

Overview:

This document serves as a basic overview of the beliefs of the Upper Room on grace, repentance, sin and the renewal of the believer. Its intentions are two-fold: 1) to bring clarity and unity to our Body on these important topics; and, 2) to draw our Body of believers closer to Jesus through wisdom, understanding and humility. We write this in humility and fear acknowledging that we are constantly growing in our understanding of the Scriptures by the leading of the Holy Spirit. However, the following document is firmly established in the Scriptures and the fruit of transformed lives by the power and grace of God through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ.

How do we access or experience the grace of God?

The grace of God is only accessed and experienced through faith in the person of Jesus Christ. We believe that progress and growth for the life of the Christian always happens “by grace, through faith.” As believers put their faith in Jesus Christ and his Word, grace is given by God to realize the believer’s faith and cause it to become a living reality in the life of the believer. We believe that freedom from the penalty, power and presence of sin is only experienced by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

“For by grace you have been saved, through faith.” (Ephesians 2:8)

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our LORD Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand...” (Romans 5:1-2)

What does grace accomplish for the believer?

Knowing that the grace of God is only accessed through faith, it is important to understand the purpose of God’s grace and what it accomplishes in the life of the believer.

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:11-14)

The grace of God has appeared first and foremost to “bring salvation to all people.” In doing so, it is clear that it is also given to “train” the believer to deny ungodliness and to live in a holy and pure way as we wait for the appearing of Jesus Christ. However, let us look at this “salvation” in greater detail to understand the depth and power of this amazing grace.

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“The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people”

The gospel is the good news of salvation—receiving God’s righteousness (in three tenses). Much of the misunderstanding about grace can be traced back to a misunderstanding these truths. One third of our salvation is complete (the salvation of our spirit); the other two parts are not.

Justification: *our legal position—past tense*, focused on my spirit (I have been saved)

Sanctification: *our living condition—present tense*, focused on my soul (I am being saved)

Glorification: *our eternal exaltation—future tense*, focused on my body (I will be saved)¹

The penalty of sin is eternal separation or death apart from God. This is a spiritual penalty and thus the remedy is entirely spiritual. **Justification** is the process whereby God **renews our spirits** so that we can be one with him.

The power of sin in this life affects our **souls**, which is how we think, feel and act. Thus the remedy for the power of sin is **sanctification**, which is the process whereby God **renews the soul** of man to be in line with his spirit that has been justified.

The presence of sin will not be fully removed until the Second Coming of Christ. The presence of sin has tangible effects on our **bodies**, which is why the salvation of Christ includes **glorification**. The ultimate glorification will take place at the Second Coming of Christ, when those who are in Christ will receive a glorified body no longer subject to death, disease or decay.

JUSTIFICATION

JUSTIFICATION is the term used in the Bible (*Romans 5:1*) to define our legal standing with God. This standing is given to the believer upon being born again through faith in “the living and abiding word of God” (*1 Peter 1:23*). Again, justification is received by grace when someone puts faith in Jesus Christ and his redeeming work on the cross as the Son of God. This is the first and most foundational aspect of the salvation of Jesus Christ. It delivers us from the penalty of sin (*which is eternal death and separation from God, Romans 6:23*) by imparting the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This righteousness or right standing before God achieves for the new believer an abiding peace with God (*Romans 5:1*) that cannot be taken away as it is an imparted legal position given by God to those who believe in Jesus as the Son of God.

¹ Bickle, Mike. “What’s Wrong With Grace?.” Charisma Magazine April 2013. Charisma News Web. 2 April. 2013

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We believe that firmly establishing the faith of the Body of Christ in being justified by grace through faith is paramount and is the starting place for sanctification and glorification, which are more mature expressions of God's salvation in the life of a believer. Many promises in the Scripture rest upon our legal standing with God but are not immediately experienced. We believe that the sanctification process is used to continually establish and form the nature of Christ into the life of the believer, which ultimately enables the believer to experience and walk in the promises of God.

SANCTIFICATION

SANCTIFICATION is the term used in the Bible to define our living standing with God. This position represents the process of the believer becoming more aligned with the reality of the legal standing of being justified and righteous before God.

“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess. 5:23)

“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:14)

As we mentioned previously, all growth and maturity for the believer takes place “by grace through faith.” This means that in the same way we are justified by grace through faith, we are sanctified in like manner.

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the LORD (justification), so walk in him (sanctification), rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” (Colossians 2:6-7)

Sanctification's Occurrence & Method

The word sanctification means “to make holy” or “to be holy.” Sanctification refers both to the **state** of being holy and the **action** of holiness (separation, apartness). So, as mentioned earlier, our **holiness** is based upon the finished works of Jesus Christ. Yet, we find in our lives (at times), behaviors, thoughts, and feelings that do not line up with this reality. So, the question is **when** and **how** does sanctification occur?

When?

In a *primary* sense, the sanctification of the believer *already* belongs to those saved by grace through faith. The reason for our sanctification (holiness) is through the accomplished work of Calvary resulting in those who “**have been sanctified** through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all” (Hebrews 10:10). Paul speaks of **Christ being** “our wisdom, our righteousness and **sanctification** and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30).

