

有关信徒地位的原则

迈尔斯·斯坦福 (MILES J. STANFORD)

第十章 各样的罪与认罪悔改 (X. Sins and Confession)

“我们若认自己的罪，神是信实的，是公义的，必要赦免我们的罪，洗净我们一切的不义”（约翰一书 1:9）。因着主耶稣已经解决了那个根源问题，亦即罪的原则，我们的父神就可以白白的赦免我们各样的罪。基督已经在十字架上在他自己的肉体当中定了罪案（罗马书 8:3）。因此，承认我们各样的罪，并不是关乎定罪与刑罚这件事，而是关系到洁净与交通的层面。

状态 (Condition)

一位信徒，如果对于自己在上帝面前的完美的地位并没有清楚的认识，也就是并没有意识到天父已经把他摆放在他同在的光明之中，那么，这位信徒就会更多的是意识到自己的那个以自我为中心的状态，多于他对于自己的那个以基督为中心的地位的认识。这样一来，就算是在他承认自己各样的罪的时候，他事实上也不会去接纳那些因着他在光明里面的地位而带下来的好处。于是，他就不会感受到自己已经被赦免，以及被从一切的不义当中被洁净了，结果就是，他可能过不了多久，就放弃认罪这件事了。从此以后，他就常常是在黑暗与内疚的沼泽里面去翻滚挣扎了。以上所言，可以说是对于今天太多的基督徒的光景的准确预测。

大多数的基督徒，在他们信主的初期，通常都是会很认真与忠实地向天父去承认他们各样的罪的。但是，因为他们还是属灵层面的婴孩，于是对于圣经的道理，关于上帝所成就的工作，特别是在关乎各样的罪在我们里面的那个根源，都是所知甚少的，所以时间不长之后，就会发现自己所犯的罪，就渐渐开始超出自己所认的罪了。那些没有来到天父面前承认的罪不断地积累，就会在良心当中造成内疚，并且这样的信徒也就会发现，自己跟天父的团契也受到了阻碍。不仅如此，他还会遭受到管教。更糟糕的是，他现在甚至开始要躲避光明。他忘记了的是，管教的目的并不是要来惩罚和谴责一位有罪的信徒，而是要揭露出罪的存在，好叫信徒们能够去认罪悔改，从而得到白白的赦免。

另一个比较常见的错误就是，人们会为着赦罪而去祷告，却不愿意来留意上帝的话语，承认自己的各样的罪，然后获得赦罪的平安与确据。某人可能会为着得着赦罪而祷告数个月的时间，却依然没有得到被赦免的那种确据。有许多人用很笼统的话语来承认自己的罪，却未曾为着具体的罪行来明确的认罪。当我们用诚实的态度为着自己的那些罪行一件件的来认罪的时候，无论是在思想、言语、或是行为方面的犯罪，其必定可以拥有的结果就是，我们会有明确的被赦免与被洁净的平安与确据。伴随着的，可能有悔改与破碎，但是这些只不过是认罪与洁净所带出的结果，而不是其原因。“若有人犯罪了，”救生索就是在我们旁边的触手可及的地方，那就是认罪，这样，我们就可以因着基督的中保作用，借着他所洒的宝血，就能得到完全的赦免与洁净。“我们若认自己的罪，神是信实的，是公义的，必要赦免我们的罪”（约翰一书 1:9）。

地位 (Position)

当我们安息于我们在基督里的地位上，我们就会发现自己乃是在光明当中的。我们知道，我们各样的罪已经被一次性而且是永远的洗净了，而且因此之故我们的良心也被洁净了。与此同时，我们也是很清楚地明白，尽管我们居住在复活的主耶稣里面，我们每一天的基督徒生活还是要在一个罪恶的世界里面去展开的。当我们处于生命成长的过程中，就难免会犯下诸多的罪来，这些往往是因为我们把眼睛从主耶稣身上挪开，愚蠢地去倚靠自己的缘故；结果就是，我们的良知被污秽了，我们跟神之间的美好团契也被破坏了。我们还知道，用来弥补的办法，就是要去承认我们的罪，好从我们一切的不义当中获得洁净，从而能够让一个清洁的良心得到恢复，并且继续拥有一份与神之间的美好团契。

