

Gospel and Holiness of God—2 (Hallowed be Your Name)

Outline

1. Gospel and Hallowed be Your Name
2. Meaning and Importance of Hallowed be Your Name
3. Lord's Prayer and Hallowed be Your Name

1. Gospel and Hallowed be Your Name

The O. T. Hebrew word for holy is "**qadash**", and the N. T. Greek is "**hagias**".
Both

mean to be cut and separated far above. When the Bible says God is holy, it

means

God is **far above and beyond** anything in creation, including man, whom He created

in His image. The Bible says, "*His Name is holy*" (Isa 57:15, Luke 1:49). None is comparable to Him. We may have a list of holy people or angels we respect. God is not on that list because He is far above and beyond the list of any created being. No one exists in His category. (1 Sam 2:2 "*There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you*).

When you think God is so far above and beyond sinful man, how can we be reconciled to Him and draw near? **We cannot**. But the good news, **the gospel**, is that the Son of God came down to earth in Jesus Christ to pay our penalty for sin and reconcile us to God—by His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead.

When Jesus knew His hour for His death was drawing near, He prayed in John 12:27-29 "*Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28 **Father,***

glorify

***your Name!**"* Then a voice came from heaven, "*I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.*" 29 *The crowd there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.*

We know, "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*" (1 Tim 1:15). But what does our salvation ultimately mean? To save us from hell and go to heaven? Is that all? It means as Jesus said in John 12:27-28, "*It was for this very reason I came to this hour. **Father, glorify your name!**"*" We will study this more in the next paragraph.

2. Meaning of Hallowed be Your Name.

The Greek word *hagiazō*, used for "**hallowed**", is translated almost everywhere in the New Testament as *sanctified*. "*Sanctified be Your Name*". We will better

understand its meaning when we refer to the other places in the Bible that use the word "sanctified" concerning God.

(i) Num 20:12 *But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honour me as holy (sanctified) in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."* (concerning Moses striking the rock instead of speaking to it as God commanded him).

So, **trust or believe the Lord** will honour His Name as holy (sanctified). Do our lives demonstrate that we trust God in good times and in bad? Or do worry, frustration, complaining, and arguing dominate our lives?

(ii) Isa 8:12-13 *Do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. 13 The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy (sanctified); he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread. Fear of the Lord, more than fear of what man says, will honour God as holy (sanctified). Are we more concerned about what people will say or what God will say when we make choices in our life?*

(iii) Lev 22:31-32 *"Keep my commands and follow them. I am the Lord. 32 Do not profane my holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites".* **Obedience** to God's commands will acknowledge God as holy (sanctified). A life of obedience will always glorify God.

(iv) Lev 10:1-3 *Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. 2 And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. 3 Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord has said, 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'"*

We can see that **sanctified (hallowed) is the same as glorified.**

"Father, glorify Your Name" means the same as "Father, hallowed be Your Name".

This prayer is the principle that Jesus lived by and died by. (John 7:18 *Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him....* John 8:29 *The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.*)

Our principle in life should also be to live and die for the Father's Name to be hallowed (glorified). **To glorify God means to feel, think, speak and act in ways that reflect and give evidence of God's holiness, greatness, mercy, love and all**

His perfections. Our heart and entire life must be like a mirror that reflects the Father's glory to God and the world. Of course, to start with, we must be born again. And then increasingly yield to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit through reading the Bible, prayer and church relationships. But the main idea is to "watch and guard your heart for everything you do flows from it" (Prov 4:23). No worship, adoration, or obedience can flow from a heart that has no regard for God's Name. And how we respect His Name accurately indicates the state of our heart concerning our attitude towards God.

PRAYER: *Father, cause Your holy Name to be hallowed (glorified) in Your Church and my life, worthy of our trust, worthy of our obedience, treated with reverence and fear, and glorified by the way we live and die, reflecting Your greatness and the beauty of Your holiness.*

3. Lord's Prayer and Hallowed be Your Name

Our Father in heaven—is calling upon God as our Father. Though God created all human beings in His image, we all have turned away from Him. But those that turned to God in repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord can call God "Father" (John 1:12-13). Jesus says others are children of the devil (John 8:41-44). Believers in Jesus are saved from God's wrath (John 3:36) and have access to our Father's tender, loving kindness (1 John 3:1, John 17:26).