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Therefore, it's appropriate for us to say that Jesus is our sanctification. Again Paul writes about those who were previously "immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunk, revilers, robbers," adding, "such were some of you. But you were washed, **you were sanctified**, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11). So, in these examples we see that believers were *already* sanctified by Christ Jesus by grace through faith.

Yet, sanctification also relates to the **continuing** life of believers walking in the sanctified realities provided by Jesus. One who is holy will **experience (live in)** holiness. This continuation is modeled again by Paul after writing to the Corinthians (see above example) about their past sanctification (2 Cor. 6:11). He admonishes them to "flee immorality" in the same chapter (6:18). So the believers who *have been sanctified* are commanded to flee sexual immorality based upon what they have become. In verse 19, Paul says, "**for do you not know** that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit..." He is calling them to **think** and **live** in their sanctified state. **Method** There are many more examples of the finished works **progressively transforming** believers' lives. This progressive transformation is sanctification's **continuance**. Paul refers to it in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "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." This "glory to glory" transformation is the process of sanctification. This process occurs as the **Holy Spirit continually imparts the revelation of Jesus** to the believer. Again, it's mentioned by Paul in Romans 12:1 when he admonishes "brethren (believers), in view of God's mercies (finished work of Jesus) offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy (the believer's state of being) and acceptable...Do not be conformed to this world (putting off old ways) but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind.**" Again, the transformation happens progressively through the renewed mind resulting in a sanctified life. This sanctification is less about **doing** and focused more on **becoming**. Yet, our **becoming** will directly impact our **doing**.

The Believer's Role In the Process of Sanctification

Sanctification happens as the believer is established in their legal standing (by grace, through faith) while allowing their mind to be renewed to the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit into their living standing. The prescription for sanctification given to the Early Church was as follows:

Put off your old self, which is part of a former life and is now corrupt.
Be renewed in the spirit of your mind to your legal standing with God.
(Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:21-24, Colossians 3:9-10)

Once your faith is firmly established in your justification, you will be able to "put on your new self" that is righteous and holy after God's image. This putting on through the renewal of your mind (and putting off of old self) results in a sanctified believer. The fruit (or goal) of sanctification is to be like Christ in what we think, say, do and feel.

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“But that is not the way you learned Christ – assuming you were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:21-24)

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...” (Romans 12:2)

“...seeing that you have put off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” (Colossians 3:9-10)

Sin and the Believer’s Response

In this section on “sanctification” it is important to make a note on sin, the effects it has on the believer and the appropriate biblical response to handling sin as a believer in Jesus Christ.

It is important to first note that we do not believe that if a believer struggles with sin after being born again through a saving faith in Jesus Christ that they have to continually confess such sins in order to maintain or keep their eternal salvation.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Cor. 5:17)

However, we also **firmly** believe that sin in the life of a believer is destructive and that it grieves the heart of the Father. Though incidental sin or sin habits do not affect our legal standing (justification) before God, it does hinder our ability to grow in intimacy with God and will negatively affect our relationship with him and others. We believe that it is necessary to **confess** (homologeo: acknowledge or agree with God’s view of) your sins (or sin habits) (1 John 1:9). This confession is not for means of eternal salvation, but to maintain a healthy relationship with God as a Father who is emotionally and relationally invested in the life of His children. This confession (agreement) positions us to **receive** forgiveness, love, and life from God. Upon agreeing with His view of our sin (confession), the believer also repents (metanoia: change/alter mind) of the sin (or sin habits) (Romans 2:4, 2 Cor. 7:9-10) resulting in a changed mind, ultimately altering the believer’s behavior. Biblical confession of sin and biblical repentance of sin will result in a sanctified (changed) person.

Sinful behavior that perpetuates for a believer is deceitful above all else. It not only grieves the heart of God, but it causes the believer to doubt or question their position before God as a son or daughter. Shame, condemnation and guilt are tools in the hand of the enemy to enslave the believer in a behavior that is contrary to their identity in Christ.

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“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” (Hebrews 3:13)

In order to combat the deceitfulness of sin we believe that in addition to confessing your sins to the Father (and to one another 1 John 5:3) it is important to confess the truth about your legal standing before God as a righteous son or daughter, washed in the blood of Jesus and forgiven for eternity. This takes a tremendous amount of humility but will result in the grace of God being poured out in such a way that actually empowers the believer to live completely free from **the dominion of sin** (Romans 6:14). There is a death to our flesh that takes place when we choose to confess the truth about our right standing before God in the face of sin struggles.

“We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.” (Romans 6:6-7)

Sanctification & Community

Sanctification is also evident and at work in our relationship with one another at Upper Room. We believe that biblical accountability is honoring God’s view of those that He bought with His Son’s blood. We believe the power of sin is removed through biblical repentance (change of mind) and seeing ourselves and each other as God sees us. The aim of our community is to establish heaven’s view of people (2 Corinthians 5:16) knowing that God is not dealing with us according to our sin (Psalm 103:10, John 3:17, 1 John 1:9, 2:1). Therefore, sin is not agreeing with or submitting to what grace has provided for us through the cross.