无论我们的属灵成长是处在怎样的阶段，我们在现今的经历，跟我们永恒的地位相比较，总是无比低劣的。我们之状态的进步与改善，乃是朝着我们那已经完成了的地位而努力的，并且同时又是从那个已然完结的根源生发出来的。在我们的地位与我们的状态之间的不匹配的情况，也就是借着我们在成长与服事当中的许多的失败而彰显出来的，可以靠着我们的认罪与神的洁净这样的途径，而获得公正的处理。我们的各种需要，借助于基督那信实的中保功能，而被进一步的供给了，于是乎，我们的地位并我们跟神的团契就可以得到维护，而且是贯穿于我们整个的属灵成长的过程之中。借着这些途径，我们的主就能够一直让我们去倚靠他本人，并且与此同时又能够在祂里面总是信心满满的。是的，我们依然有需要、有欠缺，但是，我们可以坦然无惧。

在光明中居住，在光明中行事为人，就使得我们对于自己各样的罪能够有诚实的认知，而且也会提升我们对于上帝恩典的感激之情。意识到我们有各样的罪，并不会让我们退缩，让我们自惭形秽，因为神的洁净使我们重获自由。那个用来揭示我们诸多的罪的光明，同样彰显出圣子的荣面，这样就能够使我们得以坦诚地、毫无畏惧地去面对这两个事实。当我们在某个地方最是受到探测和监控时，我们就在那个地方获得最大的保护。在这样的根基之上，我们所犯下的各样的罪，立即就会被处置，于是我们就得以继续处在与神的美好团契当中，并能够继续迈向属灵生命的成熟。除此以外的唯一的另一个选项就是，相信并倚靠自己的力量，想要去跟罪恶作斗争，然后遭受失败，进而在我们生命的发育过程中受到拦阻。

我们的天父所预备的那个针对性的措施，乃是通过内住在信徒里面的生命的灵来作工。当然啦，让我们各样的罪如此轻松和白白的就被赦免，并不是要让我们从此就在行事为人方面松懈和麻痹大意。有一件事是我们所知道的，伴随着赦免而来的，常常是上帝那信实的管教。一颗完美的良心，是那樣的值得我们去珍惜和保护，绝不应该因着我们放纵形骸而丧失其完美性。我们承认，“原来我们在许多事上都有过失 [英文详译可作，都容易被绊倒和摔跤，也容易冒犯他人]”（雅各书 3:2），但是，我们不必有惧怕之心，倒是应该直面每一个过失，为之认罪。那用来揭露我们之过犯的光芒，更是要给我们展现出我们在主耶稣里面的那个完美的地位。对我们而言，的确是，“黑暗渐渐过去，真光已经照耀”（约翰一书 2:8）。

认罪与洁净，就使得我们可以安息在上帝的面前，而且是毫不掩饰的、毫无诡诈的。我们的态度就成为是，“神啊，求你鉴察我，知道我的心思，试炼我，知道我的意念，看在我里面有什么恶行没有，引导我走永生的道路”（诗篇 139:23, 24）。我们也不必去做出任何的伪装，试图掩藏我们的罪（约翰一书 1:8）；而是说，我们想要把这些罪清晰的显露出来，好让它们被承认与处置，这样就叫我们跟父神之间的那个最重要的团契不受阻碍了。我们所领受的忠实的圣经教导就是，不要试图去遮掩自己的罪，而且断不可停止认罪。“我闭口不认罪的时候，因终日唉哼而骨头枯干。黑夜白日，你的手在我身上沉重；我的精液耗尽，如同夏天的干旱”（诗篇 32:3, 4）。合宜的内疚与神的管教，可以彻底地做成它们的工作，好叫我们学会面对事实，学会欣赏上帝做事的方式，那就是，认罪乃是命令语气的必要的行动。

正是因着我们在主耶稣里的这个地位，不管我们在自己里面的状态是怎么样子的，我们的天父就能够对我们说，“我知道我向你们所怀的意念是赐平安的意念……要叫你们末后有指望”（耶利米书 29:11）。