John 1:12-13 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

John 8:41-44 You are doing the works of your own father." "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."

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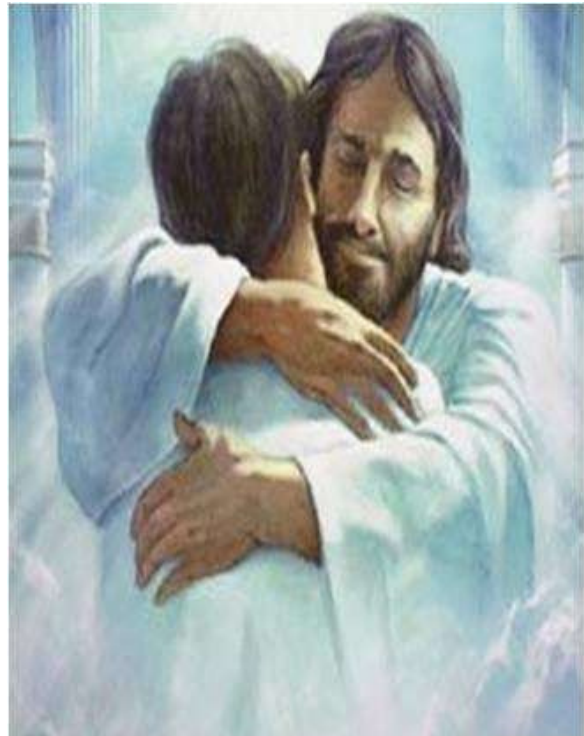
Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. 43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

John 3:1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The world does not know us because it did not know him.

John 17:26 [Jesus says to the Father] I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

Below are two pictures—one of a person who doesn't believe in Jesus as Saviour and Lord and faces God's wrath (John 3:36) and the other, a believer in Jesus, living in God's tender loving mercy, kindness and goodness (John 3:1, 17:26). We must start our prayer with the picture on the right. God is our Father in heaven who loves us dearly.



Once we have addressed God as Father and spent time in His presence and enjoying His love, thanking and praising Him, we pray to Him, two sets of prayers (the following analysis comes from John Piper):

The first set of prayers

- Hallowed be your Name. (Note that it is not addressing God but praying to God)
- Your kingdom come.
- Your will be done.

The second set of prayers

- Give us this day our daily bread.
- Forgive our sins, as we also forgive those who sin against us.

• Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

The second set of prayers is my personal daily needs.

(a) I need daily bread, so I ask for it.

(b) I need forgiveness for my sins because I'm a sinner, so I ask for it.

(c) I need guidance and protection from temptation and Satan, so I ask for it.

And then with (a) fed by bread, (b) forgiven my sins, (c) protected from my sinfulness and the evil one—then I can throw myself into the glorious work of

1. Hallowing God's Name (as it is done in heaven),

2. Seeking and Spreading God's kingdom, and

3. Doing His will as it is done in heaven.

"*Hallowed be Your Name!*" — is not just one of three. It's different from the other two in the first group. If we cannot have high regard for God's Name, we will not be interested in seeking and spreading His Kingdom or doing His will.

"God's Holy Name is God Himself (My Name is holy) is the supreme and absolute treasure in the universe." If you put God's holy Name on the balance of a scale on one side and the whole universe and all it contains on the other side, the

latter

will go up like air! Because His Name is a treasure that beats all other treasures. His Name is incomparable.

Of course, all the other five prayers are essential for this to happen the way

God

wants it to happen.

▪

If His kingdom does not come, His Name will not be hallowed.

▪

If His will is not done, His Name will not be hallowed.

▪

If we don't have food to keep us alive, we cannot hallow His Name on earth.

▪

If God does not forgive us our sins, we perish in hell, where nobody hallows God's Name.

▪

And if God does not protect us from the evil one, we will join in hating God's Name, not hallowing it.

They are all essential. But they are all secondary prayers, not the primary ones.

They are all means, not the end. There is one ultimate end.

▪

God delivers us from evil for the hallowing of God's Name.

▪

God forgives our sins for the hallowing of God's Name.

▪

God gives bread to live for the hallowing of God's Name.

