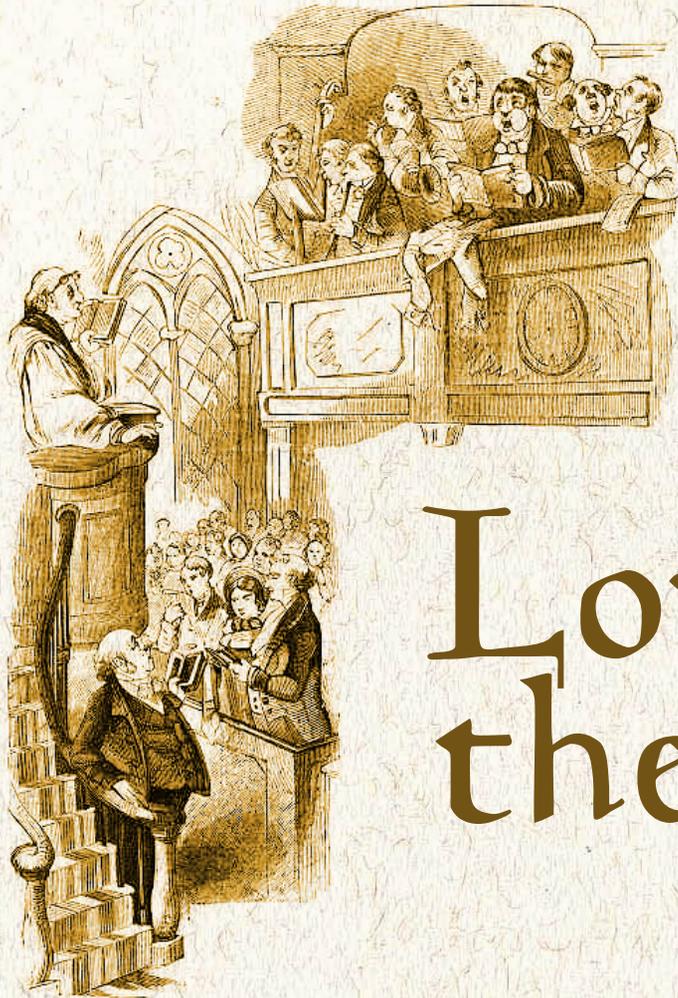


Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 7:1



Loving the familiar

A decision made for God, through Christ, is not, in itself, a decision to also rise out of the tenacious bonds of the earth. Redemption is not sanctification; justification is not holiness.

The entrance of Jesus into a life has several immediate effects: permanent residency of the Holy Spirit; adoption into the family of God, with a new Father (God the Father), and brother (Jesus Christ); membership into the church universal, the Body of Christ; and acquisition of a new eternal home (heaven rather than hell). These things and more occur immediately and automatically when we accept Jesus as Savior.

Other aspects of life in Christ, however, are not automatic, nor are they immediate.

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Philippians 2:12-13

In the moment of our rebirth, God justifies us and, in one sense (as in “set apart”), sanctifies us. But in a second sense, sanctification is an ongoing, maturing process that gradually—sometimes painfully—changes us into the likeness of our Savior. