



THE THEOLOGY OF BIBLICAL COUNSELLING

**GSM COUNSELLING COURSE
SECTION 2**

THE THEOLOGY OF BIBLICAL COUNSELLING

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Outline:

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1) INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

1. Definition

Theology ... is the discovery, systematizing, and presentation of the truths about God.
(Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 13)

2. Controlling Principle

Theology matters in daily life because we live what we believe. This is why the Puritan William Perkins called theology "the science of living blessedly forever."

3. The Importance Of Theology

Millard Erickson:

Theology is important because correct doctrinal beliefs are essential to the relationship between the believer and God It is not sufficient to have a warm, positive, affirming feeling towards Jesus. One must have correct understanding and belief. (Christian Theology, 28)

4. The Importance Of Theology To Counselling

Heath Lambert:

Counselors may understand that counseling is a theological task or they may not. They may be good theologians or bad, ones, but make no mistake: they are

theologians who are neck deep in a theological enterprise. (The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams, 21)

Point:

Counseling is never atheological.

Rich Ganz:

Counseling cannot operate apart from both parties' view of God, humanity, and the universe. (PsychoBabble, 44)

Robert Smith:

Since the basis of nearly every counseling problem is a doctrinal problem, a correct understanding of theology is essential for the biblical counselor. (in MacArthur and Mack, Introduction to Biblical Counseling, 146)

Jay Adams:

It is not possible (even for an unbeliever) to do counseling that is really untheological. All counseling, by its very nature ... implies theological commitments by the counselor. He simply cannot become involved in the attempt to change beliefs, values, attitudes, relationships and behavior without wading neck deep in theological waters. (A Theology of Christian Counseling, 14)

Counseling ... puts God at the center; it doesn't unnaturally tack Him on to the end. God is its goal. (46)

Point:

Counseling is an inherently theological exercise in which a knowledge of God, His ways, and His truth are essential. Therefore, biblical counsellors must work hard to expand and sustain their theological knowledge.

2) DIFFERENT WAYS OF DOING THEOLOGY

Different Christians or theological traditions "do theology" in different ways.

The Variety Of Options:

1. Personal, Unstudied Opinion

This is exactly how most counselees shape their theology. It's a combination of Sunday-school Bible knowledge, worldly truisms, emotion-driven conjectures, and personal opinions. Since theology is the most basic

component of the world view that shapes how a person lives, is it any wonder that counselees are in trouble when they employ such a haphazard, unstudied, non-analytical approach to theology?

2. Philosophical Reasoning

While often erudite and logical, theology of this nature is also highly speculative, since it is built on philosophical abstractions rather than on biblical exegesis.

Point:

We don't do our theology by staring off into the air and performing logical gymnastics; we do our theology by looking down at the Bible and interpreting the text.

3. The System Is King

A system of theology (Calvinism, Arminianism, Keswick or Pentecostal second-blessing, etc.) is assumed, and any verses observed are fit into that preselected system. Verses that don't fit the system are either twisted or ignored.

Evaluation:

This approach appears safe enough if the preselected theological system is fundamentally sound. However, deciding what you believe and then coming to the Bible to prove it is how the cults do theology. We should never imitate that methodology.

Jl Packer:

*... the biblical writer cannot be assumed to have had before his mind the exegete's own theological system! ("Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority," in *Themelios*, Autumn 1975, 131)*

4. History Is King

If John Calvin or the Westminster divines said it, it must be true!

Observation:

While historical theology has an important role, and while we should have a high regard for the great theologians and historical creeds of the church, we do not do theology primarily by studying the words of fallible men. We do theology by studying the words of the infallible God.

5. Christianising Worldly Systems

This is the error of the integrationists, as they futilely try to "Christianise" the inherently anti-Christian systems of Freud, Rogers, and so on. In short, unbelievers make bad theological mentors. Therefore, we should never do theology by trying to bend worldly systems to the Bible or by trying to bend the Bible to worldly systems.

6. Exegetical Theology

This is the approach we will take in this class.

You carefully build your view of God, man, the world, and the relationships between them *from the Scripture* in a step-by-step, demonstrable manner. You do that by laying all the verses on a certain subject side by side, and then, rightly interpreting each one, you assemble what they say into a systematic expression of God's mind on that matter.

Wayne Grudem:

Only Scripture has the final authority to define what we are to believe. (Systematic Theology, 22)

Applied to counselling:

... a Christian counselor (like a Christian preacher) must understand all that the Scriptures say on a given topic in order to give fully biblical direction to their counselees. (Jay Adams, A Theology of Christian Counseling, 12)

A theology of *everything*:

The scary truth is, a biblical counsellor must have a theology of *everything*. In counselling, you'll be asked about everything from Roman Catholic absolution to the signs of the zodiac. To help your counselees, you either need to know the answer or to be ready to find the answer.

3) THEOLOGICAL PROCEDURE

1. Start By Studying The Texts That Speak Directly To Your Topic, I.E., Texts That Were Given By God Expressly To Address The Subject.

Comment:

A good systematic theology will help you identify all the key verses on a given subject.

By starting with the texts specifically revealed by God to address your topic, you'll avoid two traps:

- building your theology from exceptions, not norms
- drawing principles from texts by means of three leaps of logic rather than by defensible exegesis

Illustrations:

- A. *Divorce and remarriage.* Counselees who are eager to get out of a painful marriage inevitably want to turn to the biblical exception passages regarding divorce in order to establish their view of the permanence or impermanence of marriage. Instead, they should start with God's norm: "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt 19:6). To address tempestuous marriages, you first turn to passages on marriage, not passages on divorce.
- B. *Feminism.* Where will you start to determine your view regarding whether women should be allowed to teach and lead men in the church? The apostle Paul wrote 1 Timothy 2:12 to give instruction specifically on that subject: *But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.*

Feminists, however, prefer to start with Galatians 3:28, which says that men and women are both equally saved in Christ. By doing so, they hope to use a *general* principle about salvation to obliterate Paul's *specific* instruction about the role of men and women in 1 Timothy 2:12. This is an invalid approach to theology.

- C. *The hermeneutic of love.* Some argue that since God is love, He will not condemn homosexuals. Should the general principle of God's love override passages in which God declares homosexuality to be sin? No.

Point:

When doing theology, start with the verses given by God *specifically to address your subject*, not with general concepts or with passages only remotely connected to the subject.

2. Consider Texts That Touch Your Subject In An Indirect Way.

Example:

- The Bible doesn't talk specifically about dating. However, verses on marriage companionship and sexual purity do touch the subject in a significant way, and by using those passages you could begin to build a biblical theology of dating.

3. Be Cautious When Drawing Theological Principles From Biblical Narrative.

Explanation:

It's easy to use narrative to "prove" something that God never intended the narrative to teach. Narrative is divinely inspired, but rarely does it say all that could be said on a theological issue.

Example:

Someone of Arminian persuasion might want to use Acts 16:31 to prove that salvation is an unassisted human choice: *Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved*. However, Paul did not intend that statement to be a comment on the Arminian/Calvinism debate. In fact, other texts in Acts (such as 13:48; 16:14) comment more fully on that theological issue.

Summary:

Our theology should not be vaguely biblical. It must be *specifically* biblical—demonstrably drawn from specific Bible verses that actually teach the doctrine we are espousing.

1. Look up all the verses that directly address the subject.
2. Consider verses that indirectly address the subject, using biblical narrative wisely and cautiously.
3. Having laid out all the verses on the topic, after rightly interpreting them in their context, carefully and systematically build your understanding of God's mind on that subject.
4. Check your conclusions against others who have studied the same issue and who have employed a similar, sensible exegetical methodology.

4) THEOLOGY AND LOVE

1. Love For God

Theology should always lead to a greater love for God.

Matthew 22:37. *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ...*

Calvin:

I call "piety" that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces. For until men recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his fatherly care, that he is the Author of their every good, that they should seek nothing beyond him—they will never yield him willing service. Nay, unless they establish their complete happiness in

him, they will never give themselves truly and sincerely to him. (Institutes of the Christian Religion, Battles, 1:2:1)

The study of theology should lead to an adoring, worshipful, and grateful love for God.

2. Love For Others

Contrary to the belief of many Christians, strong theology is not at odds with a legitimate compassion and love for others.

Philippians 1:9-10. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ.

Comment:

Paul prayed that the Philippians would combine warm-hearted love with deep theological knowledge, razor-sharp discernment, doctrinal excellence, and consistent moral purity. Precise, decisive theology is not at odds with a love for God and others; in fact, those things are the Spirit-produced results of good theology, rightly held.

5) THREE-STEP THEOLOGY

Biblical counsellors must always be three-step theologians.

Illustrated in Psalm 119:68 and 71:

You are good and do good It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.

1. Three-Step Theology Explained

A. Step one: a *biblical* truth statement

You are good.

B. Step two: a *general* conclusion based on that truth statement

You do good.

C. Step three: *personal* application of that truth statement

You are doing good right now, even in my painful personal situation.

All three of those steps are essential. If you don't start with a biblical truth statement, you have nothing but human opinion. Furthermore, biblical truth must actively shape your general view of reality. Lastly, biblical truth must shape how you view your own (personal) past, present, or future situation.

2. The Problem Of Official Vs. *Actual* Doctrinal Statements

A. The problem explained

Some counselees have bad doctrine, and that fact will be transparently obvious from the moment they start to talk.

On the other hand, some counselees have great theoretical doctrine. Their *official* doctrinal statement is perfectly true; therefore, initially they sound theologically solid in a counselling session.

However, it eventually becomes clear that their right doctrine is abstract, unapplied knowledge. In fact, their daily thoughts about God, salvation, sanctification, and so on, are quite different from their official doctrinal statement.

B. The problem illustrated

A mother might say that she believes in the sovereignty and wisdom of God—and she really means it. However, when she thinks about her children and their futures, suddenly her belief in God's sovereignty is punctured like a balloon: *I know that God is sovereign, but ...*

As a counsellor, your job is to bring her *actual* view of God into conformity with her *official* view of God. You must help her go to the third step of theology: she must apply what she believes about God to her immediate, personal situation.

Point:

In counselling, what a person thinks about God at any given moment is more important than what his or her official, theoretical doctrinal position is.

C. The problem illustrated from church history

William Cowper, the famous hymn writer from the 1700s, often struggled with depression. Although he was a Calvinist who believed in election, speaking of the sovereignty of God in salvation, Cowper wrote: *I admit the solidity of this reasoning in every case but my own.* (in John Piper, *The Hidden Smile of God*, 99)

Cowper was failing to be a three-step theologian (this is very common for those who are struggling with depression). While Cowper gladly applied what he believed about God and salvation to everyone else, he refused to apply it to himself.

A three-step alternative to Cowper's error:

1. Biblical truth statements:

John 6:39. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

John 10:29. 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.

2. Applied generally to redeemed sinners:

I admit the solidity of this reasoning in every case ...

3. Applied personally:

I admit the solidity of this reasoning in every case including my own. Therefore, since I have believed in Christ, I will not dwell on discouraging, unjustified, sinful doubts about God's ability or desire to save me.

Comment:

In counselling you will often have to correct people's bad theology—a smorgasbord of personal opinions, worldly thinking, and shoddy Bible interpretation. However, at other times, you will have to help a person who has a solid theoretical theology become a three-step theologian, applying what he believes to his personal situation.



BIBLIOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S WORD

Joel James
(student)

David Wells:

What is of first importance to the church is not that it learn to mimic the culture but that it learn to think God's thoughts after him. (The Courage to be Protestant, 98)

Point:

It is only through the study of and submission to God's Word that we learn to think God's thoughts.

What a counsellor believes about the Bible radically affects his or her counselling. We covered this at length in the first week of class, so here is a short review of what the Bible teaches about itself in relationship to counselling.

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BIBLE THAT AFFECT BIBLICAL COUNSELLING

1) INSPIRED

2 Timothy 3:16. *All Scripture is inspired by God ...*

The Bible is not divine merely because it talks about lofty, exalted subjects; rather, it is divine in the sense that it is God's book—literally, God-breathed. Its words are God's words, written as the Holy Spirit moved and guided the human authors of Scripture (2 Peter 1:21).

Wayne Grudem:

When they actually came to the point of putting pen to paper, the words were fully their own words, but also fully the words that God wanted them to write, words that God would also claim as his own. (Systematic Theology, 81)

Implications:

1. God's view of things cannot be learned through human observation; it is learned only through divine revelation.

Vos:

The inward hidden content of God's mind can become the possession of man only through a voluntary disclosure on God's part. (Geerhardus Vos, Biblical Theology, 12)

Calvin:

Among the philosophers who attempted, by reason and learning, to pierce the heavens, what shameful disagreement! (Institutes of the Christian Religion (Beveridge), 1:5:12)

If true religion is to beam upon us, our principle must be, that it is necessary to begin with heavenly teaching, and that it is impossible for any man to obtain even the minutest portion of right and sound doctrine without being a disciple of Scripture

... if we aspire in earnest to a genuine contemplation of God—we must go, I say, to the word If ... we turn aside from it, how great soever the speed with which we move, we shall never reach the goal, because we are off the course. (1:6:2, 3)

2. Authority to guide and judge other people's behaviour can only come from God's word, not from human opinion.

Carl Henry:

Because Christianity [is founded on] transcendent revelation it need not surrender its moral requirements to the cultural prejudices and corruptions of the day. (Christian Personal Ethics, 192)

2) TRUE (INERRANT)

- Psalm 119:128. *Therefore I esteem right all Your precepts concerning everything ...*
- Psalm 119:142. *Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth.*
- Psalm 119:160a. *The sum of Your word is truth ...*

God knows everything and He never lies; therefore, His word-for-word inspired book is, in the original manuscripts, inerrant.

Grudem:

... [these statements encourage us] *to think of the Bible not simply as being "true" in the sense that it conforms to some higher standard of truth, but rather to think of the Bible as being itself the final standard of truth.* (83)

3) UNCHANGING

- Psalm 119:89. *Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.*
- Psalm 119:160. *The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.*

In contrast to the erratic, conflicting, and transient ideas of men, God's word is gloriously *unchanging*.

4) INSIGHTFUL (INCOMPARABLY)

- Psalm 119:99-100. *I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Your precepts.*

No university lecturer with multiple earned doctorates has more insight than a child who knows the word of God. *Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so* reflects the highest level of learning that can be achieved by man.

5) PRACTICAL

- Psalm 119:105. *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

Jl Packer:

Scripture provides clear and exact guidance for every detail and department of life, and if we come to Scripture teachably and expectantly God himself will seal on our minds and hearts a clear certainty as to how we should behave in each situation that faces us. (A Quest for Godliness, 113)

God's word is not a book of theoretical, arcane, philosophical musings and meditations. It deals in a highly practical and authoritative way with the real problems of daily life.

6) EFFECTIVE

When applied by the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures deal effectively with the deepest human problems, even life-dominating sins.

- Psalm 119:133. *Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.*

- John 8:31-32. *So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "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."*

7) NOURISHING

- 1 Timothy 4:6. *In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.*

God's word is life-sustaining nourishment for those who are starving emotionally and spiritually.

8) SURGICAL

- Hebrews 4:12-13. *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*

The Bible penetrates the deepest part of man and lays bare his thoughts, motives, and desires.

9) ACCESSIBLE

The Bible is not hidden, arcane knowledge available only to an elite few. In fact, it is available to be understood and applied by any believer.

- Deuteronomy 30:11-14. *For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.*

10) SUFFICIENT

David Wells:

Unless evangelicals recover their confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture, their claim that Scripture alone is authoritative will remain empty. It will remain a charade. (The Courage to be Protestant, 227)

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17. *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

The Bible is not only *profitable* for helping people address their emotional and spiritual problems; it is also completely *sufficient* to do so.

- Psalm 119:24. *Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors.*

Jay Adams:

I cannot exhort you strongly enough to remain ever mindful of the usefulness of the Bible for changing Christians. It will do the job, if only given the opportunity. (How to Help People Change, 202)

A personal observation:

Years ago, when I was studying Psalm 19, I swivelled my chair around and looked at the books that line the shelves of my study. Which of those books would I call Perfect? Upright? Pure? True? Eternal? Righteous? More desirable than gold?

Commentaries, encyclopaedias, theology books, Hebrew lexicons, Pretoria phone book, military history—not even my Louis L'Amour collection!—none of them were perfect, eternal, or righteous all together.

This Book that we hold in our hands is something *extraordinary*. It's God's book—God's Word—and because of that, it rightfully dominates our counselling.

Summary:

Not surprisingly, your *bibliology* is essential to *biblical* counselling. God's word must dominate everything we think and do as a counsellor.



THEOLOGY PROPER: THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Joel James
(student)

(Much of the material in this section is adapted from *Taste and See That the Lord is Good / Who Is God?* by Joel James.)

1) THE IMPORTANCE OF THEOLOGY PROPER TO BIBLICAL COUNSELLING

John Calvin:

Man is never sufficiently touched and affected by the awareness of his lowly state until he has compared himself with God's majesty. (Institutes of the Christian Religion (Battles), 1:1:3)

Error never can be eradicated from the heart of man until the true knowledge of God has been implanted in it. (Institutes of the Christian Religion (Beveridge), 1:6:3)

Jay Adams:

God is man's Environment. (A Theology of Christian Counseling, 39)

All counselling problems are tied in one way or another to wrong thinking about God; therefore, biblical counsellors must be very familiar with attributes of God and their applications.

Solomon:

Ecclesiastes 12:1. Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth ...

Derek Kidner:

For our part, to remember Him is no perfunctory or purely mental act; it is to drop our pretence of self-sufficiency and commit ourselves to Him. (BST, The Message of Ecclesiastes, 100)

2) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

1. The Doctrine Proven

Although the word *tri-unity* or *trinity* is not found in the Bible, it accurately summarises the Bible's teaching about God.

John 1:1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Point:

The Word (God the Son) was both *with* God *and* God at the same time.

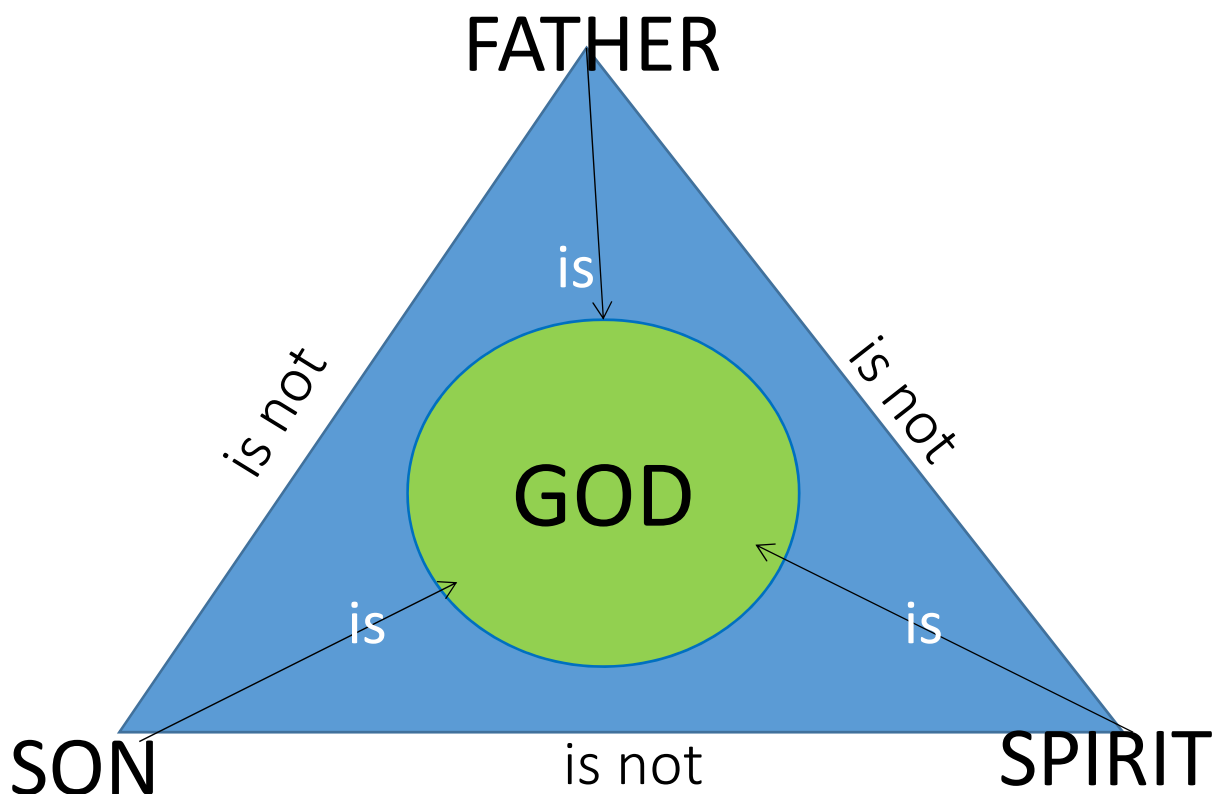
2. The Doctrine Summarised

God is one in essence, three in persons, divided without separation; united without confusion. (Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 154)

Expanded:

He is not one God who merely appears in three different modes, sometimes as the Father, at other times as the Son, and at still others as the Spirit. He is not three gods who club together under one name. The Bible teaches that there is one God who exists eternally in three Persons. (Joel James, *Taste and See That the Lord is Good*, 16-17)

3. The Doctrine Illustrated



4. Unity—One God

Deuteronomy 6:4. *Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!*

1 Corinthians 8:4. *We know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.*

5. Diversity—Three Distinct, Fully Divine Persons

Matthew 3:16-17. *After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."*

Comment:

All three members of the Godhead are here present and acting simultaneously as distinct Persons.

A. The full deity and eternity of the Father

1 Timothy 1:17. *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

B. The full deity and eternity of the Son

John 5:18. *For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.*

John 8:58. *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."*

C. The full deity and eternity of the Spirit

2 Corinthians 3:17-18. *Now the Lord is the Spirit just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*

Hebrews 9:14. *... how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God ...*

6. Wayne Grudem's Summary (*Systematic Theology*, 231)

1. God is three persons.
2. Each person is fully God.
3. There is one God.

Observation:

All three of these statements must be embraced in order to have a full, biblical view of God.

The logical tension embraced—Gregory of Nazianzus:

When I say God, I mean Father, Son, and Holy Spirit No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am illumined by the splendour of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one.
(quoted in Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 163, 164)

7. Importance Of The Doctrine Of The Trinity To Counselling

A. The roles of men and women

1 Corinthians 11:3. *But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.*

Explained:

The relationship between the Father and the Son proves that there is nothing demeaning about a one-way submission of an equal to an equal.

In other words, the Son's submission to the Father (although He is fully the Father's equal) is the foundation of and pattern for the submission of a wife to her husband and of women to men generally in the church.

B. Unity in the church

John 17:21. *[I pray] that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us ...*

The unity, fellowship, love, and serving displayed by the members of the Trinity are the basis for unity, fellowship, love, and serving in the church.

C. The need for fellowship

Since we are created in the image of the triune God, we are social beings designed to benefit from fellowship, love, and servant-hearted relationships with others.

John 17:24. *Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

Hebrews 10:24-25. *Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another ...*

Point:

Those who habitually forsake the assembly of the saints do not understand the perpetual loving fellowship within the Trinity.

3) A SURVEY OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

1. Self-Existence

Genesis 1:1. *In the beginning God ...*

John Feinberg:

God depends on nothing other than himself for his existence No one brought him into existence nor does anyone or anything but himself sustain his existence. (No One Like Him, 239-40)

2. God Is Personal

A. The African challenge

Many African cultures believe that God is an impersonal force. For example, *Modimo*, the word for God in Sotho is spelled as an impersonal noun, taking the ending you would use for a tree or a rock, rather than a person. That suggests that *Modimo* was viewed primarily as a magical energy or a cosmic power, rather than as a divine Person.

Gabriel Setiloane:

Modimo was understood to be something intangible, invincible, a natural phenomenon able to penetrate and percolate all things. (quoted in B. J. van der Walt, *Understanding and Rebuilding Africa*, 66)

Comment:

On that basis, Setiloane wrongly suggests that African Christians should call God *It*, not *Him*.

Because they view God as an impersonal force, many Africans imagine God to be distant and unapproachable, having little or nothing to do with their daily lives. However, the Bible does not teach that God is an energy or power like The Force in the movie *Star Wars*. God is a divine being who is fully personal, fully involved.

B. Two proofs that God is a divine Person

a. The image of God in man

Acts 17:29. *Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone ...*

Because God created us *in His image*, clearly He is not a force, a power, or an energy. He is a *personal being* who delights to love and be loved.

b. The Son of God become man

John 1:18. *No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*

The ultimate proof that God is personal is Jesus of Nazareth, the God-man. If Jesus is God's supreme self-explanation, then God is not a force field; He is undeniably personal.

C. Its importance to counselling:

It is sometimes difficult for African believers to escape the clutches of their traditional theological heritage. For that reason they sometimes seek out a witchdoctor when calamity strikes or they are inclined to place excessive confidence in the intercessory prayers of a pastor. Still lingering under the notion that God cannot be approached directly, they believe that He must be manipulated or contacted indirectly through an intermediary.

Two doctrines—the priesthood of all believers and the fact that God is personal—counteract these errors.

3. Eternality

Psalm 90:2. *Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.*

As A. W. Tozer has said, on the timeline of history, God exists from vanishing point to vanishing point (*Knowledge of the Holy*, 39).

A. Eternality explained

Even His name proclaims His eternity I AM or I EXIST is the perfect name for the eternal God because for Him there are no borders, no temporal limitations to His existence. (James, Taste and See That The Lord is Good, 145)

God's eternity doesn't mean merely that He has no beginning and no end. It also means that He exists at every point on the timeline (past, present, and future) at the same time God doesn't just know the future, He's already there. He experiences all events—the ancient past, the immediate present, and the remote future—at the same time (while also perfectly understanding them as sequential events). For God, nothing disappears into the fogs of time; nothing resides in the distant, misty future If you were to draw a picture of God's eternity, it would be a circle encompassing the whole timeline. (146)

.... God doesn't move back and forth between the past, the present, and the future with blinding speed any more than He zips back and forth between Africa, Asia, and Australia in order to be omnipresent. God is not confined to one moment on the timeline anymore than He is confined to one place in the universe. (146)

B. Its importance to counselling

God does not feel the urgency that we or our counselees often feel.

Illustrated by King Saul:

1 Samuel 13:8-9, 13. *Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, "Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you ...*

Saul used the passing of time as a justification for his disobedience. God, however, did not feel Saul's urgency. Like Saul, our counselees will often need to be taught to trust in the eternal God whose timing is not always our timing.

4. Immutability

A. Defined

God's immutability means that His *character, plans, and promises* do not change.

His character never differs from what it was a minute ago, a month ago, or a million years ago. God cannot change for the better: He is already perfect. He cannot change for the worse; His perfection won't allow it. What is constant for us—change—is unknown to God. Although He interacts with His changeable creatures, God's character never changes.

B. Do God's plans and promises change?

- In Exodus 32, God promised to destroy Israel for fashioning and worshipping the golden calf, but then relented.
- In Jonah 3, God promised to wipe out wicked Nineveh, but then relented.

Question:

How can God be unchanging if He changed His mind and actions in those cases?

Explanation:

When God announced His intention to punish Israel and Nineveh, He did not add these words: "But if you repent, I will restrain My wrath and give grace instead." However, that promise is always implied in God's announcements of judgement.

Jeremiah 18:7-8. *At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it.*

Point:

When God withheld judgement in Exodus 32 and Jonah 3, He wasn't changing His plan; He was following His normal practice of granting grace when sinners repent.

C. God's immutability summarised

Jl Packer:

His life does not wax or wane. He does not grow new powers, nor lose those that He once had. He does not mature or develop. He does not get stronger, or weaker, or wiser, as time goes by The first and fundamental difference between the Creator and his creatures is that they are mutable and their nature admits of change, whereas God is immutable and can never cease to be what He is. (Knowing God, 69)

D. Its importance to counselling

For human beings change is constant. You change schools, jobs, houses, cars, and clothes. Friends come and go. Relationships once dear, grow distant. A beloved husband or wife dies. Health fails, strength diminishes, eyes grow dim and hands feeble. But God never changes. He is gloriously, perfectly the same yesterday, today, and forever ... (James, Taste and See That the Lord is Good, 180-181)

5. Sovereignty

Sovereignty defined:

God can do whatever He wants, and He has the authority to make everyone else do what He wants too.

Two aspects of God's sovereignty:

A. God can do whatever He wants.

- Psalm 115:3. *Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.*
- Psalm 135:6. *Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.*
- Ephesians 1:11. *We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will ...*

God is accountable to no one; He must consult no one before He acts; He needs no one's permission. He is perfectly free to do whatever He pleases.

Observation:

Such authority would be terrifying if God were not also *good*. But He is good. We don't need to live looking over our shoulders, wondering whether the sovereign God is going to flex His biceps and squash us. God is sovereign and He is perfectly good.

Summed up:

Lord Acton's famous dictum, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely," applies perfectly to men, but it has no application to God. Absolute power doesn't corrupt God. He is sovereign and good. (James, Taste and See That the Lord is Good, 157)

Response:

Psalm 97:1. *The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice!*

B. God has the authority to make everyone else do what He wants too.

- Psalm 103:19. *The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.*

No person and no thing fall outside the circle of God's authority.

Six things God has authority over:

1. Satan

Job 1-2 reveal that Satan reports to God as a subordinate—he must ask permission from God in order to attack Job's possessions, family, or health. Furthermore, God places specific restrictions and limitations on Satan's activity in each case.

Its importance to counselling:

When I first came to Grace Fellowship, there was a young woman in our congregation who believed that God and Satan were essentially equal in power. In fact, in a bizarre inversion of the truth, she seemed to think that Satan was omnipresent and omnipotent, not God.

Every night before she went to bed, she ritually "bound" the spiritual beings that she believed inhabited her bedroom. However, fearful that her ability to bind Satan and demons was insufficient, she struggled to sleep, waking up continually wracked by bouts of fear.

She found relief when she learned that God is infinitely powerful and fully sovereign over Satan. She abandoned her nightly fear-driven binding rituals and enjoyed undisturbed sleep snugly wrapped in a comforter called the fear of the Lord.

2. All people

- Daniel 4:34-35. *God's dominion is an everlasting dominion He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and no one can ward off His hand.*

3. Human evil

- Proverbs 16:4. *The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.*
- Acts 4:27-28. *For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.*

4. Calamities of all sorts

- Ecclesiastes 7:14. *In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider—God has made the one as well as the other ...*
- Isaiah 45:7. *The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.*

5. Things we fear

According to Matthew 9:20-35, Jesus has authority over:

- chronic disease (the woman with a twelve-year haemorrhage)
- death (the synagogue official's daughter)
- physical handicaps (the blind men)
- demonic influence (the mute, demon-possessed man)
- all sickness ("healing every kind of disease," 9:35)

6. All events

- Proverbs 20:24. *Man's steps are ordained by the LORD, how then can man understand his way?*
- Psalm 139:16. *Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.*

C. The importance of God's sovereignty to counselling

- Is 26:3. *The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You.*
- Genesis 50:20. *As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.*

6. Omnipotence

A. Defined

Omnipotence means that God is never frustrated by a lack of power.

- Psalm 62:11. *Once God has spoken; twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God.*
- Jeremiah 32:17. *Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You.*
- Psalm 115:3. *Our God is in the heavens and He does as He pleases.*

B. Explained

God's sovereignty means He has the authority to do what He wants; omnipotence means that authority is not theoretical.

God's power is inexhaustible No matter how long God exerts Himself or how strenuously, His power is never reduced God does not tire; He cannot. The first six days of creation were no more difficult for God than the seventh day: work is no more tiring for God than rest. No matter what He does, God always retains an inexhaustible amount of power in reserve. (James, Taste and See That the Lord is Good, 22)

C. Applied to counselling

- a. God's power is critical to *salvation*.

- Romans 1:16. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes ...*

b. God's power is critical to the *assurance of salvation*.

- John 10:28-29. *I give eternal life to them, 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.*

c. God's power is critical to *glorification*.

- Philippians 3:21. [Christ] *will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

d. God's power is critical to *daily living*.

- Proverbs 3:5-6. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*

God's arm is strong enough to make even cork-screw shaped paths straight.

e. God's power is critical to *Christian service*.

Colossians 1:29. *For this purpose I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.*

7. Omniscience

A. God's knowledge is complete.

A. W. Tozer:

God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows no thing better than any other thing, but all things equally well. He never discovers anything. He is never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything. (The Knowledge of the Holy, 56).

B. God's knowledge is unlearned.

There is a whole category of words in the English language that don't apply to God. He has never had to investigate or inquire (if He does so, it is for our benefit, not His). God has never had to experiment, search for something He has lost, or

check His notes before going into a meeting. He has never had to look up a phone number or research a historical fact. God's knowledge doesn't result from observation, and although He is eminently reasonable, He doesn't reason His way to a conclusion based on a series of logical deductions like Sherlock Holmes. He just knows everything instantly. God has never been confused, perplexed, or bewildered. God has never remembered anything simply because He never forgot it in the first place. (James, Taste and See That the Lord is Good, 43)

C. God's knowledge is immediate.

Wayne Grudem:

Every bit of God's knowledge is always fully present in his consciousness; it never grows dim or fades into his ... memory. (Systematic Theology, 191)

Point:

God has no memory; instead, He holds everything that can be known in His conscious thought all at once.

God isn't a cosmic super-computer processing a fantastic amount of data sequentially at a mind-boggling rate of speed. God holds everything there is to know in His conscious mind all at once without confusing anything, without overlooking anything. (James, Taste and See That the Lord is Good, 51)

D. Three applications of God's omniscience to counselling

a. No *sin* escapes God's notice.

- Jeremiah 32:19. *[Your] eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, giving to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds.*

b. No *need* escapes God's notice.

- Psalm 33:18-19. *Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness, to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine.*
- Matthew 6:8. *... your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*

c. No *act of service* escapes God's notice.

- Hebrews 6:10. *For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.*

8. Omnipresence

A. Defined

God is infinite or unlimited in regard to space.

Jeremiah 23:23-24. "Am I a God who is near," declares the Lord, "And not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?" declares the Lord. "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the Lord.

B. Against pantheism

Wherever you go in the universe, God is there. That doesn't mean that God is the universe. God isn't the universe; He created it and is separate from it (Gen 1:1). But wherever you go in His creation, God is there in all of His being all of the time.

John Feinberg:

God is simultaneously present ... at each point in the universe in the totality of his being. There is not one part of Him at my house and another at yours. (No One Like Him, 251)

Point:

God has no spatial limitations.

C. Omnipresence in relationship to Jesus of Nazareth

In Jesus of Nazareth, God the Son did a marvellous thing, taking on humanity (including a physical body) without ceasing to be infinite spirit God. To this day, God the Son is incarnate, permanently located in a resurrected, glorified physical body without in any way hindering His existence as an infinite spirit: "In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col 2:9). (James, Taste and See That the Lord is Good, 54)

D. Its importance to counselling

You can't live with your counselees, correcting and encouraging them every moment. You don't have to: the omnipresent Holy Spirit does that. The omnipresent God provides both comfort and conviction for His people:

a. Comfort

- Psalm 73:28. *But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge ...*

[God] doesn't care for us by moving back and forth at a fantastic rate of speed like a doctor frantically rushing between two patients in a global-sized hospital ward. God is not geographically limited or confined. He is an infinite spirit being who is present with His people in all of His being everywhere all of the time. (James, 61)

b. Conviction

- Psalm 10:11. *He says to himself, "God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it."*

The wicked think that God does not see their sin, but His omnipresence means that every sin is done *in His presence*.

9. Holiness

A. Its importance

John Calvin:

It is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself For we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy

Because nothing appears within or around us that has not been contaminated by great immorality, what is a little less vile pleases us as a thing most pure—so long as we confine our minds within the limits of human corruption. (Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1:37)

Point:

I can imagine myself to be holy as long as I confine my gaze to other sinners—especially those whom I deem to be worse than myself. However, when I raise my eyes to contemplate the inexhaustible holiness of God, my vanity is punctured, and I realise that my imagined holiness is all rags and ruin—coal black, not snowflake white.

B. Two categories of God's holiness

- a. God's *majestic* holiness: God is absolutely and infinitely greater than anything in His creation.

Application:

Small thoughts of God lead to small living for God.

Jl Packer:

[Christians] who look at God, so to speak, through the wrong end of a telescope, so reducing him to pigmy proportions, cannot hope to end up as more than pigmy Christians. (Knowing God, 6)

b. God's *moral* holiness: He is completely set apart from sin.

i. God does not sin.

James 1:13. *God cannot be tempted by evil ...*

ii. God never approves of sin in others.

Habakkuk 1:13. *Your eyes are too pure to look at evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor ...*

Psalm 5:4-6. *For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You. The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity. You destroy those who speak falsehood; the LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.*

C. Its importance to counselling

Jerry Bridges:

This is where holiness begins—not with ourselves, but with God. It is only as we see His holiness, His absolute purity and moral hatred of sin, that we will be gripped by the awfulness of sin against the Holy God

We need to cultivate in our own hearts the same hatred of sin God has. (The Pursuit of Holiness, 24, 32)

Point:

When a believer is struggling to overcome sin, a deep understanding of God's holiness is critical to biblical change.

10. Justice

A. A definition

The biblical words for justice mean *to adhere strictly to the rules*. In other words, when God judges He always does so strictly observing the "rules" of His holy character. He never acquits the guilty; He always punishes the wicked.

- Psalm 89:14. *Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne.*
- Exodus 23:7. *... I will not acquit the guilty.*
- Deuteronomy 32:4. *... all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He.*

B. An observation

Counselors often prefer a God who won't stick to the rules. They prefer a God who bends the rules, waives the rules, or banishes the notion of rules altogether. If they had their way, rather than death, the sentence for sin would be three-to-five years with parole for good behaviour available after nine months.

Wells:

[Today's] therapeutic world is not a world where we ever—not ever—find ourselves face-to-face with a God who is justly angry, who is affronted by our sin and whose moral presence looms in front of us as the most awesome and destructive thing we will ever encounter. (The Courage to be Protestant, 236)

What are the rules that God sticks to?

Wayne Grudem:

God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right. (Systematic Theology, 203)

Expanded:

God doesn't do things because they are right; they are right because He does them.

There is no list of rules outside of God, higher than God, to which He meekly submits. God is so great, He is the rules. He doesn't check a cosmic catalogue of right and wrong before He [judges]

For example, lying is not wrong because a cosmic standard of morality outside of God says that lying is evil. Lying is wrong because God is truth. Adultery is wrong because God is unswervingly faithful. Murder is wrong because God is kind

and forgiving. (James, Taste and See That the Lord is Good, 66)

C. Its importance to counselling

Counselees try to escape God's justice in a variety of ways. Here are some of the most common (adapted from *Taste and See That the Lord is Good*, 79-82).

Common ploys to escape God's justice:

a. Blame shifting

- Genesis 3:12-13. *The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

b. Comparison

- Luke 18:11. *God, I thank You that I am not like other people ...*

c. Social position

Middle class, varsity-educated Protestants with a good job, a house in the suburbs, and multiple cars in the driveway are always acceptable to God.

- Colossians 3:25. *He who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.*

d. Negotiation

Some counselees believe they can sweet-talk or lie their way out of any corner. Therefore, they are sure that they'll be able to talk their way past God on the day of judgement.

e. Deception

Counselee: *If I act like an angel at church on Sunday, God will never know I live like a devil the rest of the week.*

- Psalm 139:3. *You ... are intimately acquainted with all my ways.*

When God judges, He does so based on all the evidence.

f. Grandpa-God

On the day of judgement, the Grandpa-God will smile benignly, pat them fondly on the head, and tell them to run along and play, too consumed by feelings of goodwill to give them the just recompense of their sin. (James, Taste and See That the Lord is Good, 81)

g. Good deeds

Counselor: *If my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds, God won't punish me.*

- James 2:10. *Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.*

h. Bribery

- Proverbs 11:4. *Riches do not profit in the day of wrath ...*

i. Revision

Many people hope to escape God's justice by editing their sins out of the biblical lists of sin.

- Romans 2:3. *But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?*

Summary:

God's justice means that all the tactics sinners use to convince themselves that they will escape the just penalty of their wrongdoing are vanity and self-deception.

God's justice also gives hope to the righteous. We know that reckless drivers, liars, thieves, sexual offenders, corrupt political leaders, and so on, will receive from God exactly what they deserve.

- Psalm 37:1, 9. *Do not fret because of evildoers For evildoers will be cut off...*

11. Compassion

- Psalm 116:5. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes, our God is compassionate.*

A. Explained by contrast

What I deserve

eternal death (Rev 20:14-15)

What God gives me in Christ

eternal life (John 17:3)

outer darkness (Matt 25:30)
 gnashing of teeth (Matt 8:12)
 the lake of fire (Rev 21:8)
 eternal destruction (2 Thess 1:9)
 "Depart from Me" (Matt 7:23)
 pits of darkness (2 Peter 2:4)
 unendurable loneliness (2 Th 1:9)
 mourning, crying, pain (Rev 21:4)
 eternal wrath (Rom 2:5)

the eternal day of God's glory (Rev 22:5)
 eternal songs of praise (Rev 5:12-13)
 the river of the water of life (Rev 22:1)
 pleasures forevermore (Ps 16:11)
 welcoming family love (Rom 8:15)
 streets of gold (Rev 21:21)
 glorious divine presence (Rev 21:3)
 fullness of joy (Ps 16:11; Matt 25:21)
 unbreakable love (Rom 8:39)

(from *Taste and See That the Lord is Good*, 111)

- Psalm 103:8. *The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.*

B. Its importance to counselling

- a. Assurance of God's forgiveness to those who repent

Psalm 103:10. *He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

- b. A model for forgiving others

Ephesians 4:32. *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

- c. A model of how to treat counselees

Matthew 9:36. *Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them ...*

12. Love

1 John 4:8. *The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

A. Defined

God's love is His deep concern and self-sacrificial action towards the undeserving.

John 3:16. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

B. Celebrated

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,
 And were the skies of parchment made,
 Were every stalk on earth a quill,*

*And ever man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

(F. M. Lehman, *The Love of God*)

13. Patience

- Psalm 103: 8, 10. *The Lord is ... slow to anger He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*
- 1 Timothy 1:15-16. *... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.*

A. God's patience defined

God often graciously withholds judgement for long periods of time from those who are sinning, giving them opportunity to repent.

Observation:

We are so used to God patiently withholding the wages of sin that we're shocked when someone dies at a young age.

B. Its importance to counselling

- a. God's patience is a great comfort to believers who struggle with a persistent sin and wonder if God will give up on them.
- b. Its abuse by counselees: *I can enjoy my sin a little bit longer before I turn to God.*

Some counselees need to be warned not to test God's patience any longer, stretching it like a rubber band until it snaps.

14. Jealousy

A. Defined

God zealously protects His reputation.

- Exodus 34:14. *You shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*

- Ezekiel 39:25. *I will be jealous for My holy name.*

B. God's love for theological precision

Richard Rogers, the Puritan pastor of Wethersfield, Essex, at the turn of the sixteenth century, was riding one day with the local lord of the manor, who after twitting him for some time about his "precisian" ways, asked him what made him so precise. "Oh, sir," replied Rogers, "I serve a precise God." (JI Packer, A Quest for Godliness, 114)

C. God's jealousy applied to worship

MacArthur:

God will not accept deviant worship. Some would insist that any kind of sincere worship is acceptable to God, but that is not true. The Bible clearly teaches that those who offer self-styled worship are unacceptable to God regardless of their good intentions. (The Ultimate Priority, 6)

John Calvin:

The pious mind does not dream up for itself any god it pleases, but contemplates the one and only true God. (Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1:2.2)

We are not to fashion God according to our own whim. (1:4.3)

They think that any zeal for religion, however preposterous, is sufficient. (1:4.3)

Point:

God loves theological accuracy, because it's His name, His glory, and His reputation that are on the line when we get it wrong.

Conclusion

Biblical counsellors must be good theologians who are especially at home with the character and attributes of God, because correcting people's wrong views of God is always central to the counselling process.



CHRISTOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Joel James
(student)

INTRODUCTION: THE CENTRALITY OF CHRIST TO CHRISTIANITY

There is a reason our faith is called *Christ-ianity*. We don't worship a moral system or venerate religious rituals. We aren't adherents to a philosophical, utopian ideal. We are followers of Jesus Christ. He is God and He is man, and we follow Him. Our lives aren't ours; they are His.

When you stopped your lips from speaking lies this week, when you spoke with unexpected gentleness in a trying situation, it wasn't for the sake of a moral code: it was because you wanted to please Christ, your King.

You don't work with integrity, serve your family in sacrificial love, or curb your lusts because you have a commitment to a middle class ethic. You do those things because you love Jesus Christ.

The crowning moment of our existence:

Philippians 2:10-11. ... at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and ... every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Imagine a vast plain so extensive that it can hold every human being ever conceived. Then imagine that plain packed with the whole human race from every age of history. Then imagine them all bowing their faces to the ground when God the Father presents Jesus Christ as Lord.

As a Christian, the ultimate goal of your life is to experience that day—the day when Jesus Christ is finally exalted as He should be.

Point:

That scenario tells us the significance of this section of our notes: Christology.

TWO TYPICAL, WRONG VIEWS OF CHRIST AMONG COUNSELEES

Today it is common to view Christ as anything from a political activist to a sympathetic life coach or a genie-of-the-lamp who magically gives wealth and success. Amidst that kind of confusion, it's critical that our counselling be based on a right understanding of the deity, humanity, lordship, and sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

1. The Domesticated Jesus

The "Jesus" the counselee believes in is suspiciously similar to the counselee. He embraces the counselee's casual attitude toward sin and sympathises with the counselee's worldly standards, motivations, and goals. Far from being Lord, this Jesus is a self-esteem coach and a good-luck charm for business and health.

DA Carson's summary of this person's thinking:

I will devote myself to this God if he heals my child. I will follow this Jesus if I can maintain my independence. I will happily become a Christian if God proves himself to me. I will turn from my sin and read the Bible if my marriage gets sorted out to my satisfaction In every case, I am assessing him; he is not assessing me. I am not coming to him on his terms; rather, I am stipulating terms that he must accept if he wants the privilege of my company.

.... [We] treat God as if we have the right to approve him, to examine his credentials. (*The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 21)

However, Christ does not surrender Himself to our examination and approval. We must surrender to His.

Illustrated by J. Oswald Sanders:

*After a notable British victory over the French in naval battle, the defeated French admiral smilingly approached Lord Nelson with hand outstretched and sword swinging at his side. Nelson impassively greeted the French admiral with, "Your sword first, sir." (*The Pursuit of the Holy*, 62)*

Point:

Counselees must understand that to follow Christ, self and all its weapons of rebellion must first be surrendered to Christ.

2. The Distant Jesus

The counselee views Jesus as a distant, unreal historical and theological figure—immensely respected to be sure, but having little or no significance for daily life.

Observation:

Christianity is, at its heart, a love relationship with the God-man, Jesus Christ. Counselees who view Jesus as distant must be taught to fall in love with their Saviour. Christianity is not a philosophical or moral system composed of axioms and rules. It's an obedient love relationship with Christ.

Five Key Christological Issues:

- 1) the deity of Christ
- 2) the humanity of Christ
- 3) the functions of Christ
- 4) the lordship of Christ
- 5) the sufficiency of Christ

1) THE DEITY OF CHRIST

It takes God to explain God. Therefore, God the Son became flesh to reach out to and to die as a substitute for sinful men.

John 1:14, 18. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

As the God-man, Jesus is God's final Word—the perfect act of communication. Jesus accurately represents God as only God can because He is God. But He is also understandable to us because He is fully man. Jesus Christ is both accurate and comprehensible, infinite and knowable.

The deity of Christ proven:

- John 1:1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
- John 10:30-31, 33. *"I and the Father are one." The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."*
- 2 Peter 1:1. *Simon Peter ... to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*
- Hebrews 1:3, 8. *He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature But of the Son He says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever ..."*

Observation:

The deity of Jesus Christ gives Him full authority over His creatures, especially those whom He has redeemed by His own death.

2) THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

- 1 Timothy 2:5. *For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ...*
- Colossians 2:9. *For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form ...*

Comment:

Jesus of Nazareth was fully God and fully man. He did not merely appear to be a man (an ancient heresy called *docetism*; see 1 John 4:2-3).

Seven reasons Jesus' full humanity was necessary:

1. To represent the human race, obeying where Adam and his seed failed (Rom 5:18-19; 1 Cor 15:45-47).
2. To be a genuine substitutionary sacrifice, a man dying for men (Heb 2:14).
3. To be a legitimate mediator between God and men (1 Tim 2:5).
4. To fulfil God's purpose for man to rule over His creation as a vice-regent (Gen 1:28; Ps 8:5-8; Heb 2:5-9).
5. To provide a moral blueprint for the redeemed.
 - 2 Corinthians 3:18. *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory ...*
 - 1 John 2:6. *The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*
 - 1 Peter 2:21. *... leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps ...*
6. To provide a blueprint for our glorified bodies (Phil 3:21).
7. To be able to sympathise with and assist believers in our battle against sin.

Hebrews 2:18. *For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.*

Hebrews 4:15-16. *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

3) THE FUNCTIONS OF CHRIST

Illustrated from the epistle of Colossians:

1. Creator

- Colossians 1:16. *For by Him all things were created ...*

2. Sustainer (of the physical universe)

- Colossians 1:17. *... in Him all things hold together.*

3. Heir (of the physical universe)

- Colossians 1:15. *... the firstborn of all creation.*
- Colossians 1:16. *... all things have been created ... for Him.*

4. Revealer

- Colossians 2:3. *... in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

5. Message

- Colossians 1:28. *We proclaim Him ...*

6. Saviour

- Colossians 1:14. *... in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*
- Colossians 1:22. *... He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death ...*
- Colossians 2:12-13. *... having been buried with Him ... raised up with Him ... He made you alive together with Him ...*

7. Sustainer (of believers)

- Colossians 1:29. ... *striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.*
- Colossians 2:7. ... *having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him ...*
- Colossians 2:19. ... *holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body ... grows ...*

8. Example

- Colossians 3:13. ... *as the Lord forgave you, so also should you ...*

9. Ruler

- Colossians 2:10. *He is the head over all rule and authority.*

10. Judge

- Colossians 3:24. ... *from the Lord you will receive the reward ...*

11. Lord

- Colossians 1:18. *He is also head of the body, the church ...*
- Colossians 2:6. *As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him ...*
- Colossians 3:17. *Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus ...*
- Colossians 3:23. ... *do your work heartily, as for the Lord ...*
- Colossians 3:24. *It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.*

Summary:

- Colossians 3:11. ... *but Christ is all, and in all.*
- Colossians 1:18. ... *so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.*

Point:

Basic to biblical counselling—and to all the Christian life—is our view of Christ.

The fact that Christ is Master or Lord is essential to counselling. Without His lordship we would have no authoritative standard by which to judge people's behaviour, no authority by which to call people to change, and no promise of divine assistance to help them change. But because Christ is Lord, we have all those things.

4) THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

John MacArthur:

Jesus is Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). That is the single, central, foundational, and distinguishing article of Christianity. It is also the first essential confession of faith every true Christian must make: "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Rom. 10:9) (The Gospel According to Jesus, 25)

1. Christ's Lordship Proven

- 1 Corinthians 3:23. *And you belong to Christ.*
- 2 Corinthians 5:15. *And He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him ...*
- Romans 14:8. *If we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.*
- Matthew 16:24. *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*

2. The Implication Of Christ's Lordship

- Luke 6:46. *Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?*
- Matthew 28:18-20. *All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ... teaching them to observe all that I commanded you ...*

3. Its Importance To Counselling

Counselees who do not understand or who refuse to submit to the lordship of Christ wander from one self-devised, worldly plan for living to another, with all the attendant consequences. In fact, it is likely that they have come for counselling precisely because their attempts to live autonomously have failed so catastrophically. They must be taught that Christ is Lord: the stability, peace, and joy they crave come from surrendering to Him and obeying Him, not from disdainning Him and ignoring Him.

Observation:

Many counselees are struggling because they have set limits on Christ's lordship. They think ...

Christ can have my Sunday mornings, but not my Friday nights ... my family life, but not my work ethics ... my career choice, but not my sexuality ... all other relationships, but not the ones with my children ... my external behaviour, but not my emotions.

Jl Packer:

The repentance that Christ requires of His people consists in a settled refusal to set any limit to the claims which He may make on their lives. (Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, 72)

MacArthur:

... nothing is knowingly held back, nothing purposely shielded from His lordship, nothing stubbornly kept from His control. (The Gospel According to Jesus, 225)

Point:

The goal of counselling is to systematically bring all areas of rebellion in submission to Christ and His word.

4) THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

1. Its Importance

A. MacArthur

The church today desperately needs to embrace that message [i.e., the sufficiency of Christ]. Christians today are consumed with the trials and troubles of life. They are caught up with difficulties and sorrows and anguish. And they are desperately looking for some great new secret, some higher spiritual level, some more effective relief than they think they have in Christ There is no need for that. His grace is sufficient. (Our Sufficiency in Christ, 263)

B. John Calvin

We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ (Acts 4:12). We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it

from anywhere else. If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that it is "of him" (1 Corinthians 1:30)

If we seek redemption, it lies in his passion; if acquittal, in his condemnation; if remission of the curse, in his cross ... if satisfaction, in his sacrifice; if purification, in his blood; if reconciliation, in his descent into hell; if mortification of the flesh, in his tomb; if newness of life, in his resurrection; if immortality, in the same; if inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom, in his entrance into heaven; if protection, if security, if abundant supply of all blessings, in his Kingdom; if untroubled expectation of judgment, in the power given to him to judge. In short, since rich store of every kind of good abounds in him, let us drink our fill from this fountain, and from no other.

Some men, not content with him alone, are borne hither and thither from one hope to another; even if they concern themselves chiefly with him, they nevertheless stray from the right way in turning some part of their thinking in another direction. Yet such distrust cannot creep in where men have once for all truly known the abundance of his blessings. (Institutes of the Christian Religion, (Battles), 2:16:19)

2. Its Proof (From Colossians 2)

A. Christ is sufficient for daily Christian living.

Colossians 2:6. As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him ...

Colossians 2:10. ... in Him you have been made complete ...

B. Christ is a sufficient source of truth.

Colossians 2:3. ... in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 2:8. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men ... rather than according to Christ.

C. Christ is sufficient because He is fully divine.

Colossians 2:9. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form ...

D. Christ is sufficient because of His victory over all earthly and demonic powers.

Colossians 2:10. ... He is the head over all rule and authority.

Colossians 2:15. *When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.*

E. Christ is sufficient for salvation.

Colossians 2:13. *When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him ...*

Point:

Christians should cease frantically seeking for mystical experiences, worldly wisdom, or occult-like supernatural power to complete their Christianity. Christ supplies all we need.

3. Its Summary

*Christianity is an all-sufficient relationship with an all-sufficient Christ. There's no reason anyone who believes God's Word should struggle with such a self-evident truth. (MacArthur, *Our Sufficiency in Christ*, 19)*

Comment:

Without Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5), but *with* Him we can do everything that He requires of us.

Conclusion:

A right understanding of the deity, humanity, functions, lordship, and sufficiency of Jesus Christ is essential to biblical living and to biblical counselling.



PNEUMATOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Joel James
(student)

Outline:

- 1) Three proofs of the Holy Spirit's deity
- 2) Eight key tasks of the Holy Spirit
- 3) The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit: What Is It?

Introductory quote:

Unfamiliarity with the Spirit's sanctifying work has opened the door for the church's current obsession with psychology. Psychological sanctification has become a substitute for the Spirit-filled life. (John MacArthur, Our Sufficiency in Christ, 105)

1) THREE PROOFS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S DEITY

1. Divine Attributes Of The Holy Spirit

Omnipresence	Psalm 139:7-10
Omniscience	1 Corinthians 2:10
Eternality	Hebrews 9:14

2. Divine Title

2 Corinthians 3:17-18. Now the Lord is the Spirit But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

3. Divine Associations

Matthew 28:19. ... baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit ...

Grudem:

... the Holy Spirit is classified on an equal level with the Father and the Son. This can be seen if we recognize how unthinkable it would have been for Jesus to say something like, 'baptising them in the name of

the Father and of the Son and of the archangel Michael'—this would have created a status entirely inappropriate even to an archangel. (Systematic Theology, 237)

4. The Holy Spirit's Humility

While the Spirit is God of very God, the third Person of the Trinity, nonetheless, He delights to serve rather than thrust Himself forward. In short, the *Holy Spirit* is also the *Humble Spirit*. Although fully equal with the Father and the Son, the Spirit's role within the Trinity is especially to exalt the Son.

- John 15:26. *When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me ...*
- 16:13-14. *But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.*

Summarised:

The focus of the church is not on the dove but on the cross, and that's the way the Spirit would have it. (Kevin DeYoung, The Holy Spirit, 17)

Show me a person obsessed with the Holy Spirit and His gifts ... and I will show you a person not filled with the Holy Spirit. Show me a person focused on the person and work of Jesus Christ ... and I will show you a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit. (Dan Philips, quoted in John MacArthur, Strange Fire, 45)

2) NINE KEY TASKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Creation

Genesis 1:2. *The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.*

2. Revelation

Zechariah 7:11-12. *They made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets ...*

2 Peter 1:21. *For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

3. Illumination

1 John 2:20, 27. *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things ...*

4. Conviction

John 16:8. *And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*

William Barclay:

When you think of it, it is an amazing thing that men should put their trust for all eternity in a crucified Jewish criminal. What convinces men that this crucified Jew is the Son of God? That is the work of the Holy Spirit. (The Gospel of John, 2:225)

D. A. Carson:

The Holy Spirit himself must do an antecedent work in our hearts and minds if we are going to believe. Without his help, gospel truths will always seem alien to us. (The Cross and Christian Ministry, 45)

Leon Morris:

The Spirit brings the world's guilt home The Spirit convicts the individual sinner's conscience. Otherwise, men would never be convicted of their sin. (NICNT, The Gospel According to John, 698)

Comment:

For believers the Holy Spirit is the *Comforter*; for unbelievers He is the *Discomforter*.

5. Regeneration

Titus 3:5. *He saved us ... by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit ...*

John 6:63. *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing ...*

Carl Henry:

The believer's life springs from God alone as a gift of grace, and only in and through the Spirit is this new life perpetuated. (Personal Christian Ethics, 460)

6. Indwelling

A. Indwelling proven

John 14:16-17. *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.*

B. Indwelling and assurance

Ephesians 1:14. *... you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance ...*

Romans 8:16. *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God ...*

Comment:

Once the Spirit has moved in and made you His home, you're Christ's forever. The Spirit is a homeowner who never sublets, never sells.

C. Indwelling and transformation

Holy is what He is; therefore, holiness is what He produces.

Romans 8:12-13. *So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

John MacArthur:

The person who demonstrates no desire for the things of God and has no inclination to avoid sin or passion to please God is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit and thus does not belong to Christ. (MNTC, Romans 1-8, 420)

Jerry Bridges:

The Holy Spirit who creates within us saving faith also creates within us the desire for holiness. He simply does not create the one without the other. (The Pursuit of Holiness, 39)

Jl Packer:

The Holy Spirit's main ministry is not to give thrills but to create in us Christlike character. (A Quest for Godliness, 31)

Observation:

The Holy Spirit not only convicts the world of sin (John 16:8), He also convicts believers of sin. His goal in doing so is to compel us to greater heights in Christ-likeness.

Galatians 5:16. *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*

Bridges:

When the Holy Spirit shows us our sinfulness, He does not do this to lead us to despair but to lead us to holiness. (The Pursuit of Holiness, 77)

7. Joyful Christian Living

Ephesians 5:18-21. *... be filled with the Spirit ... singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God ...*

Acts 13:52. *And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

8. Church Unity

1 Corinthians 12:13. *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

Gordon Fee:

The Spirit is what essentially distinguishes the believer from the non-believer (2:10-14); the Spirit is what especially marks the beginning of the Christian life (Gal. 3:2-3); the Spirit above all is what makes a person a child of God (Rom. 8:14-17). Thus it is natural for him to refer to their unity in the body in terms of the Spirit Paul refers to

their common reception of the Spirit at the beginning of their Christian experience ... (NICNT, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 603)

Note:

If unity is tied to Spirit baptism, then that baptism must take place at conversion, not subsequent to conversion. Otherwise, the body of Christ would be *divided* by Spirit baptism.

Further note:

Pentecostals have traditionally linked Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues (which in their case is ecstatic gibberish, not known human languages as in the NT). In fact, in 1 Corinthians 12:13 Paul said that all the Corinthian believers had been baptised in the Spirit, but in 12:29-30 he said that not all of them spoke in tongues. In other words, the view that all Spirit-baptised believers speak in tongues is unbiblical.

9. Empowerment

A. Its necessity

The Christian is not like an automobile with a self-contained power source; rather, he is like an electric motor that must be constantly connected to an outside current for its power. (Jerry Bridges, The Practice of Godliness, 75)

- Acts 4:31. *And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.*
- 1 Corinthians 12:7. *But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*
- Philippians 3:3. *For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God ...*
- Galatians 5:16. *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*

B. Spirit-empowerment, prayer, and biblical counselling:

Apart from Christ and His indwelling Holy Spirit, neither we nor our counselees can do anything (John 15:5). Because we understand our helplessness to produce change in ourselves and others, all of biblical counselling must be shot through with prayer.

Hallesby:

I never grow weary of emphasizing our helplessness, for it is the decisive factor not only in our prayer life, but in our whole relationship to God. (Prayer, 26)

Piper:

Prayer prevents service from being an expression of pride. (Desiring God, 147)

In prayer we admit our poverty and God's prosperity, our bankruptcy and his bounty, our misery and his mercy. (156)

Adams:

Any counseling that is not based upon the idea that it is the power of God that transforms counselees is essentially non-Christian.

... the counselor must pray for himself and his counselees, asking God to use His Word as it is ministered in the counseling sessions, requesting wisdom for himself in the selection, understanding and use of Scriptures, in gathering and analyzing data ... and seeking God's help in preparing the soil in the counselee's heart.

.... Frequently, at crucial points in a series of sessions, the only appropriate action to take is to pray. (A Theology of Christian Counseling, 61, 62)

Summary:

Kevin DeYoung:

The Spirit is a light to us in three ways. (1) He exposes sin so that we can recognize it and turn away. (2) He illumines the Word so that we can understand its meaning and grasp its implications. (3) He takes the veil away so that we can see the glory of Christ and become what we behold. (The Hole in Our Holiness, 82)

3) THE BLASPHEMY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: WHAT IS IT?

From time to time you will encounter a counselee who is convinced that he or she has committed the unpardonable sin of Matthew 12:31-32. You can understand his or her apprehension: *Have I committed the one sin that God says He will never forgive?*

Question:

What is the unforgiveable sin, and how do I help someone who believes that he or she has committed it?

Key text:

Matthew 12:31-32. *Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.*

1. What The Unforgiveable Sin Of Blaspheming The Holy Spirit Is Not

- A. Blasphemy of the Spirit *does not* refer to rejecting counterfeit miracles and fallible prophecies wrongly attributed to the Holy Spirit. In fact, the NT commands believers to expose and refute false miracles, false prophecies, and false teaching.
- 1 John 4:1. *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*
 - 1 Timothy 4:1. *But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons ...*
 - Matthew 7:15, 22-23. *Beware of the false prophets Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you ...*

Point:

It is not blasphemy against the Spirit to expose and reject the deceits of the prosperity teachers and the charades of the Charismatic movement which are wrongly attributed to the Holy Spirit.

In fact, what *is* blasphemous is attributing false doctrine, erroneous prophecies, and pseudo-miracles to the omnipotent Spirit of truth.

- B. The unforgiveable sin *does not* refer to sin generally, even in its most abhorrent forms.

Those who have committed sexual sin, lied, or persistently hated Christ before their conversion (or some other correspondingly repugnant sin) have

not committed the unpardonable sin. Those sins are not being addressed in the context of Matthew 12.

Furthermore, it is possible to find biblical examples of those kinds of sins being forgiven:

- sexual sin Rahab, David, the woman at the well
- lying Abraham
- hatred of Christ the apostle Paul

- C. The unforgiveable sin *does not* refer to the "the sin leading to death" mentioned in 1 John 5:16-17.

The apostle John does not say what he means by the *sin leading to death*, nor does any other text of Scripture use that terminology. What was John referring to?

John mentions only a handful of specific sins in 1 John, and none of them seem to tally with the chilling title, *the sin leading to death*. However, one of the dominant themes of 1 John is that, whatever a person claims, a consistently ungodly and disobedient pattern of living marks him as an unbeliever.

1 John 2:4. *The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* (see also 1 John 2:6; 3:7-10; 5:18)

Occasional sin failures typify all believers; however, persistent, unrelenting rebellion does not. Therefore, in the face of a lack of other evidence, it seems best to interpret *the sin leading to death* as the persistent and unrelenting disobedience of pseudo-believers.

Observation:

Whatever view one takes of *the sin leading to death*, there are no grounds for connecting it to the blasphemy of the Spirit in Matthew 12.

- D. The blasphemy of the Spirit *does not* refer to the relentless and irreversible unbelief of Hebrews 6 and 10.

We will deal with the interpretation of Hebrews 6 and 10 in another section of this syllabus. For now, it is enough to point out that the problem of attributing the Holy Spirit's work to Satan, which is the subject of Matthew 12:31-32, is not the subject of Hebrews 6 and 10.

2. What The Unforgiveable Sin Of Blaspheming The Holy Spirit Is

A. The context

The context of Jesus' stern warning in Matthew 12:31-32 is Jesus' healing of a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute—a healing performed by the power of the Holy Spirit working through Jesus.

- Matthew 12:28. *If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

In their blind hatred and antagonism towards Christ, the Pharisees attributed this Spirit-empowered miracle to Satan.

- Matthew 12:24. *But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."*

B. The conclusion

Since no other sin is mentioned in the context, the blasphemy of the Spirit must be defined as *attributing the Spirit-empowered miracles and ministry of Jesus to Satan.*

Explained:

Observing Jesus' miracles and refusing to believe in Him was a damning sin; however, it could be forgiven if repented of. Many, in fact, saw Jesus' miracles and came to faith only later.

However, it was another thing altogether to see the work of the Spirit in and through Jesus and to attribute it to Satan. That was an insult to the Holy Spirit that God will not forgive.

3. How Do You Help A Person Who Believes That He Or She Has Committed The Unpardonable Sin?

- Provide a biblical definition of the unpardonable sin based on the context of Matthew 12, and then ask, *Do you believe that the miracles of Jesus were done by satanic power? Have you done that sin?*
- If the counselee has not attributed the miracles of Jesus to Satan sin, ask: *What have you done that you believe is unforgiveable?*

What you are trying to ascertain with this question:

- Does the counselee simply have an exceptionally tender conscience?

- b. Has the counselee done a *specific sin* (or sins) that is riding his conscience so hard that he believes God can't or won't forgive him?

Observation:

Often it will be the second problem: he has done something specific and feels that God can't or won't forgive him (note: in cases of sexual abuse, it might be something that was done to him that he believes God won't forgive).

- C. Encourage repentance from any specific sins that are riding the person's conscience.

Note:

The assurance of forgiveness found in Psalm 103 is a helpful place to take a believer who doubts whether God can or will forgive him.

- D. If the person persists in saying that he has committed the unforgiveable sin, rebuke his pride and his doubt of God's forgiving character and promises.

God can forgive everyone's sin except mine, is pride, not humility. It is also a stern accusation against God. The person must be encouraged to be a three-step theologian: he must apply to *himself* what he knows to be true about God's forgiveness of everyone else.

- E. Point out biblical examples of God forgiving the sin the counselee has done.

Illustration:

The four women included in Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1 are Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. Three of the four had committed sexual immorality (incest, prostitution, and adultery to be specific), but God's grace was sufficient to forgive.

- F. Addressing a hyper-tender conscience:

If the person's fear of having committed the unpardonable sin seems to come from a general fear of judgement rather than from specific guilt, you can do two things:

- a. Do a thorough study of the doctrine of justification and God's forgiveness. God promises forgiveness to His children precisely to remove disabling fear.

1 John 4:17-18. *By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment There is no fear in love;*

but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

- b. Assure the person that, since the unpardonable sin is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible, Christians don't have to live in continual fear of committing it.



ANTHROPOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Joel James
(student)

In Genesis 1-2 we find **nine truths about man** that are significant to biblical counselling.

Human beings are ...

- 1) created in God's image (Gen 1:26-27)
- 2) created to exercise a legitimate dominion over God's creation (Gen 1:26, 28)
- 3) created male or female (Gen 1:27)
- 4) created to be in a relationship of blessing with God (Gen 1:28)
- 5) created to reproduce in a marriage setting (Gen 1:28)
- 6) created as material/immaterial beings (Gen 2:7)
- 7) created to be working beings (Gen 2:15)
- 8) created to be obedient beings Gen 2:16-17)
- 9) created to be social beings (Gen 2:18)

Each of these is significant to counselling in some way; therefore, let's consider each point separately.

1) HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE.

Genesis 1:26. *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness ..."*

God made men and women to be an army of little mirrors, reflecting His glory.

1. The Importance Of Being Image-Bearers

John MacArthur:

The creation of the human race was the central object of God's creative purpose from the beginning. (The Battle for the Beginning, 157)

God was ... the pattern for the personhood of man. That is not true of anything else in the space-time universe. (163)

The truth that humanity was made in the likeness of God is the starting point for a biblical understanding of the nature of man. (167)

It establishes a personal relationship between God and man that does not exist with any other aspect of creation ... not even with the other living creatures He made.
(159)

Wayne Grudem:

Every time we talk to each other ... we should remember that the person we are talking to is a creature of God who is more like God than anything else in the universe ... (Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth, 26)

A. The image of God defined

Since the Bible doesn't define the image of God, theologians debate over what it is. Perhaps the following summary will be sufficient:

The divine image thus implies all the various aspects of God's reflected glory and honor It may be defined, in summary, as the totality of man's higher powers that distinguish him from brute creation. (Payne, quoted in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, 1:10)

These higher powers and gifts include at least the following: an immaterial, immortal spirit, moral understanding and accountability, abstract reasoning and language skills, capacity to rule the creation, awareness of the future, creativity, and capacity for high-level relationships (see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 445-450).

B. Biblical applications of the doctrine

- a. It's wrong to murder those made in God's image.

Genesis 9:6. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.

Denying the fact that man is created in God's image has proven to be deadly for tens of millions of people in the last hundred years.

It's no accident that the terrors of the Nazi Holocaust and the Communists' murder of millions in their purges were carried out by men and governments who viewed human beings as nothing more than highly-evolved animals. Nor is the legalising of abortion accidental in a society dominated by evolution theory.

The effect on morals of this wrong view of man:

If you're just an animal, then you might as well eat, drink, and procreate like an animal. If other people are nothing more than beasts, then it's perfectly tolerable to be beastly toward them. If cats kill mice, then why shouldn't we kill other people?

Point:

You can't kill other people as a wolf kills rabbits, because you aren't a wolf, and they aren't rabbits. In fact, we are made in God's image and to strike a blow at one made in His image is, in some sense, to strike a blow at God.

- b. It's wrong to murder with your tongue those made in God's image.

James 3:8-10. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

- c. Racism is wrong because human beings of all ethnicities are created in God's image.
- d. Devaluing women and their unique, God-appointed roles is wrong, because women also bear God's image, not just men.

2) HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATED TO EXERCISE A LEGITIMATE DOMINION OVER GOD'S CREATION.

Genesis 1:26. ... and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

Comment:

This provides a biblical rebuke to those who worship "Mother Earth" and who subordinate man to the earth and its animals. Man was not created to abuse the earth, but he was created to exercise a legitimate dominion over it, shaping it to his needs and desires.

That dominion forfeited by the first Adam:

*Jesus repeatedly referred to Satan as "the ruler of this world" That was supposed to man's role. But Adam's willful sin in effect forfeited dominion to the devil. (MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning*, 173)*

Dominion regained by the last Adam:

Christ Himself will return to regain that dominion and establish Himself as the ruler of this world. (173; cp. Heb 2:5-9; 1 Cor 15:24-28)

3) HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATED EITHER MALE OR FEMALE.

Genesis 1:27. *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

John Piper:

A lot of energy is being expended today minimizing the distinctions of manhood and womanhood We are adrift in a sea of confusion over sexual roles. And life is not the better for it. (Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 33)

Note:

We will explore the significance of the human race being created male and female in the section on marriage counselling and in the section on how to counsel the sin of homosexuality.

4) HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATED TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP OF BLESSING WITH GOD.

Genesis 1:28. *God blessed them ...*

God did not intend an adversarial relationship between Himself and mankind. However, what the Fall has corrupted, Christ will restore.

John 10:10. *... I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

5) HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATED TO REPRODUCE IN A MARRIAGE SETTING.

Genesis 1:28. *... and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it ..."*

Note:

We will cover a biblical view of sexuality in the marriage counselling section during week three, and parenting in the fourth week of class.

6) HUMAN BEINGS WERE CREATED AS MATERIAL/IMMATERIAL BEINGS.

- Genesis 2:7. *Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*
- Job 33:6. *Behold, I belong to God like you; I too have been formed out of the clay.*

1. A Comment On Evolution

Mankind is *not* the result of gradual evolutionary advances over eons of time from inanimate chemical compounds to a living cell, cell to crustacean, fish to frog, amphibian to ape, ape to Adam.

MacArthur:

Adam ... was specially and personally created by God. There is no way to do justice to the text and maintain the notion that Adam evolved from some already-existing form of animal life. (The Battle for the Beginning, 158)

2. God's Intention For The *Physical* Aspect Of Man's Being:

God's intention is that our bodies be instruments, tools, or weapons of righteousness and offerings of worship to Him:

Romans 6:12-13. *Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

Romans 12:1. *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*

3. God's Intention For The *Non-Physical* Aspect Of Man's Being:

John 4:24. *God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*

Combined:

Mark 12:30. *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.*

4. Material/Immaterial—Its Importance To Counselling

Since man is both a physical and spiritual creature, *both* aspects of a person's being need to be considered in counseling. For example, bizarre behaviour and panic attacks can arise from refusing God's forgiveness and doubting God's goodness and sovereignty; however, they might also be influenced by physical factors, such as systematic sleep loss or too much caffeine. Counsellors need to be aware of both sides of the human equation.

5. The Bi-Partite, Tri-Partite Debate

A. Is the issue significant?

The view presented above is the bi-partite view of man. Man consists of an immaterial soul-spirit and a physical body. Some, however, prefer to see man as a tri-partite being, made up of three distinct parts: body, soul, and spirit.

The difference seems inconsequential at first. However, the way Christians apply the tri-partite view often has great significance. For example, psychologically influenced Christians often argue that while a medical doctor deals with man's *body* and the Bible deals with man's *spirit*, only a psychologist can deal with the third part of man—his *soul*.

Illustrated by Larry Crabb:

Inviting the Holy Spirit to take over our life leaves part of our being untouched. (Inside Out, 49)

Crabb believes that the Holy Spirit and God's word are unable to address the problems of the soul. In the first week of the class we exposed this notion as completely unbiblical. Furthermore, the tri-partite view of man cannot be sustained biblically.

B. Tri-partite's key verse

1 Thessalonians 5:23. *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

C. Evaluation

Although this verse highlights three aspects of man's being, it's not the only verse in the Scripture that describes the component aspects of man. Other verses also mention the heart, mind, conscience, flesh, and so on.

- Deuteronomy 6:5. *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart ...*
- Mark 12:30. *You shall love the Lord your God ... with all your mind ...*
- Romans 2:15. *... their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them ...*

Point:

Combining these verses with 1 Thessalonians 5:23, must we argue for a six-part view of man? No. In fact, none of these verses were intended by God to provide a definitive catalogue of the component parts of man.

D. The soul/spirit referred to interchangeably

In fact, the Bible consistently speaks of a material and immaterial aspect of man's being, with the immaterial aspect described in a number of interchangeable ways.

The interchangeability of the words *soul* and *spirit* illustrated:

- Matthew 10:28. *Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul ...*
- James 2:26. *For just as the body without the spirit is dead ...*
- 1 Corinthians 5:5. *... so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*
- 1 Peter 1:9. *obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*

Conclusion:

As Genesis 2:7 indicates, man was created a material/immaterial being: God formed Adam's body from the dust and breathed the spirit of life into him. At death, God takes back that spirit (Psalm 104:29), disconnecting the immaterial part of man from his body, and in glorification, He gives us an indestructible, eternal physical body. Man has always been intended by God to be a physical/spiritual being, with the spiritual aspect being described in various ways.

The bi-partite/tri-partite debate is not that important in and of itself, although the bi-partite view is clearly more biblical. It becomes important, however, because the tri-partite view is sometimes used to smuggle unbiblical ideas and practices into Christianity.

7) HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATED TO BE WORKING CREATURES.

Genesis 2:15. *Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.*

1. The Place Of Work In God's Plan

Jay Adams:

The necessity for work—to be a creative, productive being—is built into man: Adam was created to be a working being Even today, the scientific urge with its sense of curiosity and desire to learn, the home-building, house-furnishing, and decorating interests that so often crop up in women ... all manifest something of the remnants of Adam's original working nature. (A Theology of Christian Counseling, 134-135)

Point:

Work is not the result of the Fall. It was always part of God's plan for mankind, even in Paradise. The Fall, like everything else it touches, has defiled work, making it difficult and unfulfilling (Gen 3:17-19; Ecc 2:17-20).

Counselors must discover and help Christians find God's solutions to these human problems caused by sin. Work is no exception. (134)

Point:

The average person spends more than 100,000 hours of his or her life working. It would be silly not to seek God's counsel on this subject.

2. Work Is A Pervasive Human Responsibility.

Every capable person has a job of some sort, regardless of his or her age.

Many people get paid for working in the marketplace. A wife and mother has a job—looking after her family. She probably doesn't get paid for it (except in love!), but it's an exalted, noble, God-appointed work. For small children, play is their first job. As they grow, they eventually get promoted to incrementally more difficult versions of work: chores and schoolwork. When nearing the end of life, a retired person should not stop work completely; rather, he or she should exchange one kind of work and level of productivity for another.

Point: In God's plan, no one is unemployed.

Even if a person is temporarily out of work, he has a job: his job is to spend forty to fifty hours a week *looking* for a job. If he does that, God will be satisfied. The unemployed person's job is *looking for a job*.

Note:

When a man puts that kind of effort into looking for work, not only is God likely to provide a job for him relatively quickly, it also makes his family and church much more willing to help him if he has financial need.

Summary:

All human beings are to work except infants and the physically or mentally incapable.

3. Five Categories Of Problem Workers That You Will Counsel

1. The bad worker

Colossians 3:23-24. *Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.*

Ephesians 6:6-7. [Work] *not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men ...*

2. The wrongly motivated worker

A. Motivated by comparing

Ecclesiastes 4:4. *I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind.*

Rivalry or the sin of comparing is a wrong motive for work, and leads either to pride if you outdo others or discouragement and depression if you don't.

B. Motivated by greed

1 Timothy 6:9. *But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

Ecclesiastes 5:10. *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.*

3. The two-fisted worker

Ecclesiastes 4:6. *One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.*

For this man, the world's greatest invention is the laptop: it allows him to take his office everywhere, including home. His wife calls his laptop "Dell-lilah" because he even takes it to bed with him.

4. The discouraged, out-of-a-job worker

Sometimes you will have to light a fire under a person who is willing to work but has been without a job for months or even years. Inertia has become his enemy. He has forgotten how to look for work and may even be close to losing his desire to work.

5. The professionally unemployed

Proverbs 21:25. *The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, for his hands refuse to work.*

2 Thessalonians 3:10. *If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.*

Proverbs 16:26. *A worker's appetite works for him, for his hunger urges him on.*

4. A Key Text Regarding Work: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

Paul teaches that a professing Christian who rebelliously or passively refuses to work must be lovingly admonished, following the steps of church discipline taught by Jesus in Matthew 18.

A. Paul *is not* addressing

- a person who has lost his job and is industriously looking for another
- a person who cannot not work due to a genuine disability

B. Paul *is* addressing

- a person who could work but either actively or passively refuses to do so.

Such people quickly become a burden on their biological families and their church families. They often waste days, weeks, and months sleeping, watching television, surfing the internet, or fiddling with their cell phone, all the while living off the misplaced generosity of the government or their family. They have embraced the life of a parasite.

C. An important distinction

As noted above, there is a difference between a person who has been unsuccessfully looking for a job for a long time and has become discouraged, and a person who has intentionally joined the ranks of the professionally unemployed. Both need to be dealt with firmly, but the first with more grace than the other.

Both should be encouraged to get some job—any job—in order to get them moving again. God created us to be *working creatures*.

Comment:

Because of its strong sense of family, its communal approach to physical possessions, and a devastatingly high unemployment rate, it is especially easy for this to happen in an African context. Equally common in the West is the problem of young men extending a workless adolescence into their middle or upper twenties.

Question:

How can a counsellor tell the difference between a sluggard and a person who has simply been out of a job for a long time?

Three key questions:

- a. How industriously is the person looking for work—forty to fifty hours a week?
- b. If he has been out of work for a long time, is he willing to apply for positions below his qualifications?
- c. Is he willing to do unpaid work?

Being out of a *job* doesn't mean that you need to be out of *work*. Unpaid work includes housework, cooking, running errands, and volunteering at church or for other beneficial projects.

D. Addressing the *professionally unemployed*:

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-16, Paul points out a series of problems that need to be addressed with sluggards.

- a disorderly, undisciplined lifestyle 3:6-7
- refusing to follow good examples of hard work 3:7-9
- an unwillingness to experience hardship to meet basic needs 3:8
- a corresponding willingness to live off the hardship of others 3:10
- a temptation to become a busybody 3:11
- contributing to a cynical attitude among church members 3:13

5. Financial Assistance From The Church

When a person has financial need due to being out of work, the church stands ready to help. However, it is also true that the church is not required to sustain a person's middle-class lifestyle. We should pause for a moment when people who own a 1.5 million Rand home and multiple cars come asking for R5 000 to buy groceries. In such a situation, the first responsibility is for the individual or his family to sacrifice, not for the church to blindly sustain the person's lifestyle, investments, or possessions.

Point:

No one wants to lose the money he has invested in a home or car, but the church does not exist to protect people's investments.

A list of questions to ask:

1. If you are out of work, how many hours did you spend this week looking for work?
2. Do you have any adult children or other adults living in your home who are or who could be earning an income?
3. What are the balances of all your bank accounts, credit cards of all kinds, loan accounts, investment and pension funds?
4. If you own your own business, what is its sale value? Does the business owe you money?
5. What properties, vehicles, or pricey hobby-related items do you own, and what are their values? Are you willing to sell them?
6. What have you done to increase your income?
7. What have you done to decrease your expenses?
8. Have you received financial assistance from family or church members during this crisis? When and what amounts?
9. Have you informed your family about your financial crisis and asked them for assistance?
10. Do you have a monthly budget?

Point:

If the church leaders are going to ask the congregation to help a needy family, it's appropriate for them to make sure that the family requesting that assistance is living wisely and sacrificially.

In many cases, the professionally unemployed person is really just a proverbial sluggard. Therefore, as we think about man as a working being, let's consider what Proverbs says about sluggards.

6. Seven Characteristics Of A Sluggard

A. A sluggard is excessively fond of sleep.

Proverbs 6:9. *How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?*

Proverbs 20:13. *Do not love sleep, lest you become poor.*

Proverbs 10:4. *Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.*

Different kinds of poverty the sluggard experiences:

- The sluggard is poor *financially* because he can't find a job that pays him for snoozing.
- He is poor *relationally* because his laziness tends to repulse friends, rather than to attract them.
- He is poor *academically* because he lacks the self-discipline to apply himself in his classes.
- He is poor *spiritually* because he does not invest time in loving God and serving the church.

A comment on sleep:

Most people need about seven to eight hours of sleep to function effectively. The sluggard, by sleeping too much, actually makes himself more tired. Furthermore, by sleeping at irregular hours, he confuses his body clock, making himself seem more tired than he actually is.

B. A sluggard always has an excuse for not working.

Proverbs 22:13. *The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside; I will be killed in the streets!"*

The sluggard's logic:

Hundreds of people get killed driving every year. If I got a job and had to drive to work, I might get killed, and then who would support my family? I better just stay at home.

Point:

Listen to how often you make excuses, and you might find the heart of a sluggard lurking within.

C. A sluggard is systematically disorganised.

Proverbs 6:6-8. *Go to the ant ... which ... prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest.*

Comment:

The sluggard does not plan ahead or work ahead. In fact, he cherishes disorganisation because it gives him a perpetual excuse not to begin unpleasant tasks.

A note about *busy* sluggards:

Not all sluggards are brazenly lazy. In fact, some sluggards are *very busy* people. They are socially active and always into something new. The problem is, they are perpetually busy with the *wrong things*—always pleasure and novelty, never responsibility.

The vivacious life-of-the-party or endlessly distracted person might be as much of a sluggard as the guy who is hinged to his bed. The busy sluggard is hiding his avoidance of responsibility behind a smokescreen of trivial and self-focused activity, but he is a sluggard nonetheless.

D. A sluggard consistently fails to finish tasks.

His disorganisation keeps him from *starting* tasks; his lack of diligence keeps him from *finishing* them.

Proverbs 12:27. *A lazy man does not roast his prey, but the precious possession of a man is diligence.*

Proverbs 6:9-10. *How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest ...*

Derek Kidner:

He does not commit himself to refusal, but deceives himself by the smallness of his surrenders. So by inches and minutes his opportunity slips away. (Tyndale OT Commentaries, Proverbs, 42)

The sluggard's little excuses for not beginning and finishing tasks turn into a mountain of procrastination, and as a result, the job, the assignment, the responsibility remains undone or is poorly done in a frantic rush at the last moment.

Of course, trying to work with such a person is a nightmare.

Proverbs 10:26. *Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the lazy one to those who send him.*

E. A sluggard does not care for what he owns.

Proverbs 24:30-31. *I passed by the field of the sluggard and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense, and behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; its surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down.*

For the sluggard, leisure takes priority over responsibility, and his neglect turns into a kind of passive destruction.

Proverbs 18:9. *He also who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys.*

F. A sluggard works only for immediate pleasure.

Ecclesiastes 4:5. *The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.*

Proverbs 20:4. *The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, so he begs during the harvest and has nothing.*

Farming is a year-around job, but the sluggard refuses to work unless he can see immediate results. He cannot conceive of working for something as far away as the next year's harvest, and starves as a result.

Proverbs 21:25. *The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, for his hands refuse to work.*

G. A sluggard is continually restless and unsatisfied.

Proverbs 13:4. *The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing ...*

A sluggard's life is typified by restless, empty scheming because his life goal is to make money without working. He is eaten by a craving for success and contentment; however, his systematic lack of self-discipline and perseverance restrains him from achieving what he hopes for.

Point:

Sluggards are better at talking about work than they are at doing it.

Proverbs 14:23. *In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.*

Conclusion:

Derek Kidner's painful personal application:

The wise man will learn while there is time. He knows that the sluggard is no freak, but, as often as not, an ordinary man who has made too many excuses, too many refusals and too many postponements. It has been as imperceptible, and as pleasant, as falling asleep. (Proverbs, 43)

7. A Biblical Theology Of Work

Genesis 2:15 shows that God created man to work. Let's consider some biblical benefits of and instructions about work.

A. Seven benefits of work

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. restful sleep | Ecc 5:12 |
| 2. a counter to the temptations of idleness | Prov 4:25-27; 2 Sam 11:1-4 |
| 3. income to give to God | Prov 3:9-10 |
| 4. income to meet basic life needs | 1 Thess 4:12; 2 Thess 3:10 |
| 5. income to spend on legitimate pleasures | Ecc 5:18-20 |
| 6. income to share with those in need | Eph 4:28; 1 Thess 4:12 |
| 7. a legitimate sense of accomplishment | Ecc 9:7; 5:18 |

Comment:

This sense of accomplishment is not pride, nor is it the self-esteem of psychology. Rather, it's a comforting sense that God is happy with my work and the legitimate satisfaction of a job well done.

Ecclesiastes 9:7. Go then, eat your bread in happiness ... for God has already approved your works.

B. Eleven components of a Christian work ethic

a. A Christian worker is *Christ-centred*.

Colossians 3:17. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus ...

b. A Christian worker is *self-motivated*.

Proverbs 6:6-8. Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, which, having no chief, officer or ruler, prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest.

c. A Christian worker *works ahead* rather than waiting to the last moment.

Proverbs 6:6-8; 10:5

- d. A Christian worker is *diligent*.

Proverbs 10:4. *Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.* (see also Prov 10:26; 18:9)

- e. A Christian worker is *trustworthy*.

Luke 16:10. *He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.* (see also Luke 12:42-43; Prov 10:9)

- f. A Christian worker is *honest*.

Titus 2:10. *... not pilfering ... so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.*

- g. A Christian worker is *submissive*.

Proverbs 10:8. *The wise of heart will receive commands ...*

Titus 2:9. *Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative ...* (see also Ecc 8:5; 1 Peter 2:18; 1 Tim 6:1-2)

- h. A Christian worker is *wise*.

Ecclesiastes 10:10. *If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success.*

Proverbs 14:35. *The king's favor is toward a servant who acts wisely ...* (see also Prov 26:6)

- i. A Christian worker *doesn't bad-mouth his boss*.

Ecclesiastes 10:20. *In your bedchamber do not curse a king, and in your sleeping rooms do not curse a rich man, for a bird of the heavens will carry the sound and the winged creature will make the matter known.*

- j. A Christian worker is *enthusiastic*.

Ecclesiastes 9:10. *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.*

Colossians 3:23. *Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men ... (see also Phil 2:14)*

- k. A Christian worker is *content with his wages*.

Luke 3:14. *Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."*

8. Counsel To Christian Employers

The following are thirteen words of counsel, not to employees, but to *employers*.

- A. Avoid "tricky" business practices (even if they are technically legal).

Proverbs 11:1. *A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight.*

Proverbs 13:11. *Wealth obtained by fraud dwindles, but the one who gathers by labor increases it.*

Proverbs 15:27. *He who profits illicitly troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live. (see also Prov 11:6; 21:6; 10:9-10; Luke 8:17)*

- B. Avoid get-rich-quick schemes.

Proverbs 12:11. *He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who pursues worthless things lacks sense.*

Proverbs 13:4. *The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing ...*

- C. Avoid business partners with questionable ethics.

Proverbs 29:24. *He who is a partner with a thief hates his own life ...*

- D. Avoid debt as an "easy" way to advance your business.

Proverbs 22:7. *The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave.*

- E. Exercise care in whom you hire.

Proverbs 26:10. *Like an archer who wounds everyone, so is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by.*

- F. Don't use anger or threats to motivate employees; rather, calmly give legitimate, swift consequences.

Ephesians 6:9. *And masters ... give up threatening ...*

Ecclesiastes 8:11. *Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.*

- G. Don't be threatened by occasional employee grumbling.

Ecclesiastes 7:21-22. *Do not take seriously all words which are spoken, so that you will not hear your servant cursing you. For you also have realized that you likewise have many times cursed others.*

- H. Pay your workers a liveable wage, not necessarily the "market standard."

Observation:

"Market standard" might just be code for the unjustly low salaries typically offered by unsaved, self-serving employers who have no regard for God's standard of generosity and remuneration.

Proverbs 22:9. *He who is generous will be blessed ...*

Proverbs 22:16. *He who oppresses the poor to make more for himself or who gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.*

James 5:4. *Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.* (see also Deut 24:14-15)

- I. Keep a close personal eye on your business and cash flow.

Proverbs 27:23-24. *Know well the condition of your flocks, and pay attention to your herds; for riches are not forever ...*

- J. Expect corruption, but never participate in it.

Ecclesiastes 5:8. *If you see oppression of the poor and denial of justice and righteousness in the province, do not be shocked at the sight; for one official watches over another official, and there are higher officials over them.* (see also Ecc 7:7; Prov 25:26)

- K. Diversify to limit the effects of calamity.

Ecclesiastes 11:2, 6. *Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.*

L. Don't be fear-driven.

Ecclesiastes 11:4-5. *He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap. Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.*

M. Plan wisely, but at the same time joyfully embrace God's sovereignty.

Proverbs 21:5. *The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty.*

Proverbs 21 31. *The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the LORD. (see also Prov 20:18; 16:9; 19:21; 20:24; James 4:13-16)*

8) HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATED TO BE OBEDIENT CREATURES.

Genesis 2:16-17. *The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."*

Point:

God's first recorded words to mankind were a command and a prohibition. Man was created by God with a moral capacity and responsibility. In short, he was created to be an obedient creature.

Comment:

Men and women are never truly happy unless they are functioning as God designed them to function—obeying Him.

Deuteronomy 5:29. *Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!*

John 14:23. *If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.*

When we are living in disobedience to God's Word, we are, in a sense, acting in an *inhuman* or *subhuman* manner—mutant creatures of the Fall, not the obedient and blessed creatures God created us to be.

The purpose of counselling is to return men and women to their God-intended state of obedience.

Ephesians 2:10. *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

9) HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATED TO BE SOCIAL CREATURES.

Genesis 2:18. *Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."*

Comment:

Not all people have the desire to marry (1 Cor 7:7), and some who do will not have the opportunity. However, God's pronouncement in Genesis 2:18 makes it clear that human beings are created by God to be social creatures, rather than "alone" creatures.

1. The World's Wisdom

The world's perverse wisdom is encapsulated in the words of the famous French existential philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre: *Hell is other people.*

If self-determination, self-fulfilment, and self-pleasure are your ultimate goal, then you will view other people as either an obstacle to your goal or as tools to be used and cast aside in your pursuit of your goal. But no one can live happily in that kind of gruesomely selfish bubble.

2. God's Wisdom

Adam was not fashioned for solitary, isolated living his capacity for language, his walks and talks with God in the cool of the day, and God's expressed concern that he not remain alone (Gen 2:18) are all explicit evidences of the social side of human nature

All asceticism that either excludes or limits fellowship with Christians or proper social relations with unbelievers must be condemned. The second great commandment,

"love your neighbor as yourself," prohibits all such exclusivism. (Jay Adams, A Theology of Christian Counseling, 126, 127)

Observation:

Our technological world is often hostile to God's design for man.

David Wells:

We have built an outward world of great magnificence, with its cities and commerce, a world of brilliant technology ... laced together by instantaneous information On the other hand, this world we are making for ourselves, though filled with abundance, opportunities, and exotic products, is also quite inhospitable to the human spirit. (The Courage to be Protestant, 176)

Point:

What's missing in many cases is relationships. It's quite possible to have a thousand FaceBook friends and still feel friendless.

Tim Challies:

Studies show that many young people are actually losing their ability to relate to one another in an offline context It is not unusual to observe two girls sitting in the same room, mere feet from one another, texting back and forth. (The Next Story, 77)

We now consider community what was previously mere communication. (103)

Mediated communication gives us the ability to dedicate less of ourselves to more people. (112)

Point:

As much as you treasure your iPhone, it is no substitute for real, face-to-face relationships.

3. Man As A Social Being—Its Trinitarian Basis

John 17:24. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Men and women are created in God's image; therefore, considering the eternal love relationship among the Father, Son, and Spirit, it is no surprise that we are creatures who long to love and be loved.

A. Applied to different people

Different people have different levels of desire for marriage and social interaction. Clearly there is freedom here. For example, Proverbs says:

Proverbs 18:24. A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

The Bible acknowledges that you can't have the same level of relationship with everyone. In fact, relationships naturally exist in a series of concentric circles, with the most intimate at the centre: God, spouse, immediate family, extended family, church family, friends, acquaintances, neighbours, and so on. All are important, but each is developed to a different level of intimacy.

Ultimately, Christians should understand that human beings have been wired to need and enjoy a relationship with God and relationships with other people.

B. Applied to Christian fellowship

Hebrews 10:24-25. Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

1 Thessalonians 4:9. Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.

Challies:

Despite arguments to the contrary, the virtual church is not the real church. (The Next Story, 106)

It may be that there are some people who, for one reason or another, are unable to attend church or cannot find a church where the gospel is preached. In such cases, an online church may be a way for them to hear good preaching But here we find that the exception proves the rule. Such people will necessarily long for true church and true community, knowing that the online church is but a concession to unavoidable circumstances. It is never a replacement for the real thing. (109)

C. Applied to biblical counselling

Both your most difficult and most life-changing counselling will involve relationships: marriage, parenting, dating, singleness, and conflict resolution of all types. That's to be expected. Man is a social creature, and life gets bad very quickly when he has no relationships or when his relationships are disrupted by sin.

Adams:

Many of the ills of our "society" are attributed to this alienation of person to person. Attempts of every sort (self-help groups, marriage encounter, etc.) have been made in programs designed to bridge the gaps at various levels. But Christians know that those efforts are not the answer the answers, instead, lie in good old-fashioned Christian fellowship and in properly functioning Christian marriages. (A Theology of Christian Counseling, 129)

Conclusion:

While, it is essential to biblical counselling that we understand *God*, it is also essential that we understand *man*. We have found that Genesis 1-2 teaches us a series of critical truths about mankind. This survey has taught us that human beings are ...

- 1) created in God's image
- 2) created to exercise a legitimate dominion over God's creation
- 3) created male or female
- 4) created to be in a relationship of blessing with God
- 5) created to reproduce in a marriage setting
- 6) created as material/immaterial beings
- 7) created to be working beings
- 8) created to be obedient beings
- 9) created to be social beings.



HAMARTIOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

Joel James
(student)

Outline:

- 1) Sin and counselling
- 2) Sin and Christian culture
- 3) The destructiveness of sin
- 4) Sin defined
- 5) Different kinds of sin
- 6) Theological foundations
 1. Original sin
 2. The extent of sin's effects
 3. The source of sin in the world
 4. The source of sin in daily life
 5. The process of sin
 6. Sin as habit

1) SIN AND COUNSELLING

In the previous section we saw that man was created by God to be a morally accountable, obedient creature. The majority of counselling comes about because we don't obey or because others have not obeyed.

Isaiah 59:1-2. Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

Not every counselling situation arises due to sin—sometimes the issue is simply wisdom and foolishness or a lack of biblical information. Nonetheless, a biblical view of sin is essential to God-honouring counselling and, in fact, is one of the defining marks of biblical counselling.

The importance of a biblical view of sin illustrated:

A 17 year old youth stood before a judge in a ...courtroom. He heard himself sentenced to a stiff prison term for breaking into a house and making off with

\$6 000 in furs and jewellery. After sentencing the boy, the judge asked the lad's father to step into his chambers.

*...The father slumped into a chair...[and] moaned his consternation. "Why did he have to steal?" Any psychologist would tell that father his boy's criminal behavior was due to over-generosity and over-protection. His mother and father did so much for him, he was unable to do anything for himself. (C. S. Lovett, *What's a Parent to Do?*, 17)*

Comment:

Oh, that poor boy! A helpless victim of his parents' over-protection, he was "forced" to steal. Is that a biblical view of sin? Of course not. And such a fundamentally unbiblical definition of the problem will never lead to God's solution.

God's word teaches that people do what they do because they want something. All theories of psychological determinism, including "Daddy made me do it," are patently unbiblical.

Possible motivations of that young thief:

- Greed—a desire to have possessions without having to do legitimate work to obtain them.
- Self-focused pleasure—did he steal to support a drug habit?
- Man-pleasing—a desire to be considered daring by his friends.
- Malice—a desire to do something hurtful to people or to a social class that he despises.
- Attention—*If I get in serious trouble with the police, maybe my parents will finally pay attention to me.*
- Revenge—*I'll humiliate my parents by stealing and getting caught.*

Point:

The victim mentality means that psychological counselling will never address this young man's true problem: his desires. As 1 John 2:16 notes, our actions are driven by our lusts: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life.

- lust of the flesh—to support a drug habit
- lust of the eyes—greed
- boastful pride of life—a desire to be considered daring

Summary:

A biblical view of sin is *essential* to counselling.

JC Ryle:

Wrong views about holiness are generally traceable to wrong views about human corruption If a man does not realize the dangerous nature of his soul's disease, you cannot wonder if he is content with false or imperfect remedies. (Holiness, 1)

2) SIN AND CHRISTIAN CULTURE

Our nominally "Christian" culture is of no help to us when it comes to establishing a biblical view of sin. In fact, superficially Christian cultures typically regress through five stages when it comes to sin.

Five stages of regression:

1. *Sin is hidden.* This is the Pharisee stage.

Matthew 23:27-28. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Societal pressure for external moral conformity in a church-going culture means that, while sin regularly takes place, it is done secretly.

2. *Sin is winked at.* Although sin is officially condemned by the culture, it is winked at in practice: *If you look the other way when I sin, I'll do the same when you sin.*

1 Corinthians 5:1. It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles ...

3. *A few specific sins are enculturated.* Some sins become so woven into the fabric of a culture's thinking that they are no longer viewed as sin. Tragically, they become part of the culture's self-identification. Typical examples include racial prejudice, materialism, the demeaning and mistreatment of women, sexual mores, and so on.

1 Corinthians 6:13, 18. Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food ... Yet the body is not for immorality Flee immorality ...

The Corinthian Christians compared fornication to eating: *When we visit prostitutes, we're just satisfying a basic biological need, nothing more.* Influenced by the gross excesses of their pre-conversion lifestyles, the Corinthian Gentile converts added sexual immorality to

their church culture, to the degree that they openly tolerated a man who was having an affair with his mother or step-mother (1 Cor 5:1).

4. *Sins of all kinds are promoted as normal.*

Romans 1:32. *And although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.*

5. *The concept of sin is rejected altogether.* In this final stage, the whole notion of an objective external moral standard is abandoned. Sin and righteousness are no longer *inverted* ("Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil," Isaiah 5:20). Instead, the concept of moral law is rejected altogether. This is where we are today. We call it postmodernism; God calls it moral rebellion and anarchy.

Judges 21:25. *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

David Wells:

Everyone is now avant-garde, not just the cultural elite. Everyone is experimenting with how it feels to live in a world without moral form, one that is devoid of objective ethical norms. (The Courage to be Protestant, 146)

Observation:

It is in that cultural context that we bring God's authoritative message that we are morally responsible creatures, accountable to God for our decisions and actions.

The confusion of those who reject moral absolutes:

When we lose the holiness of God we have sin's pains and calamities, but we do not understand it any more. (Wells, The Courage to be Protestant, 128)

That's a keen insight into the plight of postmodern man. Our job, then, is to help people understand why they are experiencing sin's pains and calamities, and to move them back to God-blessed obedience.

Galatians 6:7. *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*

3) THE DESTRUCTIVENESS OF SIN

JC Ryle:

We are too apt to forget that temptation to sin will rarely present itself to us in its true colors, saying, "I am your deadly enemy, and I want to ruin you forever in hell." (Holiness, 9)

Sin is your enemy, not your friend. It promises blessing, pleasure, peace, and stability, but what it delivers is war. Sin sets you at war with yourself, with others, and ultimately with God.

1. Sin Sets One At War With Self

1 Peter 2:11. *Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.*

2. Sin Sets One At War With Others

Galatians 5:15. *But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.*

3. Sin Sets One At War With God

1 Peter 5:5. *... God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

Wayne Grudem:

All sin is ultimately irrational. It really did not make sense for Satan to rebel against God in the expectation of being able to exalt himself above God. Nor did it make sense for Adam and Eve to think that there could be any gain in disobeying the words of their Creator Though people sometimes persuade themselves that they have good reasons for sinning, when examined in the cold light of truth on the last day, it will be seen in every case that sin ultimately just does not make sense. (Systematic Theology, 493)

Point:

Never listen to the excuses and rationalisations fabricated by your flesh: *There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the LORD (Prov 21:30).*

Summed up:

Sin makes us stupid. It blinds our eyes, perverts our desires, and defiles our decisions.

4) SIN DEFINED

Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.
(Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 490)

Comment:

Grudem's definition notes for us that a biblical view of sin includes viewing sin from the inside out: man's sin *nature* leads to sinful *desires* that issue in sinful *words and actions*.

1. A Key Text

1 John 3:4. *Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.*

Sin is any active or passive failure to measure up to God's moral law, and that law is determined by God's holy, unchanging character. Sin is the human race's foolish and destructive attempt at moral self-reliance, independence, and autonomy.

2. Sin's Relationship To Pride

Pride, of course, is not the only sin, but it is at the heart of sin Sin is an overriding, overweening fascination with the self, with its senses, its prestige, its demands Pride makes of the small, tawdry, paltry, human preoccupations of life ultimates that must be served with a devotion that should be reserved for God. (David Wells, *Losing Our Virtue*, 188)

Sin is not a failure "to be all I can be." It is not an inconsequential mistake—"to err is human." It is not a failure to keep some personal or societal standard. Sin is a failure to obey *God's commands*—for NT believers, the law of Christ as revealed in the NT Scriptures (1 Cor 9:20-21), and for those who do not have the Bible, the law of conscience written on their hearts (Rom 2:14-15).

Our postmodern culture is not keen to submit to an unchanging, absolutely authoritative, divine moral standard.

Wells:

Evil has become purely privatized. It is simply what is bad for me.

.... Here, though, is the difference between sin and evil (as we use this word today). Evil is simply badness. Sin, though, is altogether more serious because it sets up human badness in relation to God. (*The Courage to be Protestant*, 101)

Point:

Sin is sin because it is rebellion against God and His holy character.

Illustrated:

Psalm 51:4. *Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.*

Andrew Bonar:

It is not the importance of the thing, but the majesty of the Lawgiver, that is to be the standard of obedience. (quoted in Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, 23)

5) DIFFERENT KINDS OF SIN

1. Sins Of Omission—Not Doing What You Know You Should.

James 4:17. *Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

2. Sins Of Commission—Doing What You Know You Shouldn't.

Colossians 3:8. *But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.*

3. Sins Of Imagination—Toying With And Imagining Sin In Your Mind.

Exodus 20:17. *You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife ... or anything that belongs to your neighbor.*

Proverbs 6:25a. *Do not desire her beauty in your heart ...*

4. Sins Against Conscience—Doing Something That You Believe To Be Wrong, Even If There Is No Specific Biblical Command Against It.

Romans 14:23. *But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.*

5. Sins Of Ignorance—Doing Something That, Because Of Biblical Ignorance, You Didn't Know Was Wrong.

Leviticus 5:17-19. *Now if a person sins and does any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty and shall bear his punishment So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his error in which he sinned unintentionally and did not*

know it, and it will be forgiven him he was certainly guilty before the LORD.

6. Sins Of Active And Passive Rebellion

- A. Active rebellion—*I'm not going to do my homework!*
- B. Passive rebellion—*I'll do my homework slowly and poorly, go to bed late because of it, be grumpy in the morning, and do badly in school tomorrow—in short, causing as much trouble as I can with my delays and shoddy work.*

Active rebellion is easier to see, but passive rebellion is just as much an expression of a defiant heart.

Point:

Counsellors must be sensitive to both active and passive forms of rebellion. For example, a husband might be openly destroying his marriage with his angry words and self-focused use of time—it's easy to see.

However, the wife might be just as rebellious in her coldness, silence, bitterness, and refusal to give physical affection: her passive rebellion is contributing equally to the demise of their marriage.

Proverbs 18:9. He also who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys.

7. Sins Of Initiative And Response

- A. Sins of initiative

Sins of initiative are sins that you choose to do that are not stimulated by something hurtful done to you by someone else—you look at something dodgy on the internet simply because you want to, not because of anything someone did to you.

- B. Sins of response

Sins of response, on the other hand, are ungodly responses to other people's words, actions, or attitudes, or to the pain of unpleasant external circumstances.

- C. Why is this distinction important?

Sins of response are harder to deal with because *they feel so justified*. We can understand why a wife whose husband speaks harshly to her is bitter or why a

man who has lost his job is struggling with depression—we sympathise with them.

When people are sinned against or face painful circumstances, we should express compassion—weep with those who weep and bear one another's burdens (Rom 12:15; Gal 6:2). However, we must also embrace the fact that a person's *response* to being sinned against or his *response* to his painful external trials is either selfless or selfish, faith-filled or doubting, trusting or fearful, angry or submissive, sinful or righteous.

In other words, when dealing with *sins of response*, a counselor must walk a difficult line. He must express compassion and patience toward the hurting person, but at the same time, refuse to tolerate or coddle ungodly responses.

Point:

Contracting cancer and being shouted at by your husband are not sin, but how you *respond* to them might be.

D. An example of a sin of response

Suppose you are counselling a woman who has just discovered that her husband has been cheating on her. She is, presumably, an innocent sufferer. Expressing compassion in order to comfort her in the midst of her sense of betrayal is perfectly appropriate.

However, as heartrending as her husband's unfaithfulness is, the sinned-against wife is also responsible for how she *responds*. In fact, this is her greatest challenge—not her husband's adultery, but her *response to it*.

Therefore, as a counsellor, you will need to be both supportive and unsupportive at the same time—if she allows her emotions to lead to ungodly responses.

Point:

It takes both compassion and courage to address sins of response because the person's emotion-driven reactions feel justified. While the temptation to respond in a sinful way is understandable, it's still sin. Instead, we must graciously ease the person past his or her initial emotional response, helping him or her to think and act in a selfless and Christ-like manner.

Summary:

Sins fall into various categories: sins of omission, commission, imagination, sins against conscience, sins of ignorance, active and passive rebellion, and sins of initiative and response.

However, all these sins are sins *because they are against God.*

The target missed, the path abandoned, the authority defied, the law transgressed are in each and every case God's. Sin is all about taking issue with God, defying him, refusing to submit to him, and displacing him from the center of existence. (Wells, The Courage to be Protestant, 102)

6) THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Because of Adam's rebellion against God in Genesis 3, all men and women are under God's condemnation. According to the Bible, we have become sinners by nature, and thus, when given opportunity, sinners by action. In short, we have inherited both the guilt and corruption of Adam's sin (see Grudem, 494-96)

1. Original Sin

Summed up by John MacArthur:

Scripture says we were made in the image of God but are fallen creatures, born with an inclination to sin. We inherited our sinfulness from Adam. When he sinned, he plunged the whole race into a helplessly fallen state of bondage to evil. (The Battle for the Beginning, 196)

A. Original sin means that we are sinners by *nature*.

Romans 5:19. *For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.*

Adam's sin and guilt was imputed to the whole human race in the same way that our sin is imputed to Christ and Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. This three-fold imputation is central to Christian theology.

Grudem on our sin nature:

Even while asleep, an unbeliever, though not committing sinful actions or actively nurturing sinful attitudes, is still a "sinner" in God's sight; he or she still has a sinful nature that does not conform to God's moral law. (Systematic Theology, 490-91)

Ephesians 2:3. *Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh ... and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

Psalm 51:5. *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.*

We are all born with a tendency to sin. (Grudem, 496)

B. As a result of our sin nature, we also are sinners by *action*:

Romans 3:12. *All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.*

Romans 3:23. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...*

Note:

Although it is right for God to judge us for our sinful nature alone, most often the Scripture emphasises that God condemns sinners for their actions.

Colossians 3:25. *For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.*

2. The Extent Of Sin's Effects

A. The whole man is affected by sin.

- Genesis 6:5. *Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*
- Genesis 8:21. *... the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth ...*
- Romans 7:18. *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh ...*
- Titus 1:15. *... to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.*

MacArthur:

Because of sin, no part of the creation now exists as God originally made it. (*The Battle for the Beginning*, 198)

Grudem:

Every part of our being is affected by sin—our intellects, our emotions and desires, our hearts ... our goals and motives, and even our physical bodies. (Systematic Theology, 497)

Question: How *total* is total depravity?

Total depravity means that our whole man—in totality, no parts excluded—is drastically affected by original sin. It does not mean that all sinners are as sinful as they could be.