Jesus pushes us up from the secondary aims of God to the ultimate objective of God. All other purposes of God serve this ultimate objective of God: the hallowing, the treasuring, the loving, the glorifying of God's Name — that is, God himself.

Nothing must be more precise and unshakable to us than the purpose of the whole

universe is for the hallowing (glorifying) of God's Name. "The hallowing of God's name is the end, the final goal, of all things."

Make that the purpose of your life.

NOTE: There will be many times when one or more personal needs (bread, forgiveness, deliverance from evil habits) become very important to us. We may get stuck in our praying repeatedly and fervently for these needs. That's OK. Because our heavenly Father is concerned and will answer those prayers. But keeping our focus on the ultimate prayer of hallowing God's Name will give us stability in the long run.

Gospel and Perfecting Holiness — 1 (Overview)

2 Cor 6:16-7:1 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: **"I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."**

¹⁷ "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no
¹⁸ unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 7:1 Since we have **these promises**, dear friends, **let us purify ourselves** from everything that **contaminates** body and spirit, **perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.**

Outline

1. Promises
2. Purification
3. Perfecting Holiness

1. Promises

2 Cor 7:1 **These promises** refer to God's promises in the new covenant relationship with His people. (*I will live with them and walk with them and I will be their God and they will be my people — 2 Cor 6:16*). In general, **covenant language is a three-part formula:**

I will be your God.

You shall be my people.

I will live with you.

It is like a groom telling his bride: I will be your husband — You will be my wife — and I will live with you.

From the time of Abraham, it has always been God's intention to live with His people in a covenant relationship. Lev 26:12 gives the complete general formula for covenants. God says to the Israelites, *"I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people."* (also mentioned partly in Gen 17:7; Exod 6:7, Jer 31:33;

32:38; Zech 8:8). After the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, the heart of man was sinful and was unable to keep the external Law of God. The prophets knew mankind needed a new heart and spirit (Ps 51:5, 10-11; Ezk 36:26-27).

The good news (**gospel**) is that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, rose from the dead and conquered sin, death and disarmed Satan. When we receive Jesus as Saviour and Lord, we enter into the New Covenant with God established by the

precious blood of Jesus. In the New Covenant, God gives a new heart and spirit and writes His law inside our hearts so that we can walk closely with Him. The Holy Spirit resides in us. We become a child of God, and He never stops doing good to us.

Jer 32:38-41 They will be my people, and I will be their God. 39 I will give them

singleness of heart and action so that they will always fear me and that all will then go well for them and for their children after them. 40 I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me so that they will never turn away from me. 41 I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.

2. Purification

Since we have these promises, Paul says, "*Let us purify ourselves* from everything

that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness. "Body and spirit" refer to the whole person — externally and internally. Sins of the body are sexual immorality, drunkenness, laziness, gluttony, and every type of sensual pleasure. Sins of the spirit are jealousy, hatred, bitterness, unforgiveness, anger, revenge, lustful thoughts, gossip, selfish ambition, envy and so on. Paul is asking every individual believer to take action. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we must cleanse our bodies from defilement by yielding to the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Holiness has started in us. It needs perfecting.

3. Perfecting Holiness

2 Cor 7:1 Perfect holiness out of reverence for God.

Perfecting holiness does not mean sinless perfection but a progressive growth in maturity and Christlikeness (sanctification)

(a) God will use all things for perfecting holiness in you,

It would include every encouragement, suffering, discipline and pruning. So, when

you go through suffering, discipline, pruning, and difficulties, do not doubt that God works in you. Trust Him, embrace humility and persevere in your pursuit of holiness. God has not abandoned you.

Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love

him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he

also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Heb 12:10 But God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

John 15:1-2 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he

prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

(b) Perfecting holiness out of reverence for God

1 Peter 1:15-19 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for

it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 17 Since you call on a Father who

judges

each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. 18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or

gold

that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without

blemish

or defect.

- Have reverence for Jesus Christ because His precious blood redeemed you from your empty way of life (vv 18-19). Look at the cross. Behold the Lamb of God.
- Have reverence for your heavenly Father because He is holy and wants you to pursue holiness in your conduct on earth, which is not your final home and in which you are in exile (or passing through as a pilgrim). And reverently fear Him, for He is impartial and will judge your work without favouritism. God will reward you according to your conduct on earth (vv 15-17).