“得赦免其过、遮盖其罪的，这人是有福的！凡心里没有诡诈、耶和华不算为有罪的，这人是有福的！”（诗篇 32:1, 2）。“我们既因信称义，就藉着我们的主耶稣基督得与神相和。我们又藉着他，因信得进入现在所站的 [地位方面而言的] 这恩典中，并且欢欢喜喜盼望神的荣耀”（罗马书 5:1, 2）。

当我们的生命不断成长起来，我们就学会了更好的站在我们于恩典之中的地位上，居住在复活的主耶稣里，而且是在父神同在的光明当中行事为人，并享受跟神的美好团契。即使在我们跟罪恶作斗争并且是遭遇了失败的时候，我们仍然可以在那种挫折的经历当中，来感谢神，因着我们的地位乃是铁骨铮铮的、不可撼动的事实。借着自由地承认我们各样的罪，适时地为着我们向内住的罪屈服了而审判（分辨）自己，我们所表达的，就是对于自我（老我）的一个不断增长的恨恶。我们对于自己的走出（或说漂移离开）光明的领域这件事，愿意去承担相应的责任，因为否则的话，那就会使我们进入到罪与自我的阴影里面去。

“我们若是先分辨 [原文是，审判] 自己，就不至于受审。我们受审的时候，乃是被主惩治，免得我们和世人一同定罪”（哥林多前书 11:31, 32）。

当我们站在光明之中，我们不仅仅是知道，我们诸多的罪都已经被基督的宝血所洁净和挪去了，而且，我们还会意识到，我们之作为罪人，也已经借着十字架上的死，而彻底除灭了。我们看自己是已经对罪死了，而现在活着，乃是作为在基督耶稣里新造的人而活着。因此之故，我们就可以常常为着自己的那些被光明所揭示出来的罪而认罪悔改，并且也因此而从自我迷恋当中被释放出来——得以自由自在地沉浸于、并享受着，与父神并圣子的完美团契。

从自我里面的黑暗与死亡中脱离，归向基督里面的光明与生命，这并不是意味着要放弃争战，向罪屈服。绝非如此！而是“要为真道打那美好的仗”（提摩太前书 6:12），只不过我们所要进入的，乃是以下这个事实所带来的各样的好处，该事实就是：这场争战已经被发动而且借着另一位努力，胜利已经为我们而赢得了。这样的一个从“捆绑与挫败”，向着“自由与得胜”的转折，正是从“状态”向着“地位”所进行的信心之旅。“因为那进入安息的，乃是歇了自己的工，正如神歇了他的工一样”（希伯来书 4:10）。

圣灵要来带领我们经过这整个的转变过程，并且他乃是借着一个非常简单的步骤。他允许我们跟罪与自我争战，直到我们明白了这中努力的虚空本质。接着，圣灵就提醒我们看到，主耶稣已经替我们完成了那个靠我们自己所永远无法达成的工作。这就像是“我真是苦啊！谁能救我脱离这取死的身體呢？”转变为“感谢神，靠着我们的主耶稣基督就能脱离了”（罗马书 7:24, 25）。这也就是从被捆绑的局面、受制于肢体中犯罪的律，“但我觉得肢体中另有个律和我心中的律交战，把我掳去，叫我附从那肢体中犯罪的律”，向着自由的生活而转变，那就是，“赐生命圣灵的律，在基督耶稣里释放了我，使我脱离罪和死的律了”（罗马书 7:23; 8:2）。

团契 (Fellowship)

“神是信实的，你们原是被他所召，好与他儿子我们的主耶稣基督一同得份”（哥林多前书 1:9）。圣经当中的团契与交通这两个词的字根，乃是“共通”的意思。我们跟父神并圣子的团契交通，彼此相交与互动，乃是要拥有共通的思想、情感、爱好、以及目标。这乃是一个在心灵与脑海当中的合而为一。这也就相当于“要尽心、尽性、尽力、尽意爱主你的神”（路加福音 10:27）。当我们借着圣灵的引导来研读神的话语的时候，就是在与神的思想进行交通。当我们爱戴主耶稣，我们就是在爱戴那位被父神全心所爱的那一位。