In that, our community does not take sin lightly in the life of a believer; yet we see the power of grace (through faith) as the prescribed solution to sin’s power (resulting in sanctification). We hold the highest view of holiness in which the finished works of Jesus provided to us by faith. We expect all to see fellowship and intimacy with each other through this lens.

As we have contended, justification deals with the penalty of sin, which redeems man’s spirit back into right standing with God. Sanctification deals with the power of sin which renews a man’s soul into experiencing the joy and freedom of being in right standing with God. Many believers do not know how to respond to the power of sin over their soul and thus end up enslaved in a behavior or lifestyle that is incongruent with their position as sons and daughters of God. However, **it is emphatically the stance of the Upper Room that by grace, through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ that Christians can live, in this life, free from the power of sin.**

The Scriptures speak a lot to this issue and our faith rests squarely on His word to us:

“For one who has died has been set free from sin.” (Romans 6:7)

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“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.” (Romans 6:12)

“For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” (Romans 6:14)

GLORIFICATION

This leads us to the last and final work of God upon the believer called

GLORIFICATION.

Glorification will result in the redemption of our physical bodies resulting in a whole redemption (spirit, soul and body). This will happen at the second coming of Jesus Christ when sin's presence and its effects will be removed from believers and the earth.

In glorification, God will transform the believer's physical bodies into eternal physical bodies. This moment will result in the ultimate perfection of believers morally and physically. This hope is an anchor for believers to endure sufferings, hardships, temptations and trials in this life—knowing that they are temporary. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 1 Peter 1:5-6,13). However, in this life we have the privilege of tasting “*the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come*” (Hebrews 6:5) in seeing sin's bodily effects (sickness, disease, addiction, depression, etc.) removed from people. This foretasting is the Gospel of the Kingdom proclaimed as heaven's realities manifest on earth today the future glorification that is to take place (Matt 4:17, 6:10, Romans 15:18-20).

Glorification's Moment

The moment of glorification is found in I Corinthians 13:12 when Paul states that ‘we see in a mirror dimly, but **then** face to face; now I know in part, but **then** I will know just as I also have been fully known’. The “then” referred to by Paul is the moment of glorification for the believer when Christ returns. At this moment, we will be glorified with Him and receive resurrected bodies and dwell with Him in glory. John writes of this when he states that “when he shall appear we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2). Paul states we wait for the “redemption of our bodies” and adds, “for in this hope we were saved” (Romans 8:23-24). Glorification is the last and final step in the application of redemption.

Glorification's Work

Like other facets of salvation, glorification is the work of God (Romans 8:30). Glorification's work will result in the believers **fulfilled** sanctification or moral perfection (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, Hebrews 2:10) in which they will be made **fully** glorious, holy and blameless (Eph 5:26-27). The passage most detailing glorification or the resurrection of the body is 1 Corinthians 15:12-58. Paul discusses the nature of our bodies in detail describing them as heavenly, glorious (40), imperishable (42), honorable, powerful (43), immortal (53) and eternal (54). Also, these bodies will be united with the souls of those who have previously died (1 Thess. 4:14-16). Not all believers will die, but during glorification all believers will be changed (1 Cor 15:51-52, 1 Thess. 4:17).

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Creation Glorified

Also in this redemption, the presence of sin will be done away with completely from the earth. The bible prophesies that ‘the Glory of the Lord will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea’ (Hab. 2:14). It also states that there will be a new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21). Upon Jesus’ return, Paul says that “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8:21). The effects of sin upon creation will be removed resulting in a glorified earth. In fact, Paul says that creation is groaning for that day as found in Romans 8:19, 22-23, “for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God...we know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together, and not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies”. In this redemption, there will be no more thorns, thistles, floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, natural disasters, uninhabitable places, poisonous foods, and harmful animals. The earth will be glorified and liberated from its subjection to the corruption of sin (a new earth).

Redemption Finalized

Lastly, we believe at Jesus’ second coming He will establish His reign as King on the earth to bring forth justice by eliminating the presence of evil by casting Satan, his demons and “*those that do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus*” (2 Thess. 1:8) into eternal separation from God and his people. Also, this moment will be a day of great victory because the last enemy, death, will be destroyed as prophesied: “For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26-26). This will result in a completed redemption for those who by faith through grace received salvation in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

As we have stated previously, this is not intended to be a comprehensive study on grace, repentance, sin or **renewal of the believer** but a basic framework or explanation of the Upper Room’s stance on these important topics. We will continue to seek to establish the Upper Room family in these truths in hopes that the life and nature of Christ is formed in each person in a deeper, more powerful way.

Prayer

Thank you Father that we are saved by grace, through faith in your Son Jesus Christ. We receive the gift of righteousness and the abundance of your grace so that we may reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ over sin, death and the works of the devil (*Romans 5:17*). Father we thank you that if we sin, we have an Advocate with you, Jesus Christ the righteous who is ever interceding on our behalf (*1 John 2:1 & Romans 8:34*). It is our desire to walk holy, righteous and blameless before you and to escape the corruption that is in the world through deceitful desires (*2 Peter 1:4*). Amen.