(c) Perfecting holiness for your reward of His presence on earth

You will experience the presence of God in your homes when you are perfecting holiness.

John 14:23 Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father

will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

Gospel and Perfecting Holiness — 2 (Misunderstanding Salvation & Confidence in God)

Many people say they are Christians by faith in the gospel but do not pursue holiness. They misunderstand salvation, misunderstand confidence in God and misunderstand grace. Here we will look at misunderstanding salvation and confidence in God.

Outline

1. Misunderstanding Salvation.
2. Misunderstanding Confidence in God

1. Misunderstanding Salvation

Illustration: A pig is an unclean animal happy to play in a filthy ditch. A sheep is different. It is a clean animal. If a sheep slips into a filthy ditch, it will try to climb out; if it can't, it will cry out loudly for help.

The overall teaching of the New Testament is this: If a person claims to be a Christian but goes on living in sin, and it is their pattern of life, and they do not make war on their sin, but instead, they are at peace with it — they have no

proof

to believe they are Christian.

So, does it mean that they can lose their salvation? No. It means that their lives show they never had salvation in the first place., even though they looked like they had it for a time. In other words, those who are genuinely in Christ persevere in faith, fight their sin, and grow in holiness (sheep), but those who stay in sin never were in Christ in the first place (pig).

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

So, does it mean that maintaining our salvation depends finally on us? No.

The

New Testament teaches that God keeps us **saved through sanctification**. We are born again only by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But once we are truly born again, the Holy Spirit dwells in us and gives us a hunger for holiness (sanctification). That's how God keeps us saved--through sanctification. Sanctification is a progressive war on sin, progressive growth in holiness, hating evil, and pursuing righteousness.

*2 Thess 2:13 God chose you as firstfruits to be saved **through** the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth*

Concerning a Christian's desire for holiness (sanctification), Jonathan Edwards said, "It is as much the nature of one that is spiritually newborn, to thirst after growth in holiness, as it is the nature of a newborn babe, to thirst after the mother's breast." The process is progressive. Sanctification is ultimately fulfilled in glorification. (When God sets us apart from sin's presence and possibility.).

In one sense, sanctification has nothing to do with the new birth (regeneration and justification), yet it has everything to do with demonstrating that one has experienced the new birth. Sanctification alone doesn't save, but there is no salvation without it. Paul wrote in 2 Thess 2:13 *God chose you as first fruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.*

The experience of salvation begins with the new birth (regeneration and justification), continues with sanctification, and is fulfilled in glorification. All who are regenerated are being sanctified. All who are being sanctified will eventually be glorified. While we may distinguish between regeneration-justification, sanctification, and glorification, we must not separate the terms. In other words, the person who experiences one will experience them all (in the order listed).

The old salvation formula is — "We have been saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved". Regeneration is the first part of salvation (we have been saved), and sanctification is the second part ("we are being saved"). And without sanctification, there is no "we will be saved." For as Heb. 12:14 teaches, "Pursue peace with all men, and the holiness (sanctification) without which no one will see the Lord." (Glorification).

How do I "Pursue the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord"?

Unlike regeneration, there is much **Spirit-filled human effort** involved in sanctification. Phil 2:13 "It is God who is at work in you, to will and to act according to His good purpose". We are commanded in 1 Tim. 4:7, "Train yourself to be godly." (Another verse like this is Rom 12:1). It's both "God is at work in you" as well as "train yourself to be godly" bare y the power of the Holy Spirit.

God uses means of grace to sanctify us, chief of which are the personal and church spiritual disciplines.

- Personal practice includes reading and meditating on God's Word, prayer, private worship, fasting, silence and solitude, etc.

- Church practice includes public worship, hearing God's Word preached, baptism and holy communion, corporate prayer, fellowship, etc.

2. **Misunderstanding Confidence in God**

In our pursuit of holiness, our confidence is not in ourselves but in God. As Paul put it in Phil 1:6, *"Being confident of this, that he [God] who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."*

When Paul says, *"Being confident"*, he is entirely convinced of the truth of what he said. It was based on the fact that it had begun by God. Therefore, it would be permanent. Had the beginning been based on any human effort, either Paul himself or the people to whom Paul was preaching, he would not be confident. There is no confidence that what a man does today will do the same thing tomorrow. If the perseverance of the Christian depended wholly on himself, there could be no assurance that he would ever reach heaven. Man is too weak; too changeable; too ready to be led astray; too easily tempted to sin. So, Paul's confidence is solely based on God's faithfulness.