从自我定罪、自我谴责当中被释放出来，从一个污秽内疚的良心当中被释放出来，自由地活在主耶稣这位信实的中保里面，自由地去为着我们各样的罪而在神面前认罪，进而从各样的不义当中被洁净，我们就得以在神同在的光明当中，来敬拜上帝，与祂有美好的相交，并且在祂的里面长大成人。“我们众人既然敞着脸得以看见主的荣光，好像从镜子里返照，就变成主的形状，荣上加荣，如同从主的灵变成的”（哥林多后书 3:18）。只要我们把目光简单地放在耶稣身上，我们就得以称义了，但是，若是要成圣，我们就必须更多地去仰望和注目在祂的身上。

既然我们在基督里向着罪、撒旦、律法、和世界死了，我们就获得了释放，得以从新降生，成为了在主耶稣里新造的人。在父神的光明当中，我们住在耶稣里面，我们就可以自由自在地来注目在祂的身上，怀着满心的爱并整全的意念，因为我们乃是从那些未曾认罪的各样罪咎和污秽了的良心当中被释放出来了，那些罪咎所带来的是何等的黑暗与压抑啊！这样，就不再需要那种紧张兮兮的、焦虑不安的、或者是不得安息的自我奋斗了；而只要安静的、在祂里面的休息，而且确实的知道说，我们“的生命与基督一同藏在神里面”（歌罗西书 3:3）。借着在我们里面的基督的灵的服务，主耶稣的生命就会以不断增添的方式，在我们日常的生活与为人当中被彰显出来。

我们的天父对我们的旨意，就是要我们效法他儿子的模样（品格）。为着那个目标，万事万物都是在“互相效力”（罗马书 8:28, 29）。在我们于基督里的地位上，我们的天父已经使我们成为完全，叫我们在他的里面是完美无瑕的。而在我们生活的层面，他也是在借着他的灵，正在塑造和引领着我们，好在现实中也让我们真正成为那种蒙福的样式，“使耶稣的生在我们这必死的身上显明出来”（哥林多后书 4:11）。

“人若说他住在主里面，就该自己照主所行的去行”（约翰一书 2:6）。首先，在当初，主耶稣行事为人都是在光明当中，也是在跟他的父亲的完美团契之中。他是那位“从天降下、仍旧在天的人子”（约翰福音 3:13）。其次，耶稣的生活又是全然倚靠圣灵的。“当时，耶稣被圣灵引到旷野”（马太福音 4:1）。“何况基督藉着永远的灵，将自己无瑕无疵献给神”（希伯来书 9:14）。同样的，我们的生命也是与基督一同藏在神的里面，并且我们在世上生活的时候，也要活在父神的同在之光明里面，行事为人应当像光明的子女。我们的这种倚靠之心，乃是借此而表达出来的，那就是，当我们“顺着圣灵而行，就不放纵肉体的情欲了”（加拉太书 5:16）。我们乃是“以神的灵敬拜、在基督耶稣里夸口 [夸口或作，得荣耀]、不靠着肉体的 [或作，对肉体不存任何的信心的]”（腓立比书 3:3）。

父神为了要教导我们明白，如何以一种倚靠圣灵的方式来在光明当中行事为人，所采用的其中一个办法就是，让我们在自我的黑暗当中去蹒跚举步。主耶稣也会耐心的等待，要指示我们明白，我们一切的罪恶过犯，都已经借着他的宝血而得到洁净了。通常情况下，紧跟着我们各样的罪而出现的，乃是一个被罪咎所扭曲的、不幸的良知，并以其沉重的负担，会陪伴我们许多的年日。而上帝，依然满有耐心地在等待着我们，直到我们承认了自己在基督里面、在光明之中的地位，到那时，我们就可以安息在基督所已经替我们完成的工作之上，这个已经成就的工作，也包括我们所犯的各样的罪已经在基督里被处理了。“并我们心中天良的亏欠已经洒去，身体用清水洗净了，就当存着诚心和充足的信心来到神面前”（希伯来书 10:22）。

