

- In **2 Corinthians 13:5**, Paul is talking to the church; to Christians.
 - Paul had just spent 12 chapters writing to the church and treating them as Christians, now Paul is telling them to see Christ in themselves.
 - This is not necessarily an *inward* look that Paul is pointing them towards.
 - When Paul uses the word *examine*, this is a word that was used in Paul's day to test metals. It was used to find the difference between the gold and the dross.
 - Here's the key, which is usually missed, the word was used in a way *to find approval*.
 - In other words, Paul is telling them that they need to confirm what they (and he) believe to be an authentic salvation.
 - He was not telling them that they were unsaved and to look at the sin in themselves, but rather they were to examine themselves so that they would see Christ.
 - Of course, this is a caution for all of those who are professing to be Christians to keep watch over their lives and habits.
 - **Paul wanted them to see their own transformed lives.** They knew it wasn't from their own power, so Paul encourages them to realize it is from Jesus.
- This is Paul's answer to those who dare to commend themselves by comparing themselves to others. They are to know themselves in Christ and to examine themselves by the faith.¹
 - The context of this chapter is that the Corinthian church is calling Paul out for not having an authentic message and asking for proof that Christ was really in him.
 - Paul turns the tables and says that if Christ is in you; then Christ is in me. I preached Christ to you so if you see Christ in you, He is also in me.
- **What is Paul pointing those in the church towards?** In the context of the letter, he is telling them to look at their conduct, look at how they are following Christ to see if they are *in the faith*.
- It is not a matter of examining their doctrines, however, but of bringing their conduct and thinking into conformity with their belief in Christ.²
- If they are to pass as those who are approved, they will be obedient to Paul, particularly in his commands about appropriate Christian conduct. Christian behavior is the touchstone for determining whether those who claim to be Christians really are.³
- Much more than relying on an experience to fight sin or some sort of feeling that one had at some time in the past; sin is effectively fought and defeated by keeping one's eyes presently fixed upon Christ.

¹ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 546.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 547.

- As we do this, we are encouraged to keep going forward with Christ because we see the work that He is doing in us.
- Any pastor, and any believer for that matter, depends on the outward manifestations of spiritual life to point to the reality of that spiritual life.⁴
- Our own thoughts can lead us astray, our minds and memories are easily manipulated, but when we examine if we are living for Christ we can see the present work of Him in us.
- This is answering our previous question, *how do we put sin to death in our daily living for Christ?*
- We make sure that we see Christ in us, that is, in our lives as He is transforming us from one state to another.
- As we live like this, we are keeping the world, the devil, and our flesh from coming over us. If our eyes are on Christ, we are not so easily tempted to chase after the things of the world because we will be satisfied with Christ alone.
- If our eyes are on Christ, we will not fall for the schemes of the devil because as the fears, faults, and failures come into your thoughts, you are already actively focusing on Christ. They won't find a place to make their home.
- If our eyes are on Christ, when our flesh begins to desire sinful things, we are reminded that it is dead. That we no longer take our direction from sin but now live for Christ.
- This is, for all intents and purposes, the fight of the Christian life. This is what our daily living looks like as we traverse this world as those who have a passion to serve and honor Christ.
- It is vital to keep in mind that it is *progressive sanctification*. There are many pitfalls and wrong turns that we take along the way. That is why we look at the overall growth of our transformation, not just a snapshot of our worst days.

WHAT CHANGES YOU? HOW TO BE TRANSFORMED.

- As we have discussed, sanctification is the process of changing the Christian into what they already are in the eyes of God.
- God now sees believers as clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Our sins have been separated from us, and we stand fully forgiven and cleansed.
- This is the work that has been done for us, on our behalf by Jesus.

⁴ George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 638.

- While we have discussed what brings about our practical changes, it has been in little detail. While we are fully sanctified before God right now; our position is secure before Him. We also need to work this out on a daily basis so that we live for His glory.
- In his book *How Does Sanctification Work?*, David Powlison lays out five factors⁵ through which real change occurs in the believer's life.
- These are not five independent factors, but five factors which all work together, cooperating with one another to bring about real transformation through discipleship.
- The five factors which work together are God, the Scriptures, other people, the circumstances of your life, and your heart. We are going to look at each of these on their own.

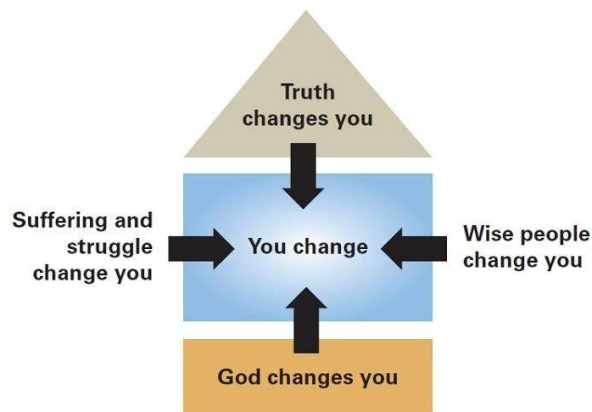


Figure 1. Five Factors in Sanctification

God Changes You

- **Philippians 2:13** "...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."
- "First, and foundational to all, *God Himself changes you*. He intervenes in your life, turning you from suicidal self-will to the kingdom of life. He raises you in Christ when you are dead in trespasses and sins. He restores hearing when you are deaf (you could not hear Him otherwise). He gives sight when you are blind (you could not see Him otherwise). All good fruit in our lives comes by the Holy Spirit's working on scene. Jesus said it was better if He went away, because the Holy Spirit would come. The Holy Spirit continues to do the things that Jesus does—continually adding to the number of books that could be written."