The words *"carry it on to completion"* means God, who began His good work in a believer, would perfect it. There is no reason why God should start such a work in a believer and then abandon it. It cannot be because God has no power to complete it, because there are more enemies to be overcome than God had supposed, because there are difficulties He did not foresee, or because of any other reason that the work should be completed. Why, then, should he abandon it? God never leaves anything unfinished. He never begins something and then abandons it. This is the basis for Paul's confidence. God will complete His work in believers. *Rom 8:30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

"Until the day of Jesus Christ", when the Lord Jesus will appear to receive his people to himself—the day of judgment.

There is a story about an artist who conceived a great picture that he meant to be his life's masterpiece. He was working on a large canvas, putting in some grey paints to compose the background. At that time, his friend came in. The artist asked his friend, "What do you think?" His friend laughed and replied, "Why, to be frank, I don't think much of it. I can see only grey, dull paint." "Ah,"

replied the artist, "you cannot see what will be there. But I can. I intend it to be the greatest work I have ever done."

So it is with God our Father. He sees in **every believer** that which will be fully brought out at the judgment seat of Christ, and He is working now toward that end. We too often see the present imperfection and forget the future glory.

But on the day of Jesus Christ, every believer will be conformed to the image of Jesus. So, don't look down on others and don't look down on yourself when you

see

our imperfections. We are all work in progress. And it should motivate us with eager enthusiasm to see the fulfilment of our perfection.

How should we respond to such a great assurance that God gives us? I refer to Spurgeon: He said, "*If any of you should be well assured that, in a certain line of business, you would make a vast sum of money, would that confidence lead you to refuse that business, would it lead you to lie in bed all day, or to desert your post altogether? No, the assurance of great business success would make you work hard with great enthusiasm. I will give you an incident of myself: it happened*

to me when I was about ten years old. Mr Richard Knill, a good Christian worker, felt moved, I know not why, to take me on his knee at my grandfather's house and to utter words like these, which our whole family treasured, especially myself,

"This child," said he, "will preach the gospel, and he will preach it to the largest congregations of our times."

I believed his prophecy, and my standing here today is partly due to such belief. It did not stop me from working hard to educate myself. But the prophecy

helped forward its fulfilment, and I prayed, sought, and worked hard, always

with

this prophecy before me, that one day I should preach the gospel.

*Similarly, the belief that we shall one day be perfect never stops any true believer from hard work, but is the **highest possible incentive** to make a man struggle against the corruptions of the flesh and seek to persevere according to God's promise".*

Read Rom 8:28-39, especially note Rom 8:37 "*In all things; we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*".

But does it mean we have no responsibility and it's all God's work? No, says Spurgeon. He says, "*God's protection and preservation of Christians do not supersede human responsibility.*" A more straightforward way to say it might be:

• Being saved by God does not mean you can be lazy or stop having faith.

*Heb 11:6 And **without faith**, it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Rom 1:17 "The righteous will live by faith.

Gospel and Perfecting Holiness — 3 (Misunderstanding Grace)

Outline

1. The false concept of grace
2. The true concept of grace

1. The false concept of grace

The false concept begins correctly but needs to go further. It has a measure of truth but needs more of it. It is very dangerous because it has the potential to produce bad fruit. If you ask Christians to define grace, many will say the following:

- Grace is undeserved or unmerited favour from God to believers.
- Grace is God's way of giving us salvation through Christ.

Though correct, these definitions do not progress to the full potential of God's grace. It often ends in serious error because **grace can be a big cover-up** over rebellion and wilful disobedience to God's revealed will. Many Christians are stuck in wilful disobedience and think they are covered by grace. If you ask them about their Christian walk, they will say they are not living as they should, but they carry on by the grace of God.

A classic case concerns the modern fashion of many unmarried couples who live with each other, profess they are Christians and attend church. Terry Virgo, a founding pastor of the New Frontier Group of Churches, had given an example of a pastor who asked Terry whether he should treat these couples under the Law or grace. In the pastor's mind, the Law forbids the lifestyle of such couples. Still, he thinks grace permits a big cover-up of their wilful disobedience because both man and woman were professing Christians. That pastor is in serious error because he should realise **grace sets a higher standard than the Law**.