“何况基督藉着永远的灵，将自己无瑕无疵献给神，他的血岂不更能洗净你们的心（原文作良心），除去你们的死行，使你们事奉那永生神吗？”（希伯来书 9:14）。当我们在许多未曾认罪的罪咎的重压之下辛苦劳碌之际，我们乃是没有资格来享受跟我们的天父之间那种美好的团契的，并且，我们对于其他人来说，也是没有多少的用处的；相反的，我们反而会成为所有人的负担。正是对于这样的信徒们，上帝劝勉说，“所以，我们只管坦然无惧的来到施恩的宝座前，为要得怜恤，蒙恩惠，作随时的帮助”（希伯来书 4:16）。我们的需要和亏欠时刻都在我们眼前摆着，而上帝拯救的工作却也是永远做成了的！他已经把我们摆放在他儿子的里面，“他又叫我们与基督耶稣一同复活，一同坐在天上”（以弗所书 2:6）。所留下来要我们做的，单单只是去满怀信心地，居住在那个已经赐给我们的位子上。

我们不是要居住在我们现今的状态当中，然后祈求从天上的基督而来的帮助，好改进我们的生活与服事的质量。这必须反过来才是对的！神已经把我们的地位清楚启示出来，好叫我们得以居住在我们复活的主里面，在光明当中，在父神的同在里面。就是从那样的一个有利的位置，我们才能够让自己委身于这个世界的各样需要之中。在约翰福音三章 13 节，我们的主耶稣称呼自己是“从天降下、仍旧在天的人子。”他真的就是那样子的，把自己属天的生命，拿到充满了需求的世界里面来分享。如果他今天想要借着我们继续做同样的工作，甚至做得更多的话，我们就必须也是让自己在天上居住，然后到地球上寄居、做客旅。只有那种生活在荣耀的光明里面的生命，才能够战胜这个黑暗的世界。

在此我们总结一下吧，（1）我们看自己乃是已经向着罪而死，并且是在主耶稣里向着上帝而活着的（罗马书 6:11）；（2）我们接受自己在光明中的地位，当我们知道自己乃是在我们复活的救主里面的新造的人（以弗所书 2:6）；（3）当我们审判（分辨）自己，愿意为着我们各样的罪而认罪悔改，我们就可以享受那份蒙福的与神之间的团契（约翰一书 1:7, 9）。惟其如此，我们的主就能够通过我们，在其他人的生命当中来作工，“要叫他们的眼睛得开，从黑暗中归向光明，从撒但权下归向神；又因信我，得蒙赦罪，和一切成圣的人同得基业”（使徒行传 26:18）。

THE PRINCIPLE OF POSITION

BY MILES J. STANFORD

CHAPTER 10

SINS AND CONFESSION

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God the Father is free to forgive our sins because the Lord Jesus has already dealt with their source, the principle of sin. He condemned it in His flesh on the Cross (Romans 8:3). Confessing our sins, therefore, has nothing to do with condemnation, but with cleansing and communion.

Condition

The believer who is not aware of his perfect position before God, who does not realize that the Father has already placed him in the light of His presence, is more aware of his self-centered condition than his Christ-centered position. Hence he does not actually accept the benefit of his position in the light when he does confess his sins. He does not feel forgiven and cleansed of all unrighteousness, and soon gives up confessing. Thereafter he flounders in darkness and guilt. This is the predicament of all too many believers today.

In the early days of their Christian life, most believers are quite faithful in confessing their sins to the Father. But, because they are yet babes, there is very little scriptural knowledge of what God has done about the indwelling source of those sins, and before long there are more sins committed than confessed. This accumulation of unconfessed sins brings guilt to the conscience, and the believer finds himself out of fellowship with the Father. Not only that, but he is experiencing chastisement. To make matters worse, he now seeks to hide from the light. He forgets that its purpose is not to punish and condemn the sinner, but to reveal sins so that they may be confessed and freely forgiven.