⁵ Pages 61-69.

The Scriptures Change You

- **Psalm 19:7** “The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.”
- “God communicates messages to us—many messages. Scripture speaks with a true voice into a world churning with false voices. Scripture reveals innumerable features of God’s person, purposes, will, promises, and actions. Scripture clarifies every facet of human experience. I come to know myself truly as I live before the eyes of the One whose opinion matters.”
 - It is no accident that Scripture appears in each of our stories as we are changing more and more.
- “Of course, Scripture and God work in harmony. In fact, all five dimensions are complementary—and all ultimately depend on the hand of God. In Scripture, God comes in person. We participate by hearing and responding.”

Other People Change You

- **Proverbs 13:20** “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”
- “Godly growth is most frequently mediated through the gifts and graces of brothers and sisters in Christ. At the most basic corporate level, you can’t call on God unless you believe in Him; you can’t believe in him unless you hear of him, you can’t hear of him unless someone proclaims him (Rom. 10:14). Good worship, preaching, teaching, prayer, and sacraments have radiant, fruitful effects. Similarly, the honesty and graciousness, humility and clarity, good sense and convictions of others have radiant, fruitful effects. It is a great mercy to know people who deal gently with your ignorance and waywardness, because they know their own weakness and sinfulness, and they know the mercies of Christ.”

The Circumstances of Your Life Change You

- **Hebrews 5:8** “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.”
- “It is, however, possible to say that the Lord Christ learned obedience when he experienced it in practice. In the sense that a person knows the taste of meat by eating it, it may be said of our Savior that he “tasted death” when he experienced death. One special kind of obedience is intended here, namely, a submission to great, hard, and terrible things, accompanied by patience and quiet endurance, and faith for deliverance from them. This Christ could have not experience of, except by suffering the things he had to pass through, exercising God’s grace in them all. Thus, Christ learned obedience.”⁶

⁶ John Owen, *Hebrews*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 128.

- “God works on us in the midst of our trouble because trouble catches our attention. Difficulties make us need him. faith has to sin roots, as profession deepens into reality. Martin Luther said that hardships were his greatest teacher because they made Scripture and prayer come alive. The difficulties that we experience necessitate grace and awakening a true sense of weakness and need. This is where the Spirit is working. Ministry traffics in trouble because Christ enters trouble, lives through trouble, speaks and acts into trouble.”

You Change

- **1 Thessalonians 1:9-10** “For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, {10} and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.”
- “We turn – from darkness to light, from false gods to the only true God, from death to life, from unbelief to faith. You ask for help because you need help. You repent. You believe, trust, obey, fear, hope, love, give thanks, weep, confess, praise, delight, walk. Notice all these active verbs; they speak of wholehearted, whole-person action. These are the fruitful characteristics of a flourishing life (think **2 Cor. 13:5** from our previous section). No one does any of this for you. You are not passive. You are not a puppet or a robot. You are 100 percent responsible, and yet you are 100 percent dependent on outside help. Notice, too, that none of these active verbs is a one-and-done. These are a way of life.”

How they all work together in our life and transformation.

- As you and I sit under the Word of God and meditate on it and pray for God to use it in our hearts and minds, we begin to realize its significance and applicability.
- As Powlison says, “...something true – catches your attention...the more you grow, the more Scripture appears early in the process. You come to orient yourself by Scripture. By learning to listen, you learn to identify sin and suffering more accurately.”
- This is God’s Word doing its work in your heart and mind. The Spirit in you knows how to take the Word and bring it exactly where it needs to be. You are both fully dependent upon the Spirit for this, but also fully accountable to do what is needed when these things come to light.
- You start to make different choices, you ask for prayer and help from friends, from God...your attitudes start to change, your old habits and ways of thinking start to come under the light of Scripture.
- “This is how sanctification works. Your entire Christian life is a series of variations and [transformations] of this five-dimensional process. This is how you grow. This is how you live. This is how you minister to others, love them well in their need.”