Grace sets a higher standard than the Law.

Consider *Matt 5: 21-22, 27-28*. The first part of the couplet quotes the Law, which came from Moses, but Jesus quotes the second part, from whom came grace and truth (*John 1:14, 17*). Consider the following:

v21: "Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment" (Law)

v22: "But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment" (Jesus' standard of grace).

v27: "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'" (Law)

v28: *But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Jesus' standard of grace).*

So, you can see that Jesus' standard of grace is much higher than the external standard of the Law. **Why is grace the higher standard? — It empowers you to perfect holiness in your life and not live a hypocritical life of external forms. If you do not use the full potential of grace, especially grace that leads to holiness, it will not produce the fruit God has in store for you. And God will**

judge

you by your fruit. Today there are so many Christians in Bible-believing churches living in wilful sin, thinking that the grace of God covers them. Their thinking is wrong. They live by the false concept of grace — that grace is the big cover-up of their wilful disobedience.

God judges us by our work/fruit.

1 Peter 1:17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

As Evangelical Christians, we believe in the Gospel. We know that we are saved by God's gift of grace through faith and not by works so that no one can boast (*Eph 2:8-9*). If we are truly saved by faith, then we are justified and receive the righteousness of God within us (*2 Cor 5:21*). This righteousness of God comes with a new heart and a new spirit within us that causes us to walk in the ways of God (*Ezk 36:26-27*) — in other words, we will bear the good fruit of holiness. Furthermore, we become a child of God, and we can call God "Abba Father". But your heavenly Father is also your judge. He is impartial. He will judge your work done on earth and the fruit of your life on earth, and you will be rewarded accordingly.

Some people make the sinner's prayer, but their lives don't change at all. There is no transformation. They are not born again. They are not Christians. James says the evidence that a person is genuinely a Christian saved by faith is when his lifestyle shows it (*James 2:19*). But if a person continuously bears bad fruit, then one wonders whether that person is truly a Christian.

2. The true concept of grace

When we have faith in God's grace that comes through Jesus Christ, we are open to God's power which is "**Divine power for everything we need for life and godliness**" (*2 Pet 1:3*).

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Therefore, we have the grace to enable us to live beyond our ability for everything we need for life and godliness. Titus 2:11-14 are powerful verses that concisely describe the effect grace should have on believers in the gospel. Grace is more than giving instruction. When we read or hear God's word, then grace uses God's word to "teach us", which includes encouraging, training, correcting, and disciplining us to reject ungodliness and leading us to holier living. (2 Tim 3:16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*).

Grace is certainly not a big-cover-up. If we are not producing the fruit of perfecting holiness, we use God's grace in vain.

But, with God's grace empowering us and training us, we can genuinely say, "**Thanks be to God who *always leads us in His triumph in Christ***" (2Cor 2:14). Therefore, with His grace, we will stand in victory over darkness in every sphere of personal activity — whether it is in our personal life (purity) social life (relationship with others) and in our business life (integrity when dealing with money). If we are stuck in wilful sin and make little effort to be free, either we are not born again or receive God's grace in vain. Paul urges (or pleads) with the Christians in Corinth that they should not receive God's grace in vain. It will grieve God.

2 Cor 6:1 *As God's fellow workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.*

Gospel and Union with Christ — 1 (Overview)

Outline

1. What we mean by Union with Christ
2. What we mean by a Fruitful Spiritual Life
3. Why we can bear fruit and how it confirms we are born again
4. What about the branches that don't bear fruit?

(Read John 15:1-11)

1. What we mean by Union with Christ

It means that we have an organic union with Christ, just like a branch has an organic union with a stem.

Before we are born again, we are organically in union with the world. The world shapes our values, and it shapes the way we think and live. It shapes our hearts.

We belong to the world, and **the world loves us as its own** (John 15:19). The world is perishing, and we were perishing with the world.

But once we believed the gospel and accepted Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, God uprooted us from the world, replanting us into a new stem—Jesus. We no longer belong to the world. The world hates us as it hated Jesus. But now, **Jesus loves us as His own** (John 13:1). He loves us as much as the Father loves Him (John 15:9). In John 15, Jesus gives us a teaching about our organic union with Him, like a branch of a vine has an organic union with the stem.