Another common error is that of praying for forgiveness, instead of heeding the Word, confessing the sins, and receiving the assurance of forgiveness. One may pray for forgiveness for months, and still not receive the assurance. Many admit sin in general, instead of confessing sins in particular. Assurance of forgiveness and cleansing are the sure result of honest and specific confession of sins committed in thought, word, or deed. There may be repentance and brokenness, but this is the result of confession and cleansing, not the cause. “If any man sin,” there is immediate recourse to confession, and to Christ’s advocacy and shed Blood for complete forgiveness and cleansing. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us” (1 John 1:9).

Position

When we rest in our position in Christ, we find that we are in the light. We know that our sins have been purged once for all and therefore our conscience is cleansed. At the same time, we are very much aware that although we abide in the risen Lord Jesus, our everyday Christian life is carried on in a sinful world. There are sins committed as we grow, because we take our eyes off the Lord Jesus and foolishly rely upon self; a defiled conscience and broken fellowship are the result. We also know that the remedy is to confess our sins, thereby to receive cleansing from all unrighteousness and restoration of a clear conscience and blessed fellowship.

Our present experience is greatly inferior to our eternal position, no matter what the stage of our spiritual growth. The development of our condition is toward our finished position, and at the same time from that completed source. The discrepancy between our position and our condition, manifested by our many failures in growth and service, is justly taken care of by means of our confession and His cleansing. Our need is further met by Christ’s faithful advocacy, whereby our position and fellowship are maintained throughout the progress of our spiritual growth. By these means our Lord ever keeps us dependent upon Himself, and at the same time fully confident in Him. Needy but bold.

Abiding and walking in the light keeps us honestly aware of our sins, while also enhancing our appreciation of His grace. The realization of our sins does not cripple us, because His cleansing frees us. The light that reveals our sins manifests the Son, enabling us honestly to face both without fear. Where we are most detected, there we are most protected. Upon this basis, the sins that are committed are immediately dealt with, and we are able to continue in

fellowship and growth. The only alternative is self-confidently to struggle with sin, to fail, and thereby to be hindered in our development.

Our Father's counter-action is the ministry of the indwelling Spirit of life. To have our sins so freely forgiven does not make us lax as to our walk. For one thing, with the forgiveness there is often His faithful chastisement. A perfect conscience is cherished too much for it to be lost by license. We admit that "we all often stumble and fall and offend in many things" (James 3:2), but there need be no fear of facing up to each offence and confessing it. The light that reveals our sins ever reveals our perfect position in the Lord Jesus. For us, "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth" (1 John 2:8).

Confession and cleansing enable us to rest before God without guile. Our attitude becomes, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me" (Psalms 139:23, 24). There is no pretension of being without sins (1 John 1:8); rather, we want them clearly revealed so that they may be confessed and thereby kept from breaking our all-important fellowship with the Father. We are faithfully taught the lesson not to attempt to hide our sins and refrain from confession. "When I kept silence, my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me" (Psalms 32:3, 4). Guilt and chastisement do their thorough work, and we learn to appreciate the fact that God's way of confession is imperative.

All because of our position in the Lord Jesus, and in spite of our condition in ourselves, our Father is able to say to us, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you... thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jeremiah 29:11). "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psalms 32:1, 2). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1, 2).

As we grow, we learn to stand in our standing of grace, abiding in the risen Lord Jesus, and walking in the light of the Father's presence and fellowship. We appreciate the fact of our position as we experience failures in fighting against sin. We express our growing hatred of self by freely confessing our sins, which amounts to judging ourselves for submitting to indwelling sin. We admit our responsibility for walking (or drifting) beyond the realm of light, into the shadows of sin and self. "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:31, 32).

Standing in the light, we are not only aware that our sins have been cleared away by the Blood, but we realize that we as sinners have also been put away by the death of the Cross. We count ourselves to have died unto sin, and now to be alive as new creations in Christ Jesus. As such, we confess our sins as they are revealed in the light, and are thereby freed from self-occupation---free to be fully occupied in fellowship with the Father and the Son.

To turn from the darkness and death of self to the light and life of Christ is not to give up the fight and give in to sin. Not at all! It is fighting "the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12), it is entering into the benefits of the fact that the fight has already been fought and won for us by Another. This transition from bondage and defeat to freedom and victory is the faith-move from condition to position. "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His" (Hebrews 4:10).

