a very specific thing. It has a very specific meaning.

 It means to take up a fixed position in Christ Jesus!

 And there are some wonderful promises attached to it if we do take up a fixed position in Christ. If we truly place ourselves “in Him”….

**2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)** **17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

**Romans 8:1 - 2 (NIV) 1Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.**

The term “in Christ” is not just speaking of initial salvation. It is not speaking of those who have said the sinner’s prayer, but it is speaking about those who subsequent to that have determined to live sanctified lives…

EXAMPLE: let’s say that as a Christian that you intentionally sin. You get your hand caught in the cookie jar and say that you were just checking the cookie level in the jar when what you were really planning to do was eat a cookie….

At that time you were not “in Christ”.

In your mind you lust after someone other than your spouse then you have not placed yourself “in Christ”.

You steal from your employer and you have not placed yourself “in Christ”.

You transgress against any of the Laws of God and you have not placed yourself “in Christ”..

Now if we are not “in Christ” then where are we?

We are outside of Christ!

Listen to this Scripture again….

**And in him is no sin.  6No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. 7Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.  8He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.  9No one who is born of God will continue to sin.**

 I get so tired of hearing Christians say; well even though I am a Christian I will always sin because I have a sinful nature…

Do you know what we are really saying when we take such a view of things?

That what Christ did on the cross was not enough!

 It was an incomplete work! Jesus didn’t really come to set the captive free!

Folks, if you feel that you have just been forgiven past sin and have not been empowered to actually stop sinning then something is seriously wrong with your theology.

 That kind of thinking is an insult to Christ!

It is like saying Jesus what you did on Calgary’s cross wasn’t quite good enough!

 **Romans 8:1 - 4 (NIV) 1Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,  2because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.  3For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature,God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.And so he condemned sin in sinful man,  4in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.**

Let me break this down for you….

 The law of the Spirit of life is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in our life..

 The law of sin and deathis our carnal or sinful nature…

 The law is the law of God, the Ten Commandments and all subsequent Laws of God….

What the law was powerless to do was give us the ability to keep the law.

The law was just intended to be a mirror that we could look into to see that we are lawbreakers!

So, what the law was powerless to do (give us the ability to keep it) in that it was weakened by our sinful natures, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering and so He judged sin in sinful man…CATCH THIS….In order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us who do not live according to our sinful nature but who live according to the Spirit.

 What this is saying is that what Christ did on Calvary’s cross was a complete work!

 It is telling us that Jesus not only came to deliver us from past sin but also from present and future sinning!

He delivers us from past sin through His wonderful act of forgiveness, and he delivers us from present and future sin by giving us the ability through His indwelling presence in our live to actually go and sin no more.

 We place ourselves ‘In Him” when we live our lives according to the direction that His Holy Spirit leads us and stop living our lives doing what our sinful natures desire.

 That process of yielding our lives to the Holy Spirits direction is the next step after salvation. It is how we go on to sanctification.

 Living a life totally free from the bondage and oppression of sin is not just now possible but it is what is expected of us as a child of God.

Try This:

 Pick a day and when you get up in the morning determine to go through the day asking yourself the question WWJD in any and every situation of the day…

From the moment you wake up until you go to sleep that night in every situation throughout your day ask yourself what Jesus would do if He were living my life today and then do as you know Jesus would do….

 If you are honest with yourself in the task I will guarantee that you will make it through the entire day without sinning.

 Do the same thing the next day and you will get through that day also without sinning.

 Be diligent to do it every day for an entire month and you will go a whole month without sinning.

God would never ask us to do the impossible!

Jesus would not have told the woman caught in adultery to go and sin no more if she had no hope of doing it!

God would not have commanded us to be Holy as he is Holy if He had not first made that possible!

He made it possible through a life committed to Christ!

 He made it possible as we truly place ourselves and remain “in Him”!

 **For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by our sinful nature God did by sending his son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering and so he condemned sin in sinful man in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us who do not liver according to our sinful natures but who live by the Spirit!**

This morning are you living your life “In Him”?

Are you allowing Him to finish His complete work of salvation within your life?

 Have you moved on to the next step? The step of sanctification? Of striving to be Holy as He is Holy? Striving to become more and more like Jesus?

For it is to this that each of us has been called…