John 15:19-20 "If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."

John 13:1 It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

John 15:9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me, you can do nothing."

When we are organically in union with Jesus, we will bear much fruit (John 15:5).

2. What we mean by a Fruitful Spiritual Life

By a fruitful spiritual life, we mean to live a life that exhibits the character of Jesus and be involved in His mission (to make disciples of Jesus). In other words, to be progressively transformed into His likeness (2 Cor 3:18) and to walk as He

did (1 John 2:6). We could describe it as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), the fruit of righteousness or holiness (Phil 1:11), the fruit of praise (Heb 13:15), evangelism and making disciples that includes prayer (Mark 16:15, Matt 28:19).

1 John 2:6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

2 Cor 3:18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness and self-control. Against such things, there is no law.

Phil 1:11 Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.

Heb 13:15, Through Jesus, let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that confess his name.

Mark 16:15 Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.

Matt 28:19 Go and make disciples of all nations.

3. Why we can bear fruit and how it confirms we are born again

2 Peter 1:3-11 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his glory and goodness.

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Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge,

self-

control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 If you

possess

these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9, But if anyone

does

not have them, he is nearsighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. 10 Therefore, my brothers, be eager to make

your

calling and election sure. If you do these things, you will never fall, 11, and you

- His Divine nature **permanently and actively resides** in our human nature.

Can you imagine—God's Divine nature permanently residing in a believer? This is superior to somebody influencing you, whether a parent, teacher or friend. And however great evil you may have experienced, God's nature in you can overcome it because the One (Jesus) who is in you is greater than the one (Satan) who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

You will bear fruit through all these beautiful things—starting with your **faith** and ending with your **love** for God and others (2 Pet 1:5-7).

But notice 2 Pet 1:9-10 *But, if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. 10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.*

Our faith must go beyond what we mentally believe. It must become a central and active part of all we do, resulting in a transformed life of love, obedience and prayer. We develop the virtues listed in 2 Pet 1:5-7 out of gratitude for what Christ has done for us. People who claim to be saved but continue to act the way they did before becoming believers do not understand saving faith or what God has done for them. If we do not show a transformed life and bear the fruit listed in 2 Pet 1:5-7, we may still not be saved.

Therefore, it means that **when you bear fruit, it confirms that you are a branch** connected to the vine's stem. The fruit does not make you born again, it does not save you, but the fruit is the result that you are born again and saved. The fruit confirms you are born again. Without fruit, there is no assurance that you are saved, even though you may regularly attend church. This explanation is also given in John 15:2, 5 below.

4. What about the branches that don't bear fruit?

*John 15:2-6 He (Father God) cuts off every branch **in me** that bears no fruit...5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit... 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.*

Can we be genuinely born of God and lose our salvation? No, we cannot lose our salvation. Jesus says in the following verses:

John 10:28-29 "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

John 6:37-39 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent

me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

Jesus emphasises this: "When I choose someone for Myself, and they hear My voice, and I take them to be My sheep and My children, that never changes. They will always be My sheep and My children, and I will raise them up on the last day."

But what about the branches Jesus says were "in Me" (John 15:2) and broken off by the Father? I believe they are nominal Christians who did not have saving faith.

Therefore, they had no vital union with the stem and could show no fruit of Christlikeness in their life. The words "in Me" are used only to complete the example of vine and branches. The New Testament gives many examples of nominal branches that appear connected to the vine.

John 8:30-31,37, "As he (Jesus) was saying these things, many believed in him." Then Jesus says to "the Jews who had believed him, 'If you abide in my word, you

are truly my disciples.'" Later in 8:37, Jesus says to these very so-called believers, "I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you" (8:37). So, this was a "belief" that provided a kind of attachment to Jesus, but not a true one.

John 6:64 Yet some of you do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him (Judas)

John 6:66 From this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. This occurred after Jesus spoke about eating His flesh and drinking

His blood. They had been a kind of *disciple* and kind of *believer*. But they had fallen away.

Summarising: There are nominal disciples and "true disciples." There are nominal believers, and there are "true believers." There are nominal branches and "true branches". **All the nominal ones are not saved, and they will perish.**