The Holy Spirit brings us through this transition by a very simple process. He allows us to struggle with sin and self until we learn the futility of it. Then it is that He shows us that the Lord Jesus has already done for us what we can never do. It is from "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" to "I thank God (He has already accomplished it) through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:24, 25). It is from the bondage of the "law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members," to the liberty of "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (which) hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 7:23; 8:2).

Fellowship

“God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9). The root word for fellowship and communion is common. Our communion with the Father and the Son, having fellowship one with another, is to have common thoughts, affections, and purposes. It is a oneness of heart and mind. It is to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart...and with all thy mind” (Luke 10:27). As we study His Word in dependence upon His Spirit, we are in communion with His thoughts. As we love the Lord Jesus, we are loving the One whom the Father loves with all His heart.

Free from self-condemnation, free from a guilty conscience, free in the faithful advocacy of the Lord Jesus, free in the confession of our sins and cleansing from all unrighteousness, we are in the light of His presence to worship Him, commune with Him, and grow in Him. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). It is the look that justifies, but it is the gaze that sanctifies.

Having died in Christ to sin, Satan, law, and the world, we are freed and born anew, made new creations in the Lord Jesus. Abiding in Him in the light of the Father, we are at liberty to gaze upon Him in the full love of hearts and minds that are free from the palling darkness of un-confessed sins and a defiled conscience. No nervous, anxious or restless self-effort, just rest in Him, knowing that our “life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). By the ministry of the Spirit of Christ within, the life of the Lord Jesus is manifested increasingly in our everyday walk.

Our Father’s purpose for us is that we become conformed to the image (character) of His Son. To that end, all things are being “worked together” (Romans 8:28, 29). In our position in Christ, our Father has already perfected us, made us complete in Him. In our walk, He by His Spirit is fashioning us after that blessed pattern, “that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:11).

“He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). In the first place, the Lord Jesus walked in the light, in fellowship with His Father. “The Son of Man which is in heaven” (John 3:13). Secondly, He walked in full dependence upon the Holy Spirit. “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness” (Matthew 4:1). “Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God” (Hebrews 9:14). Likewise, our life is hid with Christ in God, and we walk in the light of God’s presence during our earthly course. Our dependence is expressed as we “walk in the Spirit,” that we may not “fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). We are to “worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3).

One of the Father’s means of teaching us the Spirit-dependent walk in the light is to let us flounder in the darkness of self. The Lord Jesus also patiently waits to show us that all our sins have been cleansed by His Blood. Coupled with our sins is the crushing weight of an evil conscience, which is often endured for years. And He continues to wait for us to acknowledge our position in Him in the light, so that we may rest in what He has already done about our sins. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Hebrews 10:22).

“How much more shall the Blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14). Laboring under a load of un-confessed sins, we are disqualified from fellowship with our Father, as well as from usefulness to others; we are, rather, a burden to all. It is such believers whom He urges to “come boldly unto the throne of grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). The need is ever present, the work is forever done! He has placed us in His Son, having made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). All that is required is that we confidently abide where we have already been placed.

We are not to abide in our present condition, counting upon help from Him in heaven for our walk and service. Just the opposite! He has shown us our standing in order that we may abide in our risen Lord, in the light and presence of the Father. It is from that vantage point that we become involved in the needs of this world. In John 3:13 our

Lord Jesus referred to Himself as “He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.” He shared heavenly life in a world of need. If He is to do the same and more today, through us, we must abide in heaven as we sojourn on earth. Only life lived in the light of glory can overcome the world of darkness.

In summary, (1) we count ourselves to have died unto sin, and to be alive unto God in the Lord Jesus (Romans 6:11); (2) we accept our position in the light when we know ourselves to be new creations in our risen Savior (Ephesians 2:6); (3) we enjoy His blessed fellowship as we judge ourselves in confession of our sins (1 John 1:7, 9). Then it is that our Lord can work through us in the lives of others, “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me” (Acts 26:18).

“For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Colossians 3:3