Carl Henry:

The Christian doctrine of human depravity does not mean that man is as wicked as he can be. Nor does it mean that man has no moral insight or moral striving. (Christian Personal Ethics, 187)

Observation:

Sometimes unbelievers do what is right, instinctively doing the things of the Law motivated by their consciences (Rom 2:14-15). However, all that a person does before believing in Christ is defiled by his sin nature, and thus, is unpleasing to God: "those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom 8:8).

B. All Men Are Affected By Sin.

- 1 Kings 8:46. *When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) ...*
- Ecclesiastes 7:20. *Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.*
- Romans 3:23. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

CS Lewis:

We must guard against the feeling that there is "safety in numbers". It is natural to feel that if all men are as bad as the Christians say, then badness must be very excusable. If all the boys plough in the examination, surely the papers must have been too hard? (The Problem of Pain, 50)

Summary:

What we know about a person when we sit down to counsel him is that he (or she) is hard-wired by the Fall to rebel against God, is far more inclined to

sin than to righteousness, and is by both nature and action in need of the grace and forgiveness of Christ.

3. The Source Of Sin In The World

A. Not God

James 1:13. *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.*

Grudem:

We must clearly affirm that God himself did not sin, and God is not to be blamed for sin. It was man who sinned, and it was angels who sinned, and in both cases they did so by willful, voluntary choice. To blame God for sin would be blasphemy against the character of God. (Systematic Theology, 492)

... God certainly does not take pleasure in sin; nonetheless, for his own purposes, and in a way that still remains largely a mystery to us, God ordained that sin would come into the world. (492, fn.5)

B. Satan and Adam

John 8:44. *You are of your father the devil ... He was a murderer from the beginning [i.e., after his fall], and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (cp. Is 14:12-15; Ezk 28:12-17)*

Romans 5:12. *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.*

C. Question: Isn't God sovereign? Yes.

Proverbs 16:4. *The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.*

Conclusion:

The Bible lays side by side the truths that God is sovereign and that He is also not to blame for sin. God knows how those two truths are reconciled, but He has chosen not to explain it to us.

This should not throw us off. Such apparent paradoxes are, in fact, found throughout Christian theology.

Illustrations:

- The Trinity—God is three and one at the same time.
- Christ is 100% man and 100% God.
- Should we pray or is God sovereign? Yes!

The origin of sin involves a similar *apparent* paradox. In each case, God knows how the apparent dilemma is explained. We can trust Him with the answer.

Summed up:

God is sovereign, therefore, sin is part of His plan without Him in any way being or becoming sinful.

D. Why did God ordain evil?

God has ordained evil so that He can reveal the fullness of His character either by judging it or by forgiving it.

Explanation:

If there were no sin, we would not understand God's holiness or His compassion. Evil is the foil against which His perfect holiness and justice are seen and understood, and the background against which His compassion and love are most effectively displayed.

Illustrated:

Romans 9:22. *What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?*

Creation is a grand demonstration of God's character. According to Romans 9:22, sin's existence allows God to demonstrate His patience (by not judging sin immediately) and His justice and power (by eventually judging it completely).

4. The Source Of Sin In Daily Life

Six wrong views of the source of sin in our daily lives

- A. *Biological determinism*. Evolutionary theory implies that human beings are just bundles of biological needs, and our actions are determined by those needs for food, shelter, sexual release, and so on.

Observation:

If man is simply a powerless victim of his genetic or biological makeup, morality and self-restraint have no meaning.

- B. *Environmental determinism* (B.F. Skinner). Man is shaped by his environment to such a degree that he can behave only as his environment dictates.
- C. *Parental/sexual determinism* (Sigmund Freud). Behaviour is a product of repressed sexual urges and the negative influence of one's parents.
- D. *Economic determinism* (Karl Marx). People's behaviour is determined by external economic forces that mechanistically shape the flow of history.
- E. *Occult determinism*. People sin because a witchdoctor has placed a curse them.

Illustration:

Christ Seminary student who wasn't passing his Bible Survey class:
"Somebody must have placed a curse on me!"

- F. *Demonic determinism*. Sin is the result of demonic possession. If the demon of lust, anger, or stealing is cast out the person will stop sinning.
 - a. An infamous example

Demons were the excuse of the televangelist Jimmy Swaggert many years ago when he was caught with pornography and a prostitute. Oral Roberts, a fellow televangelist, pretended to cast the demons of lust out of Swaggert, supposedly curing him. Of course, Swaggert was not "cured" at all, and was caught doing the same thing again a short time later.

Point:

Many people in the Charismatic movement have been trained by theological charlatans to blame their sin on demons, giving them a convenient but unbiblical excuse for their ungodly forays into sin.

- b. A misused text

1 Chronicles 21:1. *Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.*

Was Satan the source of David's sin? Apparently not. Note David's confession a few verses later:

1 Chronicles 21:8. *David said to God, "I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly."*

Whatever Satan's role in presenting the temptation to David, David understood that he and he alone was responsible for his sinful choice to number the nation of Israel.

c. Evaluation

While biological desires, genetics, environment, and so on, give us *opportunity* to sin and shape which sin we are most likely to choose, they do not *force* us to sin. Influence is not determination.

In fact, human beings are moral agents accountable to God for our choices, otherwise God would be unjust when He judges.

The results of deterministic views of sin:

- Deterministic views of sin undercut the doctrine of *sanctification*. If environment, genetics, or parents are to blame for one's actions, or if a Christian is a puppet of demonic forces beyond his control, then he should be given sympathy, not rebuke, for his sinful actions.
- Deterministic views of sin undercut the doctrine of *salvation*. Humanly speaking, the first step to being saved is admitting that you are a sinner. If you remove responsibility (and thus moral guilt), then the concept of repentance becomes nonsense and salvation is unnecessary.

One Right View Of The Source Of Sin In Our Daily Lives

James 1:13-18

A. The source of sin is *not* God

James 1:13. *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.*

Exegetical note:

The word *by* in *tempted by God* is the preposition *apo*. *Apo* is typically used in Greek of indirect source. Therefore, the accusation being made in this verse is that God is indirectly to blame for sin.

Illustrated:

Genesis 3:12. *The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."*

Two ways people indirectly blame God for their sin:

- a. God is in control.

Since God is sovereign over circumstances, He placed me in this tempting situation; therefore, my sin is indirectly His fault: *I wasn't looking to commit adultery. God brought that woman into my office. Why did He do that if He didn't want me to be with her?* The adulterer's logic is that God must in some way share the blame for his unfaithfulness to his wife.

- b. God created me this way.

I get angry because I'm German ... I'm just a quick-trigger guy; that's how I'm wired. This rationale almost always dominates the thinking of people wrestling with same-sex attraction: *Why did God make me this way?* They want God to share the blame.

Summary:

The *God-controls* and *God-created* arguments are both attempts to indirectly blame God for sin. After all, "If He made me this way and controls the events that led up to my sin, then He should share some of the responsibility, shouldn't He?" Never give in to that kind of perverse thinking yourself, nor allow it to continue unchecked in a counselee.

James refutes all attempts to blame God for sin in three ways:

- God's innocence (v. 13)
- God's abstinence (v. 13)
- God's beneficence (v. 17-18)

B. The source of sin is *self and self's desires*.

- James 1:14. *But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.*
- Galatians 5:16. *Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*
- James 4:1-2. *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not*

have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel ...

Conclusion:

We are not helpless pawns of external forces. We do what we do *because we want something*.

Illustration:

Possible explanations of a teenager's temptation to take his first drink of alcohol:

- peer pressure—a helpless victim of forces outside himself
- men-pleasing—a strong desire to look "cool" in the eyes of his friends
- lust of the flesh—a desire for the temporary pleasure of alcoholic stimulation

Pressure from his friends may have influenced his choice, but in the end, that young man took his first swig of beer because *he wanted something*—prestige, pleasure—whatever it was, he wanted something. That's how all sin works.

James 1:14. *But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.*

Exegetical note:

Here the preposition *by* in *enticed by his own lust* is not *apo*. It is *upo* with the genitive, which speaks of direct agency. Self's strong desires or cravings are the direct and immediate source of our sin.

Comment:

The epistle of James consists of as a series of tests of true faith (2:14ff.). Here, James points out that a dominant test of true faith is a willingness to accept personal responsibility for sin. True believers do not blame God or others for their sin. They accept responsibility. It is essential to nurture this characteristic of a true faith in ourselves and in our counselees.

C. The source of sin is not ...

- Satan and demons: *A prophet in my church said I am oppressed by a spirit of anger.*

- circumstances: *I was tired ... The kids have been awful today ...*
- other people: *Did you hear what she said to me?*

James completely ignores Satan, circumstances, or other people as potential culprits for who is to blame for sin. In fact, sinners are not victims. We do what we do because we want something: *each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust* (James 1:14).

Observation:

This is why some of the key questions in biblical counselling are ...

- What did you *want* when you did or said that?
- What were you hoping to accomplish by your anger, manipulation, lying, harsh words, etc.?
- What goal did you have in mind?
- What did you want so badly that you would sin to get it, or sin if you didn't get it?

Basic to counselling is the fact that all sin starts with a person's desires. The thing desired might be neutral or even good, such as more time with your husband. However, when you want an evil thing or when you want a good thing more than you want to obey God, then you are tempted to sin. Your uncurbed, unrestrained desires are the problem.

Point:

To overcome sin, we must subdue our desires with godly self-control and replace evil desires with godly ones.

5. The Process Of Sin As Described In James 1:14-16

There are five steps to the process of sin:

Observation → temptation → imagination → action → condemnation

A. Step 1: Observation *carried away and enticed* (v. 14)

You're walking in the mall. Out of the corner of your eye you catch a glimpse of a dress. Your head turns, and you step over to the display window. You have been *enticed* and *drawn* aside. *This* is not just a dress; it is the dress to end all dresses. Forget the one you bought last week. This is *the* dress. Your continued happy existence on the face of the earth hinges on you obtaining this garment (the lust of the eyes, 1 John 2:16).

B. Step 2: Temptation *each one is tempted* (v. 14)

While external circumstances gave you the opportunity, your strong desires were actually what tempted you.

C. Step 3: Imagination *when lust has conceived* (v. 15)

In verse 15, James is using the imagery of conception, gestation, and birth to illustrate the process of sin: when a woman falls pregnant, she will eventually give birth nine months later.

Imagination is the gestation period—the forming of the sin in the mind. In many cases, imagination has a key role in the process of sin.

You meditate on how enjoyable it would be to tell off the person who offended you. You daydream about being romantic with someone besides your spouse. You toy with the notion of how one slip of the finger on the keyboard will double your return on an expense form. By imagining that sin in your mind, you are preparing to do it in reality.

MacArthur:

Nothing damages the conscience more than the habit of indulging in evil thoughts. Unfortunately, once begun, the practice becomes all too easy. This is a sin that does not have to wait for an opportunity; the mind can sin anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances. So the habit is quickly and easily established. (The Vanishing Conscience, 182)

D. Step 4: Action *it gives birth to sin* (v. 15)

Thought leads to action. When a woman goes into labour, she can't say, "This isn't convenient now, I want to wait another two months." I've held my wife's hand through two deliveries, and I can tell you, holding the baby in *isn't* one of the options. It's the same way with sin. Sin you prepare for in your mind is sin you will do in your flesh.

Illustrated:

I've often heard John MacArthur say, "When a pastor falls into sexual sin, he doesn't fall far." What he means is that man has been preparing for adultery for years by failing to discipline his imagination and his actions toward women. Rarely is adultery "fallen" into. More often it is carefully prepared for over time by a reckless disregard for disciplining the imagination.

E. Step 5: Condemnation *it brings forth death.* (v. 15)

Simply put, sin is not your friend.

James' concluding warning is, *Do not be deceived...* (v. 16).

Point:

It is easy to deceive ourselves about the source of our sin *and* its deadly consequences.

A word of encouragement:

The sin train can be derailed. The sin foetus can be aborted (this is one abortion that we will gladly support!). No sin is stronger than a Holy Spirit-assisted choice to do what is right.

Bridges:

If we sin, it is because we choose to sin, not because we lack the ability to say no to temptation. (The Pursuit of Holiness, 84)

As a Christian, the sin you *choose* to do is sin that you can, by God's grace, *choose not* to do.

6. Biblical Illustrations Of The Five-Step Process Of Sin

Observation → temptation → imagination → action → condemnation

- Eve: Genesis 3:6, 19. *When the woman saw ... that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground ...*
- Achan: Joshua 7:21, 25. *I saw ... a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels ... I coveted them ... [I] took them And all Israel stoned them with stones ...*
- David: 2 Samuel 11:2-4; 12:10. *... He saw a woman David sent and inquired about the woman David sent messengers and took her The sword shall never depart from your house ...*

7. Biblical Counsellors Can Help At Every Point In The Process Of Sin.

A. Observation

We teach people to limit their opportunities to be tempted by making "no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts" (Rom 13:14).

B. Temptation

We teach people to sanctify their desires—desiring what is true, honourable, right, pure, lovely, excellent, and praiseworthy (Phil 4:8).

C. Imagination

We teach people to be consistently "taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5), disciplining and purifying their imaginations.

D. Action

We teach people to exercise self-control, sifting their actions through the grid of loving obedience: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

E. Condemnation

We call those who have sinned to forsake it: "Let us lay aside the deeds of darkness" (Rom 13:12). Furthermore, we comfort them with the assurance of the forgiveness of God: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins ..." (1 John 1:9).

Summary:

Understanding how sin works, and especially that its source is our desires, is central to success in biblical counselling.

8. Sin As Habit

You are probably familiar with this saying:

Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character.

That's a pretty good summary of sin's enslaving power: undisciplined thoughts lead to sinful actions, which if repeated, quickly become disabling habits, which if allowed to run unchecked, become ingrained character.

Many counselors, however, fail to understand the role of habit, and therefore, fail to help their counselees as effectively as they could.

A. Habit defined

As Jay Adams frequently points out, habit is the ability to respond to situations automatically, without conscious thought, comfortably, and relatively skilfully. Habit is your friend when it comes to physical skills, such as driving, typing, and tying your shoelaces. But when it comes to sin, habit can quickly become your *enemy*.

Jay Adams:

Habit is very much a part of our lives, yet ... the average person may not be aware of how vital a part it plays in day to day activity. Habits simply don't call attention to themselves. You can demonstrate that from your counselees' own statements: "I didn't realize I was raising my voice to my wife when I said that." (How to Help People Change, 198)

B. Biblical references to sin as habit

- Jeremiah 13:23. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good who are accustomed to doing evil.*
- Ephesians 4:22. *... in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self ...*
- Hebrews 10:25. *... not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some ...*
- 1 Peter 1:18. *... your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers ...*

Note:

This last verse combines habit and imitation.

Point:

If you think or do a sin frequently, it quickly becomes a habit, as illustrated by the person who automatically contradicts anything that is said or the married couple that argues over irrelevancies simply because they always do. Such habits are sin and need to be broken.

Point:

Counsellors must help people put off sinful habits, replacing them with conscious, intentional obedience to the commands of Christ. It's easy to sin without thinking. Wouldn't it be great to be *godly* without thinking, doing what is right comfortably and relatively skilfully? That's when habit becomes your friend.

Summed up by Adams:

Counselors should not be surprised, then, when counselees protest, "I'll never change," or "I guess that's just the way I am," or words to that effect. Counselees continually confuse learned behavior patterns with inherited nature. (A Theology of Christian Counseling, 236)

Point:

It's easy to confuse habit with nature. But Christians, having been made new creatures in Christ can learn new habits, displacing the old, sinful ones.

Your view of *sin* also determines your view of *salvation*. A fully developed, biblical view of man's abject sinfulness leaves no option but for salvation to be by undeserved, unmerited, gracious, unilateral divine intervention.

Jesus on the impossibility of being saved:

Matthew 19:25-26. *When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

Point:

The next section of our notes is how God did the impossible!



SOTERIOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

Joel James
(student)

Outline:

- 1) Romans 3:21-26: the doctrine of salvation in one passage
- 2) Justification and biblical counselling
- 3) Assurance of salvation
- 4) Problem passages: Hebrews 6 and 10

Introductory Quote:

Jl Packer:

The traveller through the Bible landscape misses his way as soon as he loses sight of the hill called Calvary. (A Quest for Godliness, 286)

In this section, we will be studying *soteriology*: the saving work of God our Saviour—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- Isaiah 43:11. *I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me.*
- 1 Timothy 1:1. *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope ...*
- Titus 2:13-14. *... [we are] looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*
- Titus 3:5. *He saved us ... by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit ...*

The bad news of the gospel is that we are sinners. The good news is that God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is a saving God.

1) ROMANS 3:21-26: THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION IN ONE PASSAGE

Seven characteristics of God's salvation plan:

1. Long-anticipated
2. Not Law-based
3. Faith-based
4. Christ-focused
5. One-size-fits-all (both Jews and Gentiles)
6. Wrath-satisfying
7. Substitutionary

²¹ But now **apart from the Law (2)** the righteousness of God has been manifested, **being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, (1)** ²² even the righteousness of God **through faith (3)** in **Jesus Christ (4)** for **all those who believe; for there is no distinction;** ²³ **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (5),** ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ **whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation (6)** in **His blood (7)** through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

1. Long-Anticipated (Rom 3:21)

A. Supported

1 Peter 1:18-21. ... *you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead ...*

Examples:

Genesis 3:15	proto-evangelicum
Leviticus 16	the day of atonement
Exodus 12	Passover lamb
Isaiah 53	virtually a DVD of the atoning work of Christ
Isaiah 49:6	Gentiles included in the Messiah's saving work

B. Its importance to counselling

God's saving work is not an accidental, last-minute plan hastily assembled by the Trinity in order to rectify the sinful escapades of Adam's race. In fact, it is an eternally devised, long-anticipated, historically enacted plan of God undergirded by His eternal, unchanging, and absolutely faithful character and promises.

Doubting, fretting counselees need the assurance that God's salvation plan is an eternally established, long-anticipated plan.

2. Not Law-Based (Rom 3:21)

A. Salvation is not a synergistic project.

It is not a joint effort between God and man in which a sinner contributes moral or ceremonial compliance to obtain or maintain his salvation.

For those who are sinners by nature, neither moral effort nor religious rituals can produce an innocent standing before God.

Rom 3:19-20. Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight.

B. Examples of people wanting to be saved by Law-keeping

- a. The rich young ruler with his confidence in moral effort: *What good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?* (Matt 19:16)

Jesus' response:

Matthew 19:26. And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

- b. The Pharisee in the temple (Luke 18:9-14) with his confidence in comparative moral superiority

Luke 18:14. I tell you, this man [the tax gatherer] went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.

- c. Vaguely religious people of all sorts with their confidence in human goodness:

Illustrated:

There was general agreement that if you tried your best to live an honourable life and did your duty and were faithful to friends and not unkind to the weak and poor, it would come out right. (Winston Churchill, My Early Life, 120)

Titus 3:5. *He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy ...*

The Westminster Confession's summary:

Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone.

C. Two errors of all Law-based systems of salvation

*All inadequate doctrines of the atonement are due to inadequate doctrines of God and man. (John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 129)*

- a. An inadequate doctrine of man. All works-based views of salvation wrongly assume that men are able to believe and obey apart from unilateral divine intervention.

Romans 8:7. *For the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so ...*

- b. An inadequate view of God. All works-based views of salvation wrongly assume that God is willing to diminish His glory by following a plan in which justification is not solely His work.

Piper:

*God aims to get all the glory in our redemption. Therefore, He is adamant that He will work for us and not we for Him. (Brothers, *We are not Professionals*, 15)*

Romans 9:15-16. *For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.*

The humble result:

Galatians 6:14. *But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

Point:

The dividing line between Christianity and all other religions—and between biblical Christianity and unbiblical versions of Christianity—is the fact that only biblical Christianity credits *all* the work of justification to God.

D. Packer's outstanding summary of salvation

*There is really only one point to be made in the field of soteriology: the point that **God saves sinners**. **God**—the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit; three Persons working together in sovereign wisdom, power and love to achieve the salvation of a chosen people, the Father electing, the Son fulfilling the Father's will by redeeming, the Spirit executing the purpose of Father and Son by renewing.*

***Saves**—does everything from first to last, that is involved in bringing man from death in sin to life in glory; Plans achieves, and communicates redemption, calls and keeps, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies.*

***Sinners**—men as God finds them, guilty, vile, helpless, powerless, unable to lift a finger to do God's will or better their spiritual lot.*

***God saves sinners**—and the force of this confession may not be weakened by disrupting the unity of the work of the Trinity, or by dividing the achievement of salvation between God and man and making the decisive part man's own, or by soft-peddling the sinner's inability so as to allow him to share the praise of his salvation with his Saviour.*

*... Sinners do not save themselves in any sense at all, but that salvation, first and last, whole and entire, past, present and future, is of the Lord to whom be glory for ever; amen. (quoted in Steele, Thomas, and Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 14-15)*

3. Faith-Based (Rom 3:22)

Romans 3:22. ... *even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ*
...

A. Faith defined

Trust or belief: to have a calm, certain confidence in, to rely upon a specific person or object of hope, an assurance or strong conviction (Heb 11:1).

- Jeremiah 17:5, 7. *Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength ... Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD.*

Summed up:

Faith is ... the negation of self-confidence It involves throwing oneself unreservedly on the mercy of God. (Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology)

As repentance is the negative aspect of conversion, turning from one's sin, so faith is the positive aspect, laying hold upon the promises and the work of Christ. (Millard Erickson, Christian Theology, 938)

B. The three components of faith

- a. *Knowledge.* A personal knowledge of key saving facts about the Person and work of Christ.

Acts 16:31. Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved ...

Romans 10:2, 17. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Point:

One cannot be saved apart from a personal, conscious, informed knowledge of Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection.

- b. *Emotion:* a hearty conviction or heartfelt belief in God and Christ.

1 Peter 1:8-9. And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

Point:

Peter intermingles love for Christ and faith in Christ. In other words, belief in Christ is different than the belief that there is a continent called Antarctica. Saving faith includes an active seeking of and affection for Christ.

- c. *Will or volition.* Biblical faith includes commitment—a decisive, life-changing, Spirit-produced response to God and Christ.

Matthew 16:24. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

Berkhof:

In both Testaments faith is the same radical self-commitment to God... (Systematic Theology, 498)

Summary:

Faith is an informed, heartfelt commitment and surrender to Christ.

C. Is faith a work that a sinner does, causing God to reward him or her with salvation?

Restated:

- Is faith something you screw yourself up to and by which you compel God to relent from judgement and reward you with salvation?
- Is salvation a *free gift* or is it *compensation for faith-services rendered*?
- Is faith an unmerited divine gift or is it a *purely human response* which merits a saving response from God?

Their answers to these questions are what distinguish the Arminian and Calvinistic views of salvation.

a. The Arminian view

The Arminian view of salvation can be summarised as follows: *Jesus died to make all men saveable*—not to *save* them, but to make them *saveable*.

Arminianism is divided into two camps: those who believe man is intrinsically able to believe in Christ in spite of original sin (Pelagians), and those who believe that God does a half-way salvation in all sinners, making them capable of believing in Christ, but then leaves them to decide for themselves without divine interference, whether or not they will believe (semi-Pelagians).

b. The Calvinistic view

The Calvinistic view is that all men are both unable and unwilling to believe in Christ, and God grants faith to those He has elected, graciously refusing their refusal of Him and causing them to believe as a divine, authoritative, sovereign, loving gift.

The question repeated:

- Does God accomplish redemption in Christ on the cross, but leave it to men and women, on their own accord, to complete the equation of salvation by adding their human produced faith to activate God's divine work?
- Is faith something the sinner self-generates apart from God's active intervention?

D. Faith is a divine gift—granted, not self-generated:

- Philippians 1:29. *For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake ...*
- Ephesians 2:8-9. *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Point:

Faith in Christ is a divine gift by which God saves us, not a human mental exertion by which we save ourselves.

Salvation is through faith, not because of it. (Iain Murray, Revival and Revivalism, 364)

Machen:

Such a wonderful change is not the work of man; faith itself is given us by the Spirit of God. Christians never make themselves Christians; but they are made Christians by God. (What is Faith?, 203)

E. Why faith must be a divine gift

a. Proven

- 1 Corinthians 2:14. *A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them ...*
- Romans 8:7. *... the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so ...*

According to these texts, sinners are both *unwilling* and *unable* to understand and submit to the things of God.

b. Explained

Biblically speaking, faith is both a human duty (which we fail to fulfil) *and* the gift of God.

c. The place of human responsibility

- Acts 16:30-31. *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved ..."*

Sinners are responsible to believe; the sad truth is that we do not. We are both *unwilling* and *unable* to. Therefore, looming behind the call to believe is the theological reality that saving faith in Christ is, by hamartiological necessity, a divinely granted gift, not a humanly originated effort.

The interworking of divine sovereignty and human responsibility—with ultimate priority being given to divine sovereignty—is seen clearly in these two verses in the book of Acts.

- Acts 16:14. *A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.*
- Acts 13:48. *When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*

Summary:

Packer is right: *God* saves sinners—from first to last, from beginning to end. And that includes 1) God refusing a sinner's refusal of Him by electing him in eternity past, and 2) God regenerating a sinner through the Holy Spirit, granting him the faith to believe in Christ—an unprompted gift, in no way merited by the sinner's previous nature, thoughts, or actions.

4. Christ-Focused (Rom 3:22)

Romans 3:22. *... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ ...*

Saving faith is always faith *in* the person and work of Jesus Christ.

A. Asserted

David Wells:

The principle at stake is that salvation is to be found in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. Indeed, whatever is added to the work of Christ actually takes away from it. (The Courage to be Protestant, 234)

RC Sproul:

"It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere"This reduces justification by faith alone to justification by sincerity alone. (Faith Alone, 76)

John Piper:

The issue is: Does Islam—or any other faith besides Christianity—cherish the crucifixion of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, as the only ground of our acceptance with God? The answer is no. Only Christians 'follow the Lamb' who was 'slain' as the one and only Redeemer In other words, the center of Christianity ... is the dishonourable, foolish, gruesome and utterly glorious reality of the tortured God-man, Jesus Christ. More and more, He must become the issue. (Brothers, We Are Not Professionals, x-xi)

B. Proven

- John 3:16, 18. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*
- John 8:24. *Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.*
- Acts 4:12. *And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.*
- John 14:6. *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*

C. Contrasted with a common error

Some today believe that all "sincere or true-hearted" belief or well-intentioned service in a false religion will, in the end, be credited by God to the person's account as if that faith and service had been given to Christ.

a. Exemplified

- i. CS Lewis expounds this view in *The Last Battle*, the final book of *The Chronicles of Narnia* series. Perhaps more surprisingly, Billy Graham also held a version of this view in the later decades of his life:
- ii. Billy Graham: *I used to believe that pagans in far countries were lost if they did not have the gospel of Christ preached to them. I no longer believe that.* (from a 1978 *McCalls* magazine article, quoted in Iain Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*, 73)

Graham in a 1997 television interview with Robert Schuler:

I think that everybody that loves or knows Christ, whether they are conscious of it or not, they are members of the body of Christ They come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world or the non-believing world They may not know the name of Jesus but they know in their hearts that they need something they do not have, and they turn to the only light they have, and I think that they are saved and they are going to be with us in heaven. (73-74)

b. Evaluated

The view of salvation represented by Lewis and Graham is unbiblical at several levels.

- i. It denies the need for personal, conscious, informed faith *in Jesus Christ*.

Romans 10:17. *Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

1 John 5:11-12. *... God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.*

- ii. If a person can be saved by God crediting him the value of his sincere service in a false religion, then salvation is by works, not by the imputing of Christ's righteousness alone.

Romans 4:6. *... David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works ...*

5. One Size Fits All—Both Jews And Gentiles (Rom 3:22-24)

Three reasons salvation is the same for all who are saved:

1. One human condition: sin (v. 23)
2. One divine action: justification (v. 24)

3. One payment price: Christ's life (v. 24)

Importance to counselling:

The unity of the body of Christ is built on many things. One is the fact that before salvation we were all in the same helpless condition; we are all saved by the same undeserved divine declaration of righteousness; and we are all saved by the same payment price, Christ's death.

Racial, ethnic, religious, and social prejudices are wiped away by these theological truths. The ground at the foot of the cross is level: there no sinner stands head and shoulders above any other.