ROMANS 7:14-24 AND THE NEW LIFE

Romans 7:14-25 “For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. {15} For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. {16} But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. {17} So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. {18} For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. {19} For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. {20} But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. {21} I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. {22} For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, {23} but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. {24} Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? {25} Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

- **Romans 7** has held a long-standing debate among believers as to whether Paul is describing his pre-Christian life and how he related to the law...or his normal Christian experience after being born again.
- While there are good people who believe both sides of the debate, I do believe it is vital to understand that Paul is describing his life *after* he was born again.
 - In other words, Paul is writing to the church at Rome and describing his own life as a believer as he fights temptation, sin, what it looks like to fall into sin, and how to have victory over sin.
- “This is Paul’s autobiography, but it is also the experience of every Christian. Anyone who has seriously followed Christ has known something of this. This is reality!”⁷
- What does it mean that the **law is spiritual, but I (Paul) am of the flesh?**
- **The Law is spiritual:**
 - In other words, the Law is not the problem. The Law is from God, but it was never intended to save the people. It was given to reflect God’s holy character and righteous standard.
 - **Galatians 3:19, 24** “{19} Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. ... {24} Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.”
 - The Law was given to bring people to Christ, not to cause people to be born again. It is spiritual.

⁷ R. Kent Hughes, *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 142.

- **But I am of the flesh, sold into bondage to sin:**
- “A man may be subject to a power which, of himself, he cannot effectually resist; against which he may and does struggle, and from which he earnestly desires to be free; but which, notwithstanding all his efforts, still asserts its authority. This is precisely the bondage to sin of which every believer is conscious. He feels that there is a law in his members bringing him into subjection to the law of sin; that his distrust of God, his hardness of heart, his love of the world and of self, his pride, in short his indwelling sin, is a real power from which he longs to be free, against which he struggles, but from which he cannot emancipate himself.”⁸
- This is quite a description of the struggle in both the mind and the actions of the believer.
 - You and I can, at times, really feel the struggle that takes place in our hearts. Our desire to sin is coming upon us, but our desire to walk in righteousness is also calling out to us.
 - We struggle, we hate the sin, we hate the constant battle, but we long to be free.
 - While we are free from sin’s power, it’s a battle. Pride sneaks in when least expect it, other feelings go unchecked and we find ourselves in a place we never intended.
- “Paul is saying that in his present redeemed state he is still a creature of the flesh to some degree. He elaborates upon this and here’s the part that seems to be so confusing: **I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do** (verse 15). Paul is articulating here something that is very commonplace. We are creatures with mixed desires. We are never left with only one desire working in our hearts or in our minds. The whole business of making choices is a very complex thing, and that complexity is intensified by the fact that we have several choices or desires coexisting within our hearts at any given moment.”⁹
- Simply put here, Paul now knows the law of God and understands that he is not blameless before the law. As a Pharisee, he thought that he never sinned or transgressed God’s Law.
- But now, as one who has been born again, he sees how wretched he is before God and how far short he fell of attaining God’s perfect standard in the Law.
- He knows and confesses in **verse 15**, *I am doing the very thing that I hate*.
- In **verses 16-17**, Paul gives the reason why he is unable to fulfill the law.
- The problem is not that Paul doesn’t think of God as great, holy, and righteous. In fact, for each of us, the more mature we become in Christ, the more we come to see and understand how great God is.
- What was the problem? Look at **verse 17**, Paul starts to give us understanding into why understanding our identity is so vitally important to our Christian walk.
- When you and I were born again, there was a radical change which took place.

⁸ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Louis Kregel, 1882), 360–361.

⁹ R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 125.

- “Whereas before his conversion his inner self approved of the sin he committed, now his inner self, a completely new inner self, strongly disapproves.”¹⁰
- In other words, Paul is acknowledging that the one sinning is not who he is anymore. He is no longer identified by or with his sin.
- Remember, once we are saved, the moment of our salvation, our sin is overthrown and no longer reigns in our lives...but it manages to survive the regeneration process.
 - It is no longer at the seat of our being (our heart) but it rather resides in the unredeemed humanness which awaits confrontation with Jesus at the Rapture or our death.
- In fact, **verses 18-23** say the same thing again.
- In order for those in Rome (and us today) to understand more fully what he is talking about, in **verse 18** he says that nothing good dwells in him, that is in his flesh.
 - He is talking about his old man; the unredeemed humanness that is left over.
 - That is not who he is anymore, but that part still has a draw upon him.
- What are Paul’s final words about the continual war which takes place in his members?
- His lament is one that we are all too familiar with...
 - **“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”**
 - How can Paul call himself a *wretched man* if he is a believer? Many people have said that this is definitive proof that Paul is writing before his conversion.
 - But, as many have wisely observed about this statement, “men perceive themselves to be sinners in direct proportion as they have previously discovered the holiness of God and His Law.” (Robert Haldane, Scottish Commentator)
 - In other words, without being born again and without having a clear picture and understanding of God’s holiness and standards, Paul would have never cried out and seen himself for who he truly was.
- What do we know from Romans 7?
 - “Every well-taught and honest Christian is aware that his life falls far short of God's perfect standard of righteousness and that he falls back into sin with disturbing frequency. He is no longer of his former father, the devil (John 8:44); he no longer loves the world (1 John 2:15); and he is no longer sin's slave-but he is still subject to its deceit and is still attracted by many of its allurements. Yet the Christian cannot be happy with his sin, because it is contrary to his new nature and because he knows that it grieves his Lord as well as his own conscience.”¹¹

¹⁰ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur NT Commentary Romans 1-8*, 386.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 382.