6. Wrath-Satisfying (Rom 3:25)

Romans 3:25. ... *whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation ...*

David Wells:

[Evangelicalism] was built around two core theological beliefs: the full authority of the inspired Scripture and the necessity and centrality of Christ's penal substitution. (The Courage to Be Protestant, 5)

A. The doctrine explained

We have been alienated from God by our sin and he from us by his wrath so that, if reconciliation is to happen, he must be able to look on us without displeasure and we on him without fear. And that transformation, that transaction, happens in Christ as God's wrath is turned away from us on the cross and our sin is canceled as it is imputed to him. (168)

B. The word *propitiation* defined

In common Greek usage, the word *hilastarion* referred to a sacrifice that a worshiper made to his god in order to turn away the god's anger. Some offerings were thank offerings. Others were performed for ritual, ceremonial cleansing. A *propitiatory* offering was specifically given to turn away the god's anger and to regain his favour. In African Traditional Religion, many people still make sacrifices to deflect the anger of the ancestors. Those are *propitiatory* sacrifices.

Leon Morris:

In plain language he bribed his god to be favourable toward him. (Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, 211)

The word *propitiation*, which means *wrath satisfaction*, is at the heart of the evangelical doctrine of the cross.

C. Other NT uses of *propitiation* (Gk: *hilastarion*)

- 1 John 2:2. *He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*
- 1 John 4:10. *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
- Hebrews 2:17. *Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

D. Paul's usage vs. general Greek usage

Paul's use of the term *propitiation* is both *unlike* and *like* the pagan Greek idea.

a. Unlike

God is angry at our sin; however, there is nothing that we can offer Him that will dissuade Him from His wrath. God can't be bribed with a juicy goat steak offered up on an altar.

Psalm 50:12-13. *If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all it contains. Shall I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of male goats?*

Point:

God doesn't need to eat, and if He did, He wouldn't order at your restaurant anyway.

b. Like

A wrath-averting sacrifice is made, but it is God Himself who provides—and in fact—*becomes* the sacrifice that satisfies His wrath.

1 John 2:1-2 *If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins ...*

Liberal theologians love to deny the reality of God's wrath at sin. However, if God isn't angry at our sin, then why does sin have to be forgiven at all? The

question that the liberals never seem to address is, If God didn't forgive sin, *what would happen?*

Point:

Once you remove God's wrath, there's nothing to be saved *from*. If there are no ultimate consequences for living wickedly, God's forgiveness is irrelevant, trivial.

E. A question about God's wrath

Does God's wrath mean that God is a violent-tempered ogre who storms into the house of humanity like a drunken father, venting His rage, bullying, threatening, and roaring in fury?

Jl Packer's answer:

To some ... 'wrath' suggests a loss of self-control, an outburst of 'seeing red' which is partly, if not wholly, irrational. To others, it suggests the rage of conscious impotence, or wounded pride, or plain bad temper. Surely, it is said, it would be wrong to ascribe to God such attitudes as these. The reply is: indeed it would, but the Bible does not ask us to do this

God's wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is, instead, a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil. God is only angry where anger is called for. (Knowing God, 136)

Point:

God is angry at both sin *and* the sinners who do it.

- Psalm 5:5. *The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity.*
- Psalm 7:11-12. *God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day. If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready.*

Like most truisms, the axiom, *God hates the sin, but loves the sinner*, is partially false. It is overly simplistic, reductionistic. In fact, God both loves sinners in His compassion (John 3:16) and hates them and the sin they do.

Proof of this fact is found in a simple question: What or whom will God send to hell: sin or the sinners who do it? The reality of hell calls into question the notion that God hates sin, but not the sinners who do it.

The biblical balance:

*It is impossible to understand Paul's doctrine of penal substitution without placing it in the center of the matrix of God's character. God is simultaneously the God of love and of wrath—the one side cannot be surrendered to the other—and in his wrath he judges justly and in his love he himself bears the penalty of his judgement. (Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant*, 200)*

Thankfully, Jesus Christ is the divine sponge that soaked up God's wrath on the cross. Therefore, for those who are in Christ, there is no wrath, no condemnation left.

7. Substitutionary (Rom 3:25)

Romans 3:25. ... *in His blood* ...

In salvation, God does not suspend His justice; instead, He bears it, becoming both the "just and justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:26).

Five Views Of Christ's Atonement

- A. *A ransom paid to Satan.* A handful of men in the early church, such as Origen, believed that Christ died to pay Satan a ransom. In other words, since sinners were slaves of Satan, Christ died to pay Satan a just ransom, so that sinners could become God's possession. In recent years, this view of the atonement has been resurrected by the Word-Faith teachers.

Evaluation:

While the notion of Christ purchasing sinners from Satan seems logical enough, it actually has no biblical support. The Bible never says that Christ's ransom is paid to Satan. In contrast, what it does say about Christ's sacrifice is this:

Ephesians 5:2. ... [He] *gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God* ...

- B. *A moral influence* (Peter Abelard, 12th century). Abelard said that God wasn't angry at sinners. Instead, Christ's incarnation and dying on the cross was simply God's way of identifying with human suffering: "See, I suffer too. Now, won't you love Me and live better?" In short, *Sin-bearing' has dissolved into sympathy* ... (Campbell, in Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 167).

Evaluation:

Many Bible passages say that Christ died for our sin. None say Christ died merely that we would know that God feels our pain.

- C. *The governmental view* (Hugo Grotius, 1600s). Grotius said that Christ died to show that God gets upset when His laws are broken; however, God isn't upset at any person specifically. God has only a vague, general sense of displeasure towards wrongdoing.

Evaluation:

This fails to reflect biblical statements about God's intense, personal wrath at specific sin and at specific sinners.

Romans 2:5-6. *But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds.*

- D. *Christ died as an example of how to trust God amidst suffering* (Socinus, late 1500s). Socinus rejected the Reformers' doctrine that Christ died to satisfy the Father's wrath. Instead, he said that Jesus died to leave the human race an example of how they should trust and obey God amidst suffering.

Evaluation:

This view is true *as far as it goes*; it just doesn't go far enough. On one level, Christ's death is an example of patient trusting.

1 Peter 2:21. *... Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps ...*

However, to say that Christ died *only* as an example of how to patiently trust God while being mistreated is incomplete explanation of Christ's death.

- E. *Penal Substitution*. Christ died to bear the penalty of God's just wrath at sinners for violating His holy character and standards.

William Hendriksen's summary of the cross:

Hell came to Calvary that day. (NTC, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 970)

P.T. Forsyth:

The one thing God could not do in the face of human rebellion was nothing. 'He must either inflict punishment or assume it ...' (quoted in Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 180)

Substitutionary Atonement (Penal Substitution):

Romans 3:25. ... *in His blood* ...

A. OT background

The background of this participle phrase *in his blood* was the OT sacrificial system, in which the sacrificial animal's *blood* represented the animal's *life*.

Walter Kaiser:

Basic to the whole theory of sacrifice in the OT is the concept of substitution. The life of the victim is substituted for the individual human life in such a way that the offender averts the necessity of forfeiting his or her own life, which God could have demanded because of the offense committed. (Leviticus, in The New Interpreter's Bible, 1119)

Leviticus 17:11. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.

The key sacrifices of the OT were all substitutionary in nature. Therefore, to talk about Christ's *blood* is to talk about His *lifeblood*. On the cross, as the Lamb of God (John 1:29) Christ's life was given as a sacrifice in the place of or as a substitute for the sinner's life.

B. Three key NT texts

- Mark 10:45. *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*
- Galatians 3:13. *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us ...*
- 2 Corinthians 5:21. *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Double imputation—our guilt to Christ; Christ's righteousness to us:

MacArthur:

On the cross God treated Jesus as if he had lived our lives with all our sin, so that God could then treat us as if we lived Christ's life of pure holiness. Our iniquitous life was legally charged to Him on the cross,

as if He had lived it, so that His righteous life could be credited to us, as if we lived it. (John MacArthur, 2 Corinthians, 217)

Christ's own infinite merit thus becomes the ground on which the believer stands before God. (MacArthur, Faith Works, 89)

Point:

In salvation, the balance of a believer's sin account is not merely brought down to zero by means of God crediting our sins to Christ. More than that, God credits or fills up the believer's account with the full, infinite value of Christ's perfect righteousness.

Being declared innocent is good, but being credited the infinite value of Christ's righteousness is even better! Now God sees us in the light of the words, *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Matt 3:17).

Summed up by JI Packer:

Jesus Christ our Lord, moved by a love that was determined to do everything necessary to save us, endured and exhausted the destructive divine judgment for which we were otherwise inescapably destined, and so won us forgiveness, adoption and glory. To affirm penal substitution is to say that believers are in debt to Christ specifically for this, and that this is the mainspring of all their joy, peace and praise both now and for eternity. (quoted in Stott, The Cross of Christ, 168)

Conclusion:

Romans 3:21-26 is soteriology in one passage. It teaches us that God's saving plan is:

1. Long-anticipated
2. Not Law-based
3. Faith-based
4. Christ-focused
5. One-size-fits-all (both Jews and Gentiles)
6. Wrath-satisfying
7. Substitutionary

2) JUSTIFICATION AND BIBLICAL COUNSELLING

1. The Importance Of The Doctrine

David Wells

Roman Catholic Church says that to be justified means to be *made* righteous: at the point of salvation you are actually *made* innocent. Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that at that moment, God infuses or weaves into you an actual sinless holiness. At the moment of conversion, you are perfectly innocent *in actual practice*.

Question: How long does that actual innocence last?

Answer: Not very long.

Having been placed at the pinnacle of purity, the Catholic view says that you spend the rest of your life sliding down, away from that initial starting point. But because God *made you righteous*, you have both the ability and the responsibility to maintain your perfect right standing before Him.

The results:

- perpetual fear and uncertainty about salvation
- the doctrines of penance and purgatory, which are two ways that you, by your own suffering, atone for your failure to maintain the perfect righteousness that God infused into you at salvation.

b. The Council of Trent on justification

- The means of justification is the *sacrament of baptism*. (as quoted in *Justification by Faith Alone*, edited by Don Kistler, 9)
- *Those who, by sin have fallen from the received grace of justification may be again justified ... through the sacrament of penance.* (9)

In Roman Catholic doctrine, justification is *obtained* by water baptism and is *maintained* by works of penance.

- *If anyone says ... that the debt of eternal punishment is so blotted out that there remains no debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world or in the next in Purgatory ... let him be anathema.* (10)

Apparently, when Jesus cried out on the cross, "It is finished," it wasn't finished, because according to the Roman Catholic Church there is still punishment for you to pay.

Summary:

In the Roman Catholic view of salvation, justification is produced by a religious ritual and you are required to maintain your righteous standing before God by means of your continued efforts and suffering.

B. Popular Protestant views of justification

- a. Ultimate right standing before God is maintained by fully confessing every sin I commit after conversion. If I overlook one sin, my salvation is forfeited.
- b. Ultimate right standing before God is maintained by living obediently enough to keep God happy with me.

The result of these deficient views of justification is fear, uncertainty, self-condemnation, and a disabling lack of assurance.

CJ Mahaney:

- *Do you relate to God as if you were on a kind of permanent probation...?*
- *When you come to worship do you maintain a "respectful distance" from God, as if He were a fascinating but ill-tempered celebrity...?*
- *Are you more aware of your sin than you are of God's grace ...?*

.... Don't buy the lie that cultivating condemnation and wallowing in your shame is somehow pleasing to God, or that constant low-grade guilt will somehow promote holiness and spiritual maturity. It's just the opposite! God is glorified when we believe with all our hearts that those who trust in Christ can never be condemned. (The Cross Centered Life, 39)

C. The historic Protestant view of justification

a. Defined

Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight. (Grudem, Systematic Theology, 723)

Leon Morris:

Because justification is an act of God rather than of man there is an assurance about it which means that it is not presumptuous to speak of being justified now. (The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, 283)

Explanation:

God declares you righteous or innocent by imputing to you the righteousness of Christ, even though you aren't righteous in actual practice. God doesn't *infuse* righteousness; he *imputes* or credits Christ's righteousness to your account. In other words, in justification there is a change of status with God, not a change in practice.

b. The relationship between justification and sanctification:

Of course, the Holy Spirit immediately goes to work on a believer in a process the Bible calls *sanctification*, making you more righteous in practice. However, your relative success or failure in the process of sanctification doesn't change your ultimate status before God, which is based on Christ's flawless, imputed righteousness.

Mahaney:

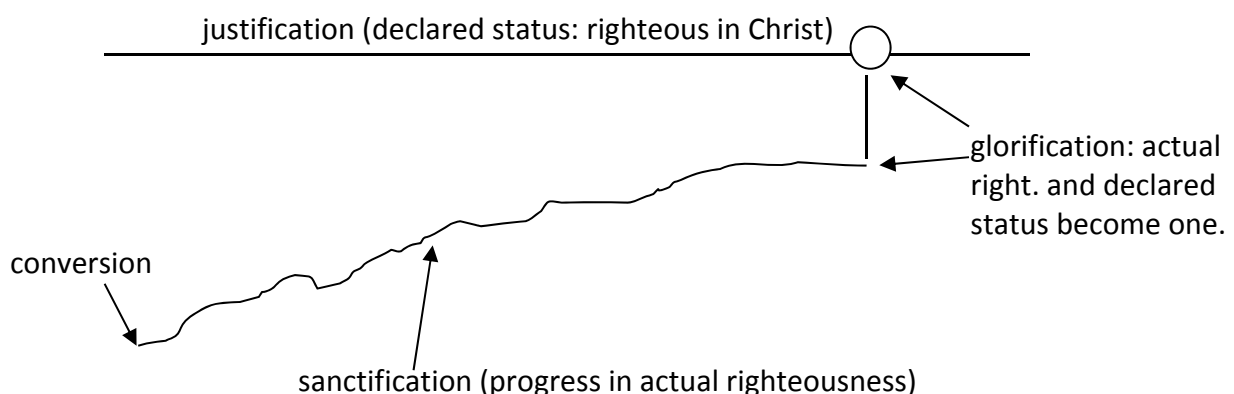
... here's the mistake the legalist makes. He confuses his own ongoing participation in the process of sanctification with God's finished work in justification.

.... Jesus' work, not mine, is the basis of my forgiveness and acceptance by God. (The Cross Centered Life, 33, 35)

White:

To make any action of man (including the action of faith) the basis of justification is to take away from the righteousness of Christ, which is the true basis of Christian justification. (The God Who Justifies, 66)

A Diagram



Which of those three views of justification is correct?

The word *to justify* (*dikaioo*) can mean either to be declared or to be made righteous. The question is, how does Paul use the word *justify* in key texts?

Paul uses the word *justify* in a forensic or courtroom manner, and in a courtroom *to justify* means **to declare** a person righteous. The judge does not make the defendant innocent; he declares him innocent.

Romans 8:33. *Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns?*

4. Key OT Courtroom Uses Of *To Justify*:

- Exodus 23:7. *Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty.*

Did God mean that He will not *declare* the guilty to be innocent or that He will not *make* the guilty actually innocent in practice? Clearly the use here is *to declare*.

- Deuteronomy 25:1. *If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked ...*
- Proverbs 17:15. *He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.*
- Isaiah 5:22-23. *Woe to those ... who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!*

Conclusion:

When the word *justify* is used in a courtroom setting, it clearly means to *declare innocent*. In Romans, Paul is teaching that God the Judge has declared us innocent. He is not teaching that God *made* us perfectly righteous and that we are responsible to sustain that perfection by our own efforts.

The glorious biblical truth:

One who has been justified stands before God uncondemned and uncondemnable—not because of what he is in himself, but because of what Christ is in him. (White, *The God Who Justifies*, 98)

5. The Importance Of The Doctrine Of Justification In Counselling

A. Stated by Jerry Bridges

The gospel is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the only essential message in all of history. Yet we allow thousands of professing Christians to

live their entire lives without clearly understanding it and experiencing the joy of living by it. (The Disciplines of Grace, 46)

Many Christians grew up in homes where parental acceptance was based, to a large degree, on academic, athletic, musical, or perhaps some other standard of achievement. Often, in that kind of performance environment, they never quite felt as if they measured up to expectations, regardless of how successful they were. Then they transfer that sense of inadequacy to their relationship with God. They continually wonder, Is God pleased with me? (Transforming Grace, 104)

Point:

A right understanding of justification helps believers understand that their ultimate standing with God is based on the Father being pleased with the Son, not with the Father being pleased with us.

B. Understanding union vs. Communion

This doesn't mean that sin has no impact on a believer's daily relationship with God. It's important to maintain a distinction between a believer's once-for-all, ultimate standing with God and our daily communion with Christ. One is not affected by a believer's sin; the other is.

Kevin DeYoung:

Through faith we are joined to Christ and have union with him. That bond is unbreakable. Our union with Christ is an established fact, guaranteed for all eternity by the indwelling of the Spirit. When we sin our union with Christ is not in jeopardy. But our communion is. (The Hole in Our Holiness, 73-73)

Although Paul (the champion of justification by faith alone) knew that there was no condemnation left for him because he was "in Christ Jesus," note his concern for his daily communion with Christ:

2 Corinthians 5:9. *Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.*

Comment:

God is unchangeably pleased with believers because He has credited to us the perfect obedience of Christ; therefore, our ultimate standing with God is not in question. However, it is equally true that it must be our daily ambition to please Him in order to sustain unhindered our moment-by-moment communion with Him.

To abandon the first is to become a legalist (*I must earn my standing before God*); to forsake the second is to become an antinomian (*It doesn't matter how I live since God always sees me in the light of Christ's righteousness*).

C. The importance of a right view of justification illustrated

Jane had an abortion ten years ago She still feels guilty about what she has done She knows the truth of the cross, but it doesn't seem to matter. It is as if her guilt is a resistant virus that is immune to the gospel.

Her anti-gospel is that life and forgiveness come through Christ plus not having an abortion.

Having violated her beliefs and standards, she "had to" be punished. She could not reverse the consequences of her abortion, so she decided that her self-imposed punishment would be grief, and it would be long and severe. Perhaps, after an unspecified period of suffering, she would allow herself to be forgiven.

*... Multiple suicide attempts and daily reflection on her past actions were not judged to be enough. So she continued in her grief, hoping that one day she would wake up and find that her penance had finally satisfied God's justice. (Ed Welch, *Depression: A Stubborn Darkness*, 191-2)*

Point:

Jane needs to understand justification—that she is right with God based on Christ's suffering, not based on her own suffering and self-punishment.

- Romans 5:1. *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ...*
- Romans 8:1. *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*
- John 3:18a. *He who believes in Him is not judged.*
- 1 John 4:17-18. *By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.*

Conclusion:

The doctrine of justification is critical to biblical counselling.

3) ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

John Calvin:

When conscience sees only wrath and indignation, how can it but tremble and be afraid? And how can it avoid shunning the God whom it thus dreads? But faith ought to seek God, not shun him We shall now have a full definition of faith if we say that it is a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favor toward us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (Institutes of the Christian Religion (Beveridge), 3.2.7, emphasis added)

1. Maturity In Christ Includes What The NT Calls *Full Assurance*.

- Colossians 2:2. *... that their hearts may be encouraged ... attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding ...*
- Hebrews 11:1. *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*
- Hebrews 6:11-12. *And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

Contrary to some theological systems, the NT promotes assurance as a good and noble thing that leads to spiritual vitality, not sluggishness. God wants His children to know and be motivated by the peace, stability, and joy of full assurance.

- Hebrews 6:19. *This hope [in God's unchangeable promise to save] we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast ...*

God doesn't want His children to live terrorised by fears and doubts about their salvation. He wants true believers to have a restful, joyful confidence that they are safe in His love because of Christ.

Salvation is *relief* from the fear of judgement, not an oppressive continuation in it.

2. Two Foundations Of Christian Assurance

- God's work in Christ
- God's work in us

A. God's work in Christ

- Romans 8:28-30. *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed*

to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Paul was so confident that God would successfully complete the process of salvation in the Roman believers that he put the verbs in verses 29-30 in the past tense, even though those believers were not yet glorified. Paul did this to express the certainty of God completing His saving work in them.

Observation:

God's salvation train runs from *election* in eternity past to *glorification* in eternity future without stopping to disembark passengers anywhere along the route.

- Romans 8:38-39. *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- John 10:28-29. *I give eternal life to them, 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.*
- Romans 10:11. *... Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.*

Question:

Does complete assurance mean that Christians are free to sin without fear of consequences?

Jerry Bridges:

The same grace that brings salvation teaches us to renounce ungodly living. (The Pursuit of Holiness, 39)

True believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit will not long be satisfied with a life of unbridled sin. Furthermore, while God does not reject those who are His when they sin, He does discipline them with corrective consequences.

Romans 6:1-2. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Hebrews 12:10. ... He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

B. God's work in us

- 2 Peter 1:10. *Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.*
- 2 Corinthians 13:5. *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?*

Simply stated, the tests of faith are:

- what you believe (Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 15:1-5)
- how you live (1 John 2:3-4; 3:10).

a. Passing the how-you-live test

I'm not who I want to be, but I'm also not who I was. I can see that Christ is at work in me in real, discernible ways. When I sin, I repent. I'm experiencing victory over sins that used to dominate me. I love Christ, His word, and His people. Although there are ups and downs, the direction of my life is undeniable. I'm growing in the grace and knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ. In short, God's work in me assures me that I am His child.

Romans 8:16. *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God ...*

b. Professing Christians who live wickedly forfeit their assurance.

Hebrews 10:35-36, 39. *Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.*

J.I. Packer:

... Christians who grieve the Spirit by sin, and who fail to seek God with all their heart, must expect to miss the full fruition of this crowning gift of [assurance] this is a gift which our heavenly Father will, to some extent at least, hold back if He sees us to be in a state where it would spoil us, by making us think our Father did not care whether we lived holy lives or not. (Knowing God, 207)

c. Two errors to be avoided

- i. putting assurance out of reach by making the standard of assurance virtually sinless perfection
- ii. assuring salvation to those who are indifferent or rebellious

Illustrated:

Most of the Puritans taught that believers could not expect assurance until long after conversion, and only after a life of extended faithfulness. They tended to make assurance dependent on the believer's ability to live at an almost unobtainable level of personal holiness As we might expect, the Puritans' demanding preaching led to a widespread lack of assurance Christians became obsessed with whether they were truly elect, and many lapsed into morbid introspection and utter despair.

By contrast, today assurance is rarely made an issue Evangelists and counselors normally seek to dispel doubts about salvation by pronouncing them groundless Preachers are so fearful of shattering anyone's confidence that they seem to forget false assurance is a more serious problem than no assurance. (John MacArthur, Faith Works, 161)

Point:

Biblical counsellors need to avoid these two errors. True believers who are plagued by doubts need to be encouraged by God's finished work in Christ and by God's visible work in them. At the same time, professing believers who are characterised by indifference to Christ or persistent waywardness need to be disabused of their false assurance.

4) PROBLEM PASSAGES: HEBREWS 6 AND 10

As in the case of Matthew 12 and the unforgiveable sin, you will frequently be asked about the warning passages of Hebrews, because they appear to say that a true believer can lose his or her salvation. As a counsellor, you will need to be prepared to provide an accurate explanation of those passages.

Hebrews 6:4-6. For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

Hebrews 10:26, 31. *For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

1. Two Paths To A Solution

- A. *Default to your theology.* If you are a Calvinist, you will argue that, based on other passages, it's impossible for a person to lose his salvation; therefore, the people in Hebrews 6 and 10 were not believers. If you hold to Arminianism, you will argue that it sounds like people are losing their salvation in these passages precisely because they are.

Observation:

This approach tells you a lot about your preferred theological system, but very little about the right interpretation of Hebrews 6 and 10. Simply defaulting to your systematic theology and demanding that a passage conform to what you already believe is bad Bible interpretation.

- B. *Study the context.* Does the broader context of Hebrews tell us whether the author is here speaking about believers or unbelievers?

2. The Key To Interpreting Hebrews 6 And 10 Is The Context (Hebrews 3 And 4).

In Hebrews 3-4, the author tells you exactly what kind of person he is dealing with in the later warning passages.

- A. Hebrews 3-4—the Exodus generation

In Hebrews 3, the author highlights a group of people who had participated in God's work at an extraordinarily high level, but who were, nonetheless, unsaved: the Hebrews of the Exodus.

The Exodus generation saw and participated in God's miraculous works at an extraordinary level. They saw the ten plagues, walked through the Red Sea on dry land, drank water from a rock, ate manna from heaven, and heard God preach the Ten Commandments in an audible, divine voice. You can't have more contact with the supernatural than they did. Nonetheless, God was angry with them.

Hebrews 3:10. *Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, "They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways."*

- B. A corresponding warning to his readers

Hebrews 3:12, 19. *Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.*

a. The dilemma

Were the people of the Exodus believers who lost their salvation, or were they people who had never been saved in spite of all the miraculous works of God which they had experienced?

b. The answer

Hebrews 4:2. *For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.*

Although they had participated in God's work at an extraordinarily high level, the majority of people of the Exodus generation were *unbelievers* and always had been. The word of God had never been united to their heart in faith.

c. The consequences for interpreting Hebrews 6 and 10:

Many of the people to whom the book of Hebrews was written had heard the preaching and seen the miracles of Jesus and the apostles. Nonetheless, although they had participated in the work of God in that way, they were just like the Exodus generation: the word of God had never been united to their hearts by faith. Based on the context of chapters 3-4 we can conclude that the people addressed in the warning passages of Hebrews 6 and 10 were not—and never had been—true believers.

Thankfully, the author of Hebrews believed that most of the people to whom he wrote were not in that condition.

Hebrews 6:9. *But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.*

The exceptional language used to describe the professing-but-false believers in chapters 6 and 10 refers not to salvation, but to their experience of the work of the Spirit in the miracles and preaching of Jesus and the apostles. In spite of being enlightened, tasting, partaking, and experiencing God's power in that way, like the Exodus generation, they had never truly believed.

Summary:

The warning passages of Hebrews 6 and 10 do not teach that true believers can lose their salvation. Instead, they are a stern warning to those who have been associated with the work of God at a high level but lack saving faith.



SANCTIFICATION

Joel James
(student)

Outline:

- 1) Sanctification defined
- 2) The relationship between sanctification and justification
- 3) The theological foundation of sanctification
- 4) "Christians" who don't act like Christians
- 5) Critical truths about sanctification
- 6) A sampling of unbiblical approaches to sanctification
- 7) Colossians 2-3: A biblical case study

1) SANCTIFICATION DEFINED

Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives. (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, 746)

Sanctification ... is essentially conformity to the moral character of God. (Jerry Bridges, Transforming Grace, 102)

Matthew 28:19-20. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them ... [and] teaching them to observe all that I commanded you ...

Sanctification focuses on the obeying-all-that-I-have-commanded-you aspect of Jesus' Great Commission.

2 Corinthians 7:1. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

1. Sanctification Is One Of The Key Purposes Of Salvation

Ephesians 2:10. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Colossians 1:22. He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.

JC Ryle:

He who supposes that Jesus Christ only lived and died and rose again in order to provide justification and forgiveness of sins for his people, has yet much to learn The Lord Jesus has undertaken everything that his people's souls require; not only to deliver them from the guilt of their sins by his atoning death, but from the dominion of their sins ... (Holiness, 21)

2. Positional Vs. Progressive Sanctification

*In Christ every believer has a once-for-all positional holiness, and from this new identity every Christian is commanded to grow in the ongoing-for-your-whole-life process of holiness. (Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness*, 33)*

*Scripture speaks of both a holiness we already possess in Christ before God and a holiness in which we are to grow more and more. The first is the result of the work of Christ for us; the second is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in us. (Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, 102)*

A. Positional sanctification

1 Corinthians 1:30. *But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption ...*

B. Progressive sanctification

Romans 6:19. *... For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.*

3. Different Ways Of Summarising Sanctification

A. The fruit of the Spirit

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

B. Loving God and loving neighbour

Matthew 22:37-39. *And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'*

Observation:

In one way or another, all of counselling falls into those two categories: teaching people either to love God or to love their neighbour.

Carl Henry:

The lordship of Christ does not work itself out into the life as a vague religious feeling. Rather, it expresses itself practically by a whole-soul love for God and love for neighbor as one's self. (Personal Christian Ethics, 431)

C. General transformation

Romans 15:13-14. *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.*

According to Romans 15:13-14, sanctification or spiritual maturity includes ...

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| • transformed attitudes | <i>joy, peace, and hope</i> |
| • consistently godly actions | <i>full of all goodness</i> |
| • a passion for Bible knowledge | <i>filled with all knowledge</i> |
| • a desire to influence others | <i>able also to admonish one another</i> |

D. Sanctification summarised

Kevin DeYoung:

Holiness is the sum of a million little things ... the setting aside of little bits of worldliness and little acts of compromise, the putting to death of little inconsistencies, and little indiscretions, the attention to little duties and little dealings, the hard work of little self-denials and little self-restraints, the cultivation of little benevolences and little forbearances. (The Hole in Our Holiness, 145)

In one verse:

Romans 13:14. *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*

What all Christians need is ...

- a greater love for Christ
- an effective way of dealing with daily sin

Romans 13:14 is, in a nutshell, what sanctification is about.

2) THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SANCTIFICATION AND JUSTIFICATION

Donald Grey Barnhouse:

Although justification is not sanctification, justification is intended to produce sanctification Justification and sanctification are as inseparable as a torso and a head. (quoted in John MacArthur, Faith Works, 114),

1. Justification And Sanctification Are Both *Unrelated And Related*.

A. *Unrelated*: justification is by faith in Christ alone, apart from any effort to live better.

Romans 3:20. *by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight ...*

B. *Related*: The Bible teaches that justification will issue in better, more Christ-like living.

Hebrews 12:14. *Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.*

2. The NT Teaches That Justification Leads To Transformed Living Of Some Kind.

Hebrews 12:14 says that sanctification is a valid and necessary evidence of one's justification. In short, a faith that has no power to *change* is a faith that has no power to *save*.

James 2:20, 26. *But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*

A. W. Tozer:

Plain horse sense ought to tell us that anything that makes no change in the man who professes it makes no difference to God either ... (quoted in Kevin DeYoung, The Hole in Our Holiness, 18)

3) THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF SANCTIFICATION: THREE CHANGED RELATIONSHIPS

According to Romans 6, Christians have a changed relationship with *Christ* which leads to a changed relationship with *sin* which leads to a changed relationship with *God*.

John Murray on changed relationship with Christ:

Union with Christ is really the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation ... (Redemption Accomplished and Applied, 161)

Comment:

In Romans 6, Paul teaches that union with Christ is also the central truth of *sanctification*.

1. Changed Relationship With *Christ*: United With Christ

Romans 6:3-4. *Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death ...*

Christ died; you died. Somehow God views things as if the last two thousand years have been telescoped, squashed flat, and you died with Christ on the cross.

Illustrated:

When I'm driving with my family in the car and we are stopped at a roadblock, the police officer checks my driver's license. Once he sees that it's valid, he waves not just me, but my whole family through. My family, because they are associated with me, are allowed to proceed as well. If I wait, they wait. If I proceed, they proceed. By being in the car with me, they are united with me.

It works the same way when you become a Christian. Christ is driving the car, and whatever happens to Him happens to you.

2. Christians Are United With Christ's Death *And* Life:

Romans 6:4-5. *Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection ...*

You can't have one without the other; it's a package deal. For a believer, union with Christ's *death* is irreversibly complemented by union with Christ's *life*.

Consequence:

2 Corinthians 5:17. *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

3. Changed Relationship With *Sin*: Made Dead To Sin

Romans 6:6-7. *Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.*

A. Christ saves both from the *penalty* of sin and the *power* of sin.

Sin, which had been our master, has been *done away with, made inoperative, put out of commission* because of our union with Christ.

Observation:

Grace doesn't free you *to* sin; it frees you *from* sin.

B. Paul's illustration—a change of slave masters:

Romans 6:17-18. *But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*

Henry:

... the body of sin has been wrested from its wicked ruler and freed for the use of another. (Christian Personal Ethics, 186)

A man is never so free as when he is the bondsman of Christ. (Alexander, quoted in Henry, 167)

Point:

If Christ is master, I will gladly be slave!

4. Changed Relationship With God: Made Alive To God

Romans 6:10. *For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.*

The result of a believer's three changed relationships:

Romans 6:11-12. *Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts ...*

The theological foundation of sanctification is our union with Christ's death and life, which makes us dead to sin and, at the same time, gloriously alive to God and His commands.

5. The Implications Of Our Changed Relationship With Sin, Christ, And God

Some professing Christians appear disinclined to embrace their professed union with Christ's *life*. They want fire insurance—rescue from hell by being united with Christ's death—but they have little or no interest in a new life of obedience.

They want the *benefits* of Christ's death without its *obligations*. However, Romans 6 says that you can't have one without the other. You can't be forgiven and stay dead to God.

Summed up:

Titus 2:11-12. *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age ...*

Personal application:

As a Christian, you're not all you want to be. However, you're also decidedly *not* the person you were before you were converted. You're probably not even the person you were ten years ago. Why? Because you have experienced the changed relationships of Romans 6.

Previously you were apart from Christ, alive to sin, and dead to God. Now by God's grace you are united with Christ, dead to sin, and alive to God. That's the theological foundation of your sanctification.

4) WHAT ABOUT "CHRISTIANS" WHO DON'T LIVE LIKE CHRISTIANS?

B.B. Warfield:

The whole sixth chapter of Romans Was written for no other purpose than to assert and demonstrate that justification and sanctification are indissolubly bound together; that we cannot have one without having the other. (Perfectionism, 356-7)

It is obvious that many professing Christians in our world claim to have justification but give little or no indication of the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit. What about them?

Two Ways To Approach The Issue:

1. Rework The Definition Of The Word *Christian*.

This has, to a large degree, been the solution of the evangelical church in our era. It is a solution that, in essence, denies that there is a problem. Today, it is blithely assumed that worldly Christians are, in fact, normal Christians; therefore, Christians who don't live like Christians are nothing to be disturbed about.

MacArthur:

Why should we assume that people who live in an unbroken pattern of adultery, fornication, homosexuality, deceit, and every conceivable kind of flagrant excess are truly born again?

Yet that is exactly the assumption Christians of this age have been taught to make It follows logically, then, that someone's one-time profession of faith is more valid than the evidence of that person's ongoing lifestyle in determining whether to embrace him or her as a true believer. The character of the visible church reveals the detestable consequence of this theology. (The Gospel According to Jesus, 20-21)

Reworking the definition of a Christian to exclude any expectation of progress in sanctified living has led to the creation of at least three special sub-categories of Christians, sub-categories of dubious biblical validity.

Three misused or unbiblical labels:

A. Disciples

Stripped of its biblical meaning, in some circles this title is now reserved for Christians whose professed faith makes a discernible difference in how they live. In other words, rather than taking the word *disciple* to be synonymous with a Christian (which is the biblical usage), the word *disciple* is limited to "higher-level Christians" who have obediently embraced the lordship of Christ.

Evaluation:

Acts 11:26. ... the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

All Christians are *disciples*. However, altering the biblical definition of the word *disciple* in order to make it refer only to higher-level, obedient Christians was necessary in order to create elbow room for two other categories: carnal Christians and back-slidden Christians.

B. "Carnal" Christians

This label (mistakenly taken from 1 Corinthians 3:1) is assigned to people who claim to believe in Christ, but who are difficult to distinguish from the world. They live spiritually shallow, double lives that consistently defame the name of Christ and discredit true believers. The term *carnal Christian* was coined out of necessity so that these worldly, apathetic, often hypocritical, and disobedient professors of faith could be considered Christians.

Evaluation:

Rather than tolerate their carnality, Paul called the people in the Corinthian church who were living that way to question their salvation.

2 Corinthians 13:5. *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?*

Jesus' comment:

Luke 6:46. *Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?*

Matthew 7:21, 23. *Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'*

Observation:

People who live like unbelievers probably are.

C. "Backslidden" Christians

Carnal Christians live double lives. *Backslidden Christians* don't even bother to do that. This term is reserved for people who no longer make a pretence at being a Christian. Although they professed Christ in their youth, they have now turned their backs completely on Christ and the church.

Evaluation:

This label is usually reserved for friends and family members. Anyone else who lived in such a fashion we would simply call an *unbeliever*. But since the person is a son or brother, a daughter or a sister, we feel compelled to create a sub-category of "Christians" who have rejected Christ.

Rather than rework the biblical definition of a Christian to create room for apathetic and worldly professing "Christians" (and even for apostates who have completely abandoned the faith), the biblical way of addressing the problem of professing Christians who don't act like Christians is altogether different.

2. Acknowledge The NT Teaching That Professing Believers Who Live Like Unbelievers For An Extended Period Of Time Are Just That: Unbelievers.

A. Some key texts

- 1 John 3:7-8, 10. *Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous the one who practices sin is of the devil By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God ...*
- James 2:14. *What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? [grammatically, negative answer required]*

Summarised by MacArthur:

Faith obeys. Unbelief rebels. The direction of one's life should reveal whether that person is a believer or an unbeliever. (The Gospel According to Jesus, 193)

Luther:

Faith is a living, restless thing. It cannot be inoperative. (in Justification by Faith Alone, ed. Don Kistler, 84)

JC Ryle:

Of course it is hard to know what people really are, and many who make a fair show outwardly in religion may turn out at last to be rotten-hearted hypocrites. But where there is not, at least, some appearance of sanctification, we may be quite certain there is no election. (Holiness, 24)

- Romans 8:13-14. *If you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

Point:

Paul says that true believers are identifiable based on their submission to the Spirit's leading to put to death daily sin.

B. Application to counselling

As biblical counsellors we begin by addressing our counsees based on their profession of faith. We know that believers can and do fall into sin—sometimes catastrophic sin. However, over time as it becomes clear that there is no sanctifying reality to the counselee's professed faith in Christ, it is an act of love to challenge his or her dead, unsaving faith.

Never *subtract* works from the expected results of salvation. Faith without works is dead (James 2:14ff.). If over time a person lives like an unbeliever, it's safest to assume that he or she is exactly that—an unbeliever.

5) OTHER CRITICAL TRUTHS ABOUT SANCTIFICATION

Having covered most of these in the first week of class, let's quickly review them.

1. The Gospel Is The Foundation Of Biblical Change.

2 Corinthians 5:17. *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

2. Change Is Always Possible For Believers.

Philippians 1:6. *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

3. The Word Of God Applied By The Spirit Of God Is The Primary Tool For Change.

John 17:17. *Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*

4. The Heart Is The Place Where Real, Long-Lasting Change Takes Place.

Mark 7:21-22. *For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.*

5. Revitalising The Conscience Is Important To Biblical Change.

DeYoung:

We don't think about the conscience as much as we should. (The Hole in Our Holiness, 41)

A. The conscience identified biblically

Romans 2:14-15. *For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law ... they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them ...*

Jl Packer:

An educated, sensitive conscience is God's monitor. It alerts us to the moral quality of what we do or plan to do, forbids lawlessness and irresponsibility, and makes us feel guilt, shame, and fear of the future retribution that it tells us we deserve, when we have allowed ourselves to defy its restraints. Satan's

strategy is to corrupt, desensitize, and if possible kill our consciences. (quoted in MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience*, 35)

B. The danger of ignoring the conscience

It's very dangerous to build up a habit of ignoring your conscience. Therefore, Paul warns believers not to ignore their consciences even if the matter is actually a preference issue rather than sin.

Romans 14:22-23. *The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.*

Illustration:

Drinking a glass of wine with a meal might not be sin, but Romans 14:23 warns you not to do it if your conscience pricks you. Why? The next time your conscience issues a warning, the matter at stake *might actually be sin*; therefore, you don't want to build up a habit of suppressing or ignoring your God-given warning system.

C. Satan's tools for disabling the conscience

- a. dulling it by such constant exposure to evil that sin eventually feels normal
- b. abolishing the concept of moral responsibility and guilt altogether through philosophy and psychology

Psychology ... is usually less concerned with understanding the conscience than with attempting to silence it. (*The Vanishing Conscience*, 50)

D. Different kinds of consciences

- *weak*—biblically uniformed, seeing sin where it is not (1 Cor 8:7-12)
- *defiled*—constant exposure to sin has crippled its effectiveness (Titus 1:15)
- *evil*—good and evil are inverted (Heb 10:22; Is 5:20)
- *seared*—completely dysfunctional due either to misinformation, being continually ignored, or constant exposure to sin (1 Tim 4:2)

It is possible virtually to nullify the conscience through repeated abuse. (MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience*, 38)

- *active*—1 Sam 24:5. *It came about afterward that David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul's robe.*

- *clear*—Acts 24:16. ... *I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.*
- *affirming*—1 Peter 3:16. *Keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.*

E. The importance of the conscience in counselling

The conscience is essential to biblical change because it's the tool the Holy Spirit uses to warn a counselee against sin and to encourage him to do right. When a counselee's built-in moral warning system is not functioning or is ignored, the Holy Spirit's messages of conviction and encouragement are either garbled or lost, and moral catastrophe is sure to result.

The counsellor's job:

Many counsees will come to counselling with uninformed, misinformed, silenced, or seared consciences. It is impossible for them to live obediently in such a state. Therefore, the counsellor's job is to *reactivate* the counselee's conscience (getting him to listen to it again) and to *re-inform* it (with biblical truth) so that it will send him accurate messages of conviction or affirmation.

The key—God's word:

The conscience reacts to the convictions of the mind and therefore can be encouraged and sharpened in accordance with God's word. The wise Christian wants to master biblical truth so that the conscience is completely informed and judges right because it is responding to God's Word. A regular diet of Scripture will strengthen a weak conscience or restrain an overactive one.

*The conscience functions like a skylight It lets light into the soul; it does not produce its own. (MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience*, 39)*

Point:

The light which the conscience lets in must be the light of Scripture.

6. God's Plan For Daily Change Is *Put Off/Be Renewed/Put On*.

Ephesians 4:22-24. *In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self ... be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self ...*

Romans 12:21. *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Jay Adams:

There must be an equal and opposite, positive effort to put on new biblical ways in the place of the old ones discarded. (How to Help People Change, 172-73)

7. Sanctification Is A Joint Divine-Human Effort.

A. The "trust and obey" balance

While regeneration, justification, conversion, and glorification are 100% the work of God, in contrast, *sanctification* is a joint effort between the omnipotent God and frail, inept believers. It is 100% God's work and 100% man's work at the same time.

Philippians 2:12-13. ... *work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you ...*

Summed up:

*Trust and obey,
for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus,
but to trust and obey.*

(John Sammis, *Trust and Obey*)

MacArthur:

"Work out your salvation" is not a command for unbelievers to work for their salvation. It is a call to believers for sustained effort and diligence in holy living based on the divine resources within them. (Our Sufficiency in Christ, 199)

If the truth be known, the divine side of the sanctification is never in question. God's work is certain (Phil 1:6). It's our diligence, our effort, that is often deficient, causing our lapses into fleshly disobedience.

2 Peter 1:5-6. *Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness ...*

B. Paul's command to *work out your salvation*

Working out (literally *working down*) your salvation is like wringing water out of a wet towel. It takes a determined, energetic, muscular, God-assisted effort to wring

sin and selfishness out of your life. Unfortunately, many Christians prefer the *trickle-down* or *drip-dry* approach to spiritual growth.

Kevin DeYoung:

Some Christians are stalled out in their sanctification for simple lack of effort. (The Hole in Our Holiness, 90)

Adams:

You may have sought and tried to obtain instant godliness. There is no such thing We want somebody to give us three easy steps to godliness, and we'll take them next Friday and be godly. The trouble is, godliness doesn't come that way. (Godliness through Discipline, 3)

Illustration:

A sprinter leaning into the finish line to win the conference championship in the 60 metres while the favourite was running straight up, smiling and waving at the crowd.

Point:

The runner who thinks he can coast into the finish line might just lose the race. Many Christians need a reminder that heaven is *rest*; the Christian life is a *race*.

Summed up by Bill Goode:

Many people are confused about how a believer grows They want spiritual growth and development on their own terms, easily and quickly Paul, when teaching about spiritual growth, spoke not of mysterious, emotional experiences but of hard work. (in MacArthur and Mack, Introduction to Biblical Counseling, 307)

C. Sanctification and faith in Christ

Sanctification flows out of daily faith in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 2:20. *I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

Jerry Wragg:

Resisting God's will in favor of my own is ultimately the sin of unbelief. (unpublished article, "Jesus + Nothing = Everything God Promised")

Faith believes that obedience is better than disobedience, that righteousness is better than unrighteousness.

6) A SAMPLING OF UNBIBLICAL APPROACHES TO SANCTIFICATION

1. Monastic Sanctification

Sanctification does not consist in retirement from our place in life, and renunciation of our social duties Hundreds of hermits have buried themselves in some wilderness, and thousands of men and women have shut themselves up within the walls of monasteries and convents, under the vain idea that by so doing they would escape sin and become eminently holy Our Master himself said in his last prayer, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil [one]." (JC Ryle, Holiness, 32, 33)

2. "Let Go And Let God"

Made popular by the old Keswick authors, this approach to sanctification emphasises passive surrendering. While surrendering to Christ is certainly part of biblical sanctification, this approach fails to acknowledge verses that tell us to actively put to death the deeds of the flesh and replace them with godly alternatives. This approach is too passive.

Jay Adams:

To expect the counselee to obey in his own wisdom or strength is unbiblical. But in the light of all of the biblical commands given to him, it is equally unbiblical for the counselee to do nothing while waiting for God to do everything. (How to Help People Change, 42-43)

JC Ryle:

It would not be difficult to point out at least twenty-five or thirty distinct passages in the Epistles where believers are plainly taught to use active personal exertion, and are addressed as responsible for doing energetically what Christ would have them do, and are not told to "yield themselves" up as passive agents and sit still, but to arise and work. (Holiness, xxxii)

3. Worship-Event Sanctification

Some Christians treat the singing and emotional catharsis of Sunday worship as a perfecting event. They believe that God will supernaturally remove their sin and temptations if they simply attend and participate. Of course, it doesn't work; they crash-and-burn all week long, and then they come back next week, hoping again to be transformed without any further effort on their part.

4. Sign-Gift Sanctification

Many people in the Charismatic movement believe that if they speak in tongues, have visions, receive prophecies, or watch healings, they will be transported to a new level of spiritual maturity in which their sin will magically disappear.

5. Mystical Sanctification

A growing number of people today describe themselves as "spiritual." Most often this refers to a privatised, superficially Christian, self-contrived religion that focuses on things like lighting candles, evoking a sense of mystery, emotional sensations, and a shallow, self-serving morality.

Wells:

This new spirituality is about the private search for meaning, a search for connection to something larger than the self. It is in fact a self-constructed spirituality. (The Courage to be Protestant, 179)

6. Pharmaceutical Sanctification

Sin is redefined as a medical condition and pharmaceutical remedies are employed to "solve" the problem. This approach has been especially popular when dealing with disobedient children, but is now being used more and more frequently with adults as well. However, rebellious behaviour is merely masked by the medication; the sinful heart is not changed.

7. Delayed Sanctification

Life is really busy right now, but I'll get to Bible reading, prayer, and going to church as soon as I get things sorted out.

Donald Whitney's comment:

If you are simply waiting until you have more time for the Spiritual Disciplines, you never will "I find myself thinking, 'When life settles down, I'll ...' But I should have learned by now that life never settles down for long. Whatever I want to accomplish, I must do with life unsettled." (Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, 237)

8. Meditate-More-On-Justification Sanctification

A. Identified

Evangelicalism's fairly recent obsession with terms like "gospel-centered" and "grace-driven" is the wonderful fruit of clearer, more biblical teaching on the Solas of the

Reformation [However] Being “gospel-centered” today has almost become synonymous with being against any kind of holy striving. (Jerry Wragg, unpublished article, "Jesus + Nothing = Everything God Promised")

Kevin DeYoung:

Among conservative Christians there is sometimes the mistaken notion that if we are truly gospel-centered we won't talk about rules or imperatives or moral exertion.

.... But the Bible does not reason this way. It has no problem with the word "therefore." Grace, grace, grace, therefore, stop doing this, start doing that, and obey the commands of God. (The Hole in Our Holiness, 19, 55)

B. Illustrated (by Tullian Tchividjian)

Sanctification is the daily hard work of going back to the reality of our justification. It's going back to the certainty of our objectively secured pardon in Christ and hitting the refresh button a thousand times a day.

.... Realizing this has changed the entire way I read the Bible. Think of what Paul tells us in Philippians 2:12; ‘Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.’ We’ve got work to do—but what exactly is it?

... [The work is] to place your trust in Christ’s finished work, and by learning to do this more and more ... all that is your possession already in fact—now becomes increasingly yours in experience. (Jesus + Nothing = Everything, 94, 95-96)

C. Evaluated

Tchividjian has reduced Paul's command to *work out your salvation* to nothing more than encouragement to meditate more extensively on the accomplished work of Christ. While such meditation is wonderful, it does not give full expression to Paul's commands to kill the flesh and to put off sin and to put on righteousness (Col 3:5ff). Meditation on the doctrine of justification does not magically cause sin and temptation to vanish.

Ryle:

The Scriptures teach us that in following holiness the true Christian needs personal exertion and work as well as faith Moreover, the Scriptures nowhere teach us that faith sanctifies us in the same sense, and in the same manner, that faith justifies us! (Holiness, xxiii)

Wragg:

If our problem is disobedience ... musing on justification could tempt us to ignore the warnings of conscience. (unpublished article, "Jesus + Nothing = Everything God Promised")

DeYoung:

We don't just get gripped by the gospel. We also work hard to be holy. (The Hole in Our Holiness, 89)

Observation:

We don't need to be so scared of legalism that we strip sanctification of its legitimate, God-assisted striving to put to death the deeds of the flesh.

The proper balance—grace-driven work:

1 Corinthians 15:10. By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

DeYoung:

My fear is that as we rightly celebrate ... all that Christ has saved us from, we are giving little thought and making little effort concerning all that Christ has saved us to. Shouldn't those most passionate about the gospel and God's glory also be the most dedicated to the pursuit of godliness? I worry that there is an enthusiasm gap and no one seems to mind. (The Hole in Our Holiness, 11)

9. Hoop-Jumping Sanctification

Sanctification is viewed as a series of rituals or hoops that a person must jump through—baptism, confirmation, communion, and semi-occasional church attendance. Like a circus dog, if you jump through all the appointed hoops, at the end you get a biscuit called eternal life.

Evaluation:

Love for Christ and daily obedience, not ritual, are the heart of sanctification. As a result, hoop-jumping Christians are frequently indifferent to Christ and mired down in ungodliness. In fact, nothing is more clear in our church-going culture than the fact that the hoop-jumping approach to sanctification doesn't sanctify.

10. The-Bridge-Is-Out Approach

In this case, a Christian looks at where he is and at where he should be, spiritually speaking. Between the two is a rushing river of sin and self-preoccupation. Unfortunately, he has no idea how to get from immaturity to maturity. The sanctification bridge is *out*.

He tries more Bible reading and more prayer—excellent things in and of themselves—but he is never quite able to build the bridge of spiritual change to the far shore. It's always washed away. He is never able to consistently overcome temptation and worldly preoccupations.

In the end, he despairs and slogs along in the Christian life, wishing that he could do better, but he can't: the bridge is out.

7) COLOSSIANS 2-3: A BIBLICAL CASE STUDY

Four *Wrong* Approaches To Sanctification (Colossians 2:16-23)

1. Sanctification Comes Through Keeping Religious Taboos And Ceremonies.

Colossians 2:16, 20-21. *Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!"*

Some believers in the Colossian church had become convinced that spirituality came through keeping religious taboos and the rituals of the Mosaic Law.

God's OT comment:

Hosea 6:6. *I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

Isaiah 1:12. *... Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?*

Point:

Not even in the OT was God satisfied with taboos or ceremonial ritual as a substitute for genuine love and obedience.

A. NT ritualism

Many professing Christians act as if their ritual church attendance, baptism, and taking communion offset or magically protect them from the defilement of their

drunkenness, sexual immorality, lying, and so on. In their minds, Christian ritual *is* sanctification.

This is not a new problem. It was also prominent in the church of Corinth in the NT era. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul exhorted the Corinthians to abandon their foolish belief that baptism and communion magically protected them from the defilement of cohabiting with prostitutes and participating in the wine-soaked demonic worship festivals held at the pagan temples of their city (1 Cor 6:15-16; 10:20-21).

Point:

The biblical ordinances, as important as they are, can never serve as a substitute for true sanctification, which includes a vibrant love for Christ and purity of life.

B. Paul's focus on Christ

Colossians 2:16-17. *Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.*

The rituals of the Mosaic system are the shadow; Christ is the substance.

Illustration:

The foolishness of hugging my wife's shadow, rather than my wife.

2. Sanctification Comes Through And Is Expressed By A Preoccupation With Angelic Beings.

Colossians 2:18. *Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels ...*

A. Described

A staggering number of people's Christianity today consists of a nearly crazed preoccupation with angels and demons. In recent decades, the church has been flooded with books and novels about "spiritual warfare" in the angelic realm. Most of these books are, at best, marginally biblical. More often than not they are a case of *theology by imagination*. Demons take over cities, and sword-bearing angels battle with grotesque, scale-covered creatures, while believers go on prayer crusades, binding, bruising, and casting out Satan's minions at every turn.

It's all very electrifying to read, and many professing Christians treat such a preoccupation with angelic beings as a substitute for sanctification: "*This is real spirituality!*"

B. Evaluated

Even if such imaginations about the spiritual realm were true, a preoccupation with angels is not the focus of biblical living. Angels are only ministering spirits (Heb 1:14); true spirituality focuses on Christ.

Furthermore, being preoccupied with angelic beings offers no help for overcoming daily sin. Sanctification will have to be sought elsewhere.

3. Sanctification Comes Through And Is Expressed By Receiving Dreams And Visions.

Colossians 2:18. *Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind ...*

A. Described

The popularity of fallible prophecies and visions among professing Christians today is astounding, especially since Paul specifically rebuked self-imagined visions as fleshly. Yet for many, such visions and prophecies *are* their Christianity, replacing Bible study, godly living, and even Christ.

MacArthur:

The charismatic quest for extrabiblical revelation, ecstatic experiences, [and] subjective guidance ... represents a massive danger. (Strange Fire, 82)

B. Evaluated

- Jeremiah 23:32. *"Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams," declares the LORD, "and ... led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit," declares the LORD.*

Point:

Sanctification is neither found in nor expressed by self-inflated imaginations passed off as divine messages. Such things serve only to distract believers from Christ and hold no benefit for spiritual growth.

- Colossians 2:18-19. *... taking his stand on visions he has seen ... not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body ... grows with a growth which is from God.*

As popular as they are, self-inflated visions do not help believers hold fast to Christ or overcome sin.

4. Sanctification Comes Through Treating One's Physical Body Harshly.

Colossians 2:23. ... *self-abasement and severe treatment of the body* ...

This could be called the *ascetic* or *monastic approach* to sanctification. It almost always flows out of a works-based view of justification. It assumes that harsh treatment of one's physical body is a biblical and effective way to overcome sin.

A. Its historical roots

Treating one's body harshly as a way to combat the lusts of the flesh was popularised by the aesthetics of fourth century AD. They believed that the way to deal with sin was to reside in the desert (Egypt being the destination of choice), experiencing the extremes of heat and cold with a minimum of clothing and shelter, and subsisting on a diet of pebbles and cactus spines.

The Roman Catholic Church codified this approach to sanctification in its various monastic systems, honing self-depravation to a science: all-night vigils, endless fasts, not washing for years, wearing rough, uncomfortable clothing, vows of perpetual poverty, and self-flagellation.

The Roman Catholic Church applauded such extreme acts of devotion as the ultimate in spirituality. God says they are *useless*.

B. A modern example

A popular modern expression of this mentality is *cutting*—self-punishment inflicted with a razorblade in hopes of making oneself more acceptable to God.

C. Paul's evaluation

Is denying yourself certain foods, wearing rough clothing, and treating your body harshly the biblical way to exalt Christ and overcome temptation?

- a. This approach to sanctification is childish and worldly.

Colossians 2:20-21. *If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!"*

The Colossians had died to such ignorant approaches to sanctification. As believers in Jesus Christ, they were no longer to be enslaved to taboos, as if such trivial self-denials were what made them spiritual.

- b. This approach to dealing with sin is human, not divine.

Colossians 2:22. ... *in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men ...*

- c. This approach to sanctification is of no value in combating sin.

Colossians 2:23. *These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.*

Point:

Self-discipline—telling yourself *no*—is a noble and necessary part of spiritual maturity; it's part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23; 2 Peter 1:6). However, God says that religiously motivated self-punishment is of no value in fighting *internal* sinful desires.

In contrast to those ineffectual and unbiblical approaches to sanctification, Paul develops the biblical approach to sanctification in Colossians 3. Predictably, it focuses on two things: a love for Christ and a practical plan for dealing with daily sin.

Our one-verse summary:

Romans 13:14. *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*

What all Christians need is a greater love for Christ and an effective way of dealing with daily sin.

The One *Right* Approach To Sanctification (Colossians 3:1-17)

1. Sanctification Consists Of A True, Deep Love For Christ—Daily Thoughts About Him And On Heaven.

Colossians 3:1-2. *Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.* (See also 3:11, 17)

Having died to the petty external rituals typical of false worship, believers are to focus on Christ, anticipating being with Him forever.

But simply meditating on Christ and heaven is not, by itself, an adequate plan for sanctification. We also need a practical, effective way of dealing with daily sin.

2. Sanctification Includes Putting To Death The Deeds Of The Flesh By Implementing God's Put Off/Put On Plan.

Colossians 3:5. *Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry*

A. Put off

Colossians 3:8-9. *But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,*

B. Put on

Colossians 3:10, 12, 14. *... and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*

And, of course, undergirding all of this effort is a dependence on God and a focus on Christ's glory.

Colossians 3:17. *Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*

Conclusion:

All counselees come to counselling with a theology of sanctification. It might be a good one or a bad one, but they will come tightly gripping either a learned or intuitive theology of change. Your job will be to identify and correct their wrong approaches to sanctification that have hindered them from making real progress in Christ, and help them replace those wrong approaches with the plan Paul outlined in Colossians 3.

Summed up:

Sanctification includes ...

- a vibrant love for Jesus Christ
- implementing God's put off/put on plan as His way for dealing with daily sin.



ECCLESIOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Joel James
(student)

1) WHAT MAKES A CHURCH A CHURCH?

1. Saved People (1 Cor 1:2)
2. The Regular Proclamation Of The Word Of God (1 Tim 3:15; 4:13)
3. The Regular And Appropriate Practice Of The Ordinances Of Baptism And Communion (Matt 28:18-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26)
4. The Presence Of Or A Working Toward Spiritually Qualified Leaders (Acts 14:23)
5. The Practice Of Church Discipline As Outlined In Matthew 18. (Gal 6:1; 1 Cor 5:5, 11-13; 2 Cor 2:2; 2 Thess 3:14-15; 1 Tim 1:20; Titus 3:10-11)

Summed up:

A church is a group of true believers in Jesus Christ who meet regularly to hear the word of God, who participate in the ordinances Christ commanded, who are led by spiritually qualified men, and who deal with sin in their midst in a biblical fashion.

2) THE CHURCH'S OWNER

Paul called the Corinthian church, "the church of God" (1 Cor 1:2). God owns the church. Christ, His Son, is the Lord of the church.

Implications:

1. God's Assembly Must Be Governed By God's Word.

Robert Saucy:

Progress in the church comes not from advancing beyond the biblical patterns but from building squarely upon them. (The Church in God's Program, 8)

2. God's Assembly Must Focus On His Glory.

Ephesians 3:20-21. *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think ... to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*

Comment:

The church isn't about programs, keeping people busy, making people feel good about themselves, or entertaining the youth. The church is not a Good Samaritan club or an architectural society ardently absorbed with the building it meets in, nor is the church a fund-raising machine.

Plain and simple, the church is an assembly of believers in Jesus Christ, ruled by God's Word, and preoccupied with God's glory.

3) THE CHURCH AND COUNSELLING

Biblical change takes place primarily in the church, not the counselling room, because in God's design, sanctification is a corporate project, requiring church life and input from other believers

Bill Goode:

Counseling must never be thought of as a weekly hour of magic, or an independent ministry conducted aside from the church. (in MacArthur and Mack, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, 302)

- Romans 15:14. *And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are ... able also to admonish one another.*
- 1 Thessalonians 5:14. *We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*
- Ephesians 4:15-16. *... but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies ... causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*
- Hebrews 10:24-25. *... and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some ...*

Paul Tripp:

If you followed the Lord for a thousand years, you would still need the ministry of the body of Christ as much as you did the day you first believed. (*Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, xi)

4) CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND BIBLICAL COUNSELLING

Three Common Objections To Church Discipline

1. Objection 1: Church Discipline Is Not Important To The Life Of The Church.

Responses:

- A. The process we call church discipline is clearly taught in Matthew 18 by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church. It cannot be considered optional or unimportant.
- B. The apostle Paul mentions church discipline in six epistles written to five different churches (1 Cor 5:1-13; 2 Cor 2:5-11; Gal 6:1; 2 Thess 3:6-15; 1 Tim 1:20; Titus 3:10-11). It is absurd to conclude that the process of church discipline is unimportant to the church.

2. Objection 2: Church Discipline Is Unloving.

Responses:

- A. Proverbs 27:5. *Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed.*

Unlike some professing Christians, God sees no contradiction between reproof and love.

Leviticus 19:17-18. You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

- B. If Jesus is the God of love, then it is scandalous to accuse Him of giving the church "unloving" instructions in Matthew 18.
- C. We all love the parable of the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep at pasture and clambers among the rocks and brambles on the mountainside to find the one lost sheep. We might forget, however, that the text of Scripture that immediately follows that parable is the church discipline section (Matt 18:12-14, 15-17).

Point:

In other words, church discipline is the way in which Christ our Shepherd, recalls a straying sheep to the fold of His love and care.

3. Objection 3: Implementing Church Discipline Is Too Painful.

Responses:

- A. This objection exposes a lack of faith. We must believe that obedience to Christ is better than any humanly contrived alternatives.
- B. While it is perfectly true that implementing church discipline is never enjoyable, when done graciously, it is beneficial to both the church and the person being called to repentance.
- C. The benefits of church discipline for the church

- a. Conviction

Galatians 6:1. ... *looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.*

Nothing teaches the seriousness of sin or encourages sober self-examination more than a public announcement that a person needs to be put out of the fellowship because of his or her continued refusal to repent.

- b. Purity

Ecclesiastes 9:18. ... *but one sinner destroys much good.*

The reputation of Christ and His church must be protected from the disrepute of those who say they belong to Christ's flock but who are living like they belong to Satan's.

- D. The benefit for the person disciplined

- Proverbs 27:5-6. *Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.*
- 1 Corinthians 5:5. *I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

The Four Steps Of Church Discipline/Restoration (Matt 18:15-17)

1. Step One: A Personal Meeting

Matthew 18:15. *If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.*

Note:

Both the sinner and the one sinned against are held responsible to seek reconciliation when sin has occurred (Matt 5:23-24 / Matt 18:15; Rom 12:18).

A. The two *purposes* of the personal meeting:

a. A fact-finding mission

We can easily misinterpret people's words or actions; therefore, we need to ascertain whether what the person did was actually sin, and if it was, whether he has repented.

Proverbs 18:13. *He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.*

b. A call to repentance (if necessary)

B. The *attitudes* of the personal meeting:

- gentleness
- humility

Galatians 6:1. *Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.*

2 Thessalonians 3:15. *Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

C. The *tools* of the personal meeting:

- prayer (Matt 18:19-20)
- God's word

2 Timothy 3:16. *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.*

Point:

We do not reprove people on the basis of opinion or personal preference. We need go with a Bible passage that clearly rebukes the person's words, attitudes, or actions as sin.

Question:

For what kinds of sin are the steps of church discipline implemented?

Possible answers:

- big sins (like adultery)
- sin done repeatedly
- unrepentant sin

There is only *one sin* that causes us to implement the steps of Matthew 18: the sin of *refusing to repent*.

In each step in Matthew 18, it is the person's repentance that ends the process, or his lack of repentance that causes the process to move to the next step. Technically speaking, one is not disciplined out of the church for adultery, lying, or any other specific sin. One is disciplined out of the church for the sin of refusing to repent when given repeated opportunities to do so.

Point:

Christians are not sinless. However, when we sin, what Christians do is repent and ask forgiveness for it. That is the defining mark of a Christian, because that's how Christianity begins: confession and repentance.

Therefore, to refuse to repent when confronted for sin is *the most utterly non-Christian* thing that a professing believer could do. It is to return to the attitudes and actions of Satan's kingdom; it is to act like one of Satan's flock.

The Christian life begins with repenting from sin, and how the Christian life *begins* is how it *continues*. Whenever we stop repenting, we have, in the most fundamental way, stopped acting like a Christian. We have forfeited the distinguishing mark of a follower of Christ—not sinlessness, but repentance.

When a professing believer relentlessly refuses to repent in spite of multiplied opportunities to do so, he must be put out of the church. He must be handed back over to Satan, the one whose kingdom is characterised by a unending resistance to conviction.

2. Step Two: A Second Meeting, With Witnesses

Matthew 18:16. *But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.*

Reflecting the OT practice for capital cases, multiple witnesses are brought in to confirm the person's sin and lack of repentance.

The purposes of the second meeting are the same as first meeting:

A. A fact-finding mission

Did the person sin or not? Has he repented or not? These questions are too significant to be left to the judgement of one person alone; therefore, multiple judges/witnesses are to be involved.

B. A call to repentance

If the person repents, the process is stopped, forgiveness is granted, love is affirmed, and any legitimate consequences (e.g., public confession, restitution, etc.) are agreed upon. If the person does not repent, step three must be implemented.

3. Step Three: A Congregational Announcement Of The Person's Refusal To Repent

A. The practical considerations

This announcement is the responsibility of the elders. Paul taught that "those who are spiritual" should take the lead in church discipline situations (Gal 6:1) and that the worship services of the church should be orderly (1 Cor 14:33, 40).

Therefore, it would be inappropriate for a church member to pop up on his or her own authority in the middle of the announcements and blurt out, "Billy has refused to repent from his sin of adultery; therefore, Tom, Dick, and I have decided to put him out of the church."

B. The purpose

The purpose of the public announcement is to gradually increase the pressure being brought to bear on the unrepentant brother. First one person pursued the sinning brother, then two or three. Now the whole church is told so that they can corporately pray for and pursue the straying sheep. If the person still refuses to repent, the church must move to step four.

4. Step Four: Put The Relentlessly Unrepentant Person Out Of The Church.

Matthew 18:17. *... and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

A. Turned over to Satan (1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20):

Because his relentless refusal to repent misrepresents what Christianity is about, this person is "turned over to Satan." He is returned to the sheepfold characterised by hardened, rebellious stubbornness.

Observation:

Because he professes Christ but is acting persistently like he belongs to Satan, his situation is *worse* than that of unbeliever.

Normally, an unbeliever who is living in sin is welcome to attend church and to socialise at an appropriate level with its members. However, one who claims to be a Christian but is living persistently like he isn't is not allowed to associate with or worship with believers. The world must not be allowed to imagine that sinful unrepentance is a normal state for Christians to live in, and thus conclude, "Christians don't live any differently than I do."

Disfellowshipped completely, the unrepentant one is sent back to "enjoy" Satan's realm. If he is a true believer, his heart will be repulsed by the cold, dark, brutal nature of Satan's shepherding. If he is a believer, he will long for the fellowship, worship, and love of Christ and the church. One of Christ's sheep can not long be satisfied subsisting in Satan's sheepfold.

B. Disassociation includes ...

a. Disbarring from worship services

1 Corinthians 5:12-13. ... *Do you not judge those who are within the church? Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.*

Clearly this involved more than merely removing a person's name from the membership roll or barring him from taking communion. It included disbarring the person from the worship and fellowship events of the church.

b. Cutting off social contact

Jesus' instruction to treat the person "as a Gentile and a tax collector" should not be reduced merely to the notion that he is treated as an unbeliever. Jesus' audience, based on the long-established practice of the Jewish culture, would have understood that treating a person like a Gentile and a tax collector meant avoiding all social contact with him or her.

Paul's application:

1 Corinthians 5:11. *I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.*

2 Thessalonians 3:14. *If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.*

C. The goals of putting an unrepentant person out of the church

- restoration of the person to Christ
- protection of Christ's reputation
- protection of the church's reputation
- a warning to other people in the church who are living in sin

D. The hoped-for fifth step

Repulsed by Satan's realm and Satan's shepherding, and disappointed by the false promises of sin, the unrepentant person relents, turns to God, seeks forgiveness, and forsakes his sin. When that happens, the person is publically restored to the fellowship of the church.

Illustrated:

2 Corinthians 2:5-8. *But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree—in order not to say too much—to all of you. Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.*



ESCHATOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

Joel James
(student)

Note:

This course is not intended to settle issues such as millennial views and the timing of the rapture. Therefore this section of the notes will focus primarily on *personal eschatology*: what happens to people when they die?

Eschatology—Motivation To Godly Living Now:

1. The Return Of Christ

- 2 Peter 3:10-11. *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness ...*
- 2 Peter 3:13-14. *But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless ...*
- Matthew 24:44. *For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.*

2. Heaven

- Colossians 3:1-2. *Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.*
- James 1:12. *Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

Point:

Few counselees think daily about Christ's return and the the glories of heaven, and they are spiritually poorer for it.

We'll approach the subject of eschatology by asking three questions:

- 1) What is death, and how should a believer prepare for it?
- 2) What happens to unbelievers when they die?
- 3) What happens to believers when they die?

1) WHAT IS DEATH, AND HOW SHOULD A BELIEVER PREPARE FOR IT?

1. Death Is The Separation Of The Immaterial Part Of You From The Physical Part Of You.

James 2:26. *For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*

A. Death is not cessation of existence.

Death is simply a transition to a different mode of existence; it is not, as some tend to think, extinction. (Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1169)

D. L. Moody:

Soon you will read in the newspaper that I am dead. Don't believe it for a moment. I will be more alive than ever before. (quoted in Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, 31)

B. How does a Christian prepare for this transition?

Grudem:

... the world's goal of preserving one's own physical life at all costs is not the highest goal for a Christian: obedience to God and faithfulness to him in every circumstance is far more important

The New Testament encourages us to view our own death not with fear but with joy at the prospect of going to be with Christ. (*Systematic Theology*, 813)

Philippians 1:21. *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain ...*

C. Seven biblical truths about death

a. Death is an enemy.

1 Corinthians 15:25-26. *For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.*

b. A believer's victory over death is assured by Christ's victory over death.

1 Corinthians 15:20, 22. *But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.*

- c. Jesus frees believers from the fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15. *Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.*

Psalms 23:4. *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

- d. Death cannot separate a believer from Christ; in fact, it sends him or her to Christ.

Romans 8:38-39. *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life ... will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2 Corinthians 5:8. *We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.*

- e. God is sovereign over the timing and nature of a person's death.

Psalms 33:18-19. *Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness, to deliver their soul from death ...*

Psalms 116:15. *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His godly ones.*

- f. Death is the final way of glorifying God in this life.

Philippians 1:20. *... Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.*

Romans 14:8. *For if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.*

- g. While the parting of death holds real sadness, for believers it does not include incapacitating sorrow.

1 Thessalonians 4:13. *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.*

John 11:24-25. *Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies ...*

2) WHAT HAPPENS TO *UNBELIEVERS* WHEN THEY DIE?

1. The Unbeliever's Spirit Is Separated From His Body. (James 2:26)

2. An Unbeliever Goes Directly To A Place Of Conscious Torment Called *Hades*.

Luke 16:22-23. *Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment ...*

3. Following Christ's Final Verdict At The Great White Throne Judgment, All Unbelievers Will Be Transferred From The Temporary Place Of Torment, Hades, To The Place Of Permanent Torment, The Lake Of Fire.

Revelation 20:11-14. *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.*

Common questions:

A. Are unbelievers given a second chance to believe in Christ after death? No.

Hebrews 9:27. *It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment ...*

B. What about the African idea of zombies—living dead who are called up by witchdoctors?

a. The biblical examples of people temporarily returning from the dead (Moses, Elijah, Samuel, Lazarus, etc.) were exceptional situations and bear no relationship to zombies.

b. Luke 16 and Hebrews 9:27 teach that the spirits of unbelievers who have died go directly to conscious torment. They are not available to become zombies.

4. Five Realities Of Final Judgement For An Unbeliever

A. It is certain.

Acts 17:30-31. ... *God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed ...*

B. Christ is the Judge.

John 5:22. *For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son ...*

2 Timothy 4:1. *I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead ...*

C. Every sinful thought, word, and deed will be exposed and judged.

Ecclesiastes 12:14. *For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.*

Matthew 12:36. *But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.*

D. Judgement will be more severe for those who had more truth.

Luke 12:47-48. *And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. (see also Matthew 11:21-22)*

E. Judgement consists of eternal, conscious torment.

Hell's descriptions:

lake of fire	Rev 20:14-15
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perpetual decay	Is 66:23-24
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torture	Matt 18:34
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burning in a furnace	Matt 13:42
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being ground to powder	Matt 21:44
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burning of chaff	Matt 3:12
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outer darkness	Matt 8:12, 25:30
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being cut to pieces	Matt 24:51
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eternal destruction	2 Thess 1:9
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The lake of fire is a place of eternal, conscious torment for rebellion against God.

5. Does The Bible Teach Annihilationism?

Key phrase—eternal destruction:

2 Thessalonians 1:9. *These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,*

A. Annihilationism explained

Some evangelicals teach that unbelievers are punished in the fires of hell for a short time and then blink out of existence. In other words, the *consequences* of destruction—ceasing to exist—are eternal, but the actual suffering is not.

The church has traditionally held that the wicked will be cast into hell, where they will experience unending suffering. The doctrine is admittedly a difficult one Not surprisingly, it has been increasingly replaced by a milder doctrine that the wicked will be annihilated

*Annihilationists teach that the punishment of the wicked is everlasting in consequence, not duration. (Gregory Boyd and Paul Eddy, *Across the Spectrum*, 255)*

B. Annihilationism refuted

The Bible teaches that hell is a process of destruction that continues eternally, never reaching the cessation of existence.

- Revelation 14:11. *And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night ...*
- Revelation 20:10. *And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*
- Matthew 25:46. *These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*

Comment:

These passages show that unbelievers do not blink out of existence after a short or even an extended session in the lake of fire. In fact, hell's duration is the same as heaven's.

Observation:

Those who know and understand God best— holy angels and saints who have died and who are in heaven—believe that an eternal hell is a suitable and praiseworthy punishment for those who have rebelled against God.

- Revelation 19:1-3. *After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her." And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever"*

Point:

The citizens of heaven confirm that the eternal punishment of sinners is praiseworthy.

If we are confused on this issue, it's only because of our limited, earthly perspective. Once we gaze on the full holiness and majesty of God, unhindered by our sinful and finite misperceptions, we will understand that eternal hell is a suitable and praiseworthy punishment for those who have rebelled against God.

3) WHAT HAPPENS TO *BELIEVERS* WHEN THEY DIE?

1. **The Spirit Is Separated From The Body. (James 2:26)**
2. **The Believer Goes Directly To The Presence Of God (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Luke 23:43)**

Two false doctrines: purgatory and soul-sleep

A. Purgatory

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that when believers die, they go to purgatory, a place of temporary suffering in which a believer tops up his personal suffering for sins committed after his justification. Purgatory is *Hell Junior*—a temporary lake of fire for believers.

Evaluation:

The Bible is silent regarding purgatory. In fact, this doctrine was deduced from the extra-biblical, historical book of 2 Maccabees, not the Bible.

Furthermore, the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory clearly violates the teaching of Scripture on at least four counts.

- a. It contradicts the biblical teaching that believers go directly to God's presence when they die. (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Luke 23:43)
- b. It denies the sufficiency of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, teaching that a believer's suffering must be added to Christ's to bring Christ's death up to full sufficiency. (Heb 10:14)
- c. It contradicts the biblical teaching that Christ's death removed all condemnation for believers. (Rom 8:1)
- d. It teaches that believers are still at war with God until thousands or hundreds of thousands of years of suffering in purgatory have transpired. (Rom 5:1; 1 John 4:17-18)

B. Soul sleep

- a. Sleep—as a metaphor of death

When Scripture represents death as 'sleep' it is simply a metaphorical expression used to indicate that death is only temporary for Christians

As for the passages that indicate that the dead do not praise God, or that there is a ceasing of conscious activity when people die, these are all to be understood from the perspective of life in this world. (Grudem, Systematic Theology, 819, 820)

- b. Biblical evidence against soul sleep

- i. The book of Revelation shows that those who have died take an active interest in the events of this world and actively praise God while events on the earth are transpiring.

Revelation 6:9-10. When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (see also Rev 19:1-4)

- ii. Luke 16:19-31. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus taught that human beings' post-death experience includes, not soul sleep, but conscious torment for unbelievers and conscious bliss for believers.

Question:

Did OT believers go directly to God's presence when they died?

- 2 Kings 2:1, 11. *And it came about when the LORD was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.*
- Psalm 73:24. *With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory.*
- Matthew 22:31-32. *But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" He is not the God of the dead but of the living.*

Recapitulation:

When a believer dies, he or she goes directly to the presence of God.

3. The Bema Seat Judgement Of Believers

A. Explained

All believers will experience a judgement before Christ called the Bema Seat Judgement. This takes place either after the rapture or after the return of Christ, depending on your other eschatological views. The Bema Seat is not a judgement to determine salvation or eternal destiny; rather, it is evaluation by Christ of how each believer lived under His lordship, with corresponding reward given.

- 2 Corinthians 5:10. *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*
- Romans 14:10, 12. *But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.*
- 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. *Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any*

man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

B. Does the Bema Seat involve punishment?

Rather than conscious suffering, which would violate a host of verses that teach that a believer's condemnation was completely absorbed by Christ, most theologians argue that those who have served Christ distractedly or impurely will be given less capacity to enjoy the glories of heaven.

Heaven will be heaven for all believers. However those who have been the most faithful in this life will be rewarded by Christ with a greater capacity to enjoy it fully.

Illustrated:

A person who has been gifted by God with greater hand-eye coordination is able to enjoy the game of table tennis more fully than those whose eyes and hands are not on talking terms.

C. Levels of reward

The level of reward is not related to whether one's service was public or private, widely acclaimed or known to Christ alone.

Matthew 10:41-42. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.

Hebrews 6:10. God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.

4. Glorification

Glorification involves two changes. When you enter God's presence at death ...

A. God will make you incapable of sinning.

Finally, what you've always longed for in this life will be brought about by omnipotent divine intervention: your declared status before God and your actual righteousness will be perfectly and eternally congruent.

1 John 3:2-3. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will

be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

B. God will give you a physical body like Christ's resurrection body.

NT references to glorification:

- Romans 8:30. *And these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*
- Philippians 3:20-21. *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*
- 1 Corinthians 15:42, 53. *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

Point:

Our glorified bodies will allow us to enjoy heaven eternally.

- 2 Corinthians 5:1-2. *For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven.*

Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

Everything will be glorified, even nature itself. And that seems to me to be the biblical teaching about the eternal state: that what we call heaven is life in this perfect world as God intended humanity to live it. When he put Adam in Paradise at the beginning, Adam fell, and all fell with him, but men and women are meant to live in the body, and will live in a glorified body in a glorified world, and God will be with them. (quoted in Randy Alcorn, Heaven, 101)

C. What will our glorified bodies be like?

The fact that our new bodies will be "imperishable" means that they will not wear out or grow old or ever be subject to any kind of sickness or disease. They will be completely healthy and strong forever our resurrection bodies will have no sign of aging, but will have the characteristics of youthful but mature manhood or womanhood forever. (Grudem, Systematic Theology, 831)

4) HEAVEN

After the final judgement, believers will enter into the full enjoyment of life in the presence of God forever. (Grudem, 1158)

*We shall then have rest without sleep, for God will be our rest. (Richard Baxter, quoted in John MacArthur, *The Glory of Heaven*, 176)*

J. C. Ryle on looking forward to heaven:

*The man who is about to sail for Australia or New Zealand as a settler, is naturally anxious to know something about his future home, its climate, its employments, its inhabitants, its ways, its customs. All these are subjects of deep interest to him. You are leaving this land of your nativity, you are going to spend the rest of your life in a new hemisphere. It would be strange indeed if you did not desire information about your new abode Before we go to our eternal home we should try to become acquainted with it. (quoted in Alcorn, *Heaven*, 5)*

Five Features Of Heaven

1. God Will Create A New Heavens And A New Earth.

The eternal state includes not only a new *you*, but a new heavens and the new earth.

A. The uncreation of the sin-corrupted universe

- Revelation 20:11. *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.*

Point:

It seems best to interpret this to mean that the old heavens and old earth go out of existence.

- 2 Peter 3:10, 12. *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up and the elements will melt with intense heat!*

B. The creation of a new universe

- Isaiah 65:17. *For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.*

- Revelation 21:1. *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away ...*

A. A. Hodge on the nature of the new heavens and earth:

*Heaven, as the eternal home of the divine Man and of all the redeemed members of the human race, must necessarily be thoroughly human in its structure, conditions, and activities. (quoted in MacArthur, *The Glory of Heaven*, 140)*

2. The Curse And All Its Effects Will Be Removed.

- Revelation 21:4-5. *... He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new" ...*
- Revelation 22:3. *There will no longer be any curse.*

3. There Will Be No Sin.

- Revelation 21:27. *Nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

The resulting heavenly motivation:

*If ungodliness is your delight here on earth, what will please you in heaven, where all is clean and pure? You would not be happy there if you are not holy here. (DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness*, 15)*

*Heaven is the perfect place for people made perfect. (MacArthur, *The Glory of Heaven*, 118)*

4. Believers Will Enjoy An Extraordinarily Heightened Relationship With God.

Randy Alcorn:

Our longing for Heaven is a longing for God. (Heaven, 171)

*Eternity is but long enough to enjoy my God. (Finley, quoted in Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 40-41)*

- Revelation 22:3-5. *... the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their*

foreheads the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

- John 17:24. *Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

Comment:

In Heaven, Christ will induct us into the eternal glory, fellowship, unity and love of the Trinity.

MacArthur (of Christ):

Heaven is His realm. He has gone there to prepare a place for us to live with Him forever. That truth is what makes heaven so precious for the Christian That is heaven's chief appeal for the Christian whose priorities are straight. Christ Himself is the glory of heaven. (The Glory of Heaven, 12)

Luther:

I had rather be in hell with Christ, than be in heaven without him.
(quoted in Alcorn, *Heaven*, 187)

Summed up by Jonathan Edwards:

*God is the highest good of the reasonable creature, and the enjoyment of him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows. But the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, God is the ocean. (quoted in Alcorn, *Heaven*, 185)*

5. Heaven Includes Eternal Joys And Pleasures Personally Dispensed By God.

- Psalm 16:11. *You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.*

The attraction of Heaven for believers does not merely consist of the absence of pain. It also includes God tipping over a reservoir of divine joy and pleasure on us.

Berkhof:

The reward of the righteous is described as eternal life, that is, not merely an endless life, but life in all its fullness. (Systematic Theology, 737)

John 10:10. *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

Conclusion:

Fanny Crosby, "My Savior First of All"

*When my life work is ended, and I cross the swelling tide,
When the bright and glorious morning I shall see,
I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side,
And His smile will be the first to welcome me*

*Thru the gates of the city in a robe of spotless white,
He will lead me where no tears will ever fall;
In glad song of ages I shall mingle with delight
But I long to meet my Savior first of all.*

Summary:

All of theology is important to biblical counselling. It tells us who God is and who He is not. It tells us that He made us. It tells us how to be right with Him, how to please Him and how not to please Him. It tells us His eternal plan of blessing for those who, by His grace, believe in and love His Son. All of that is critical to biblical counselling.

Next session:

In the next portion of the course, we'll begin to apply everything we've learned by looking at the most frequent and most difficult type of counselling: marriage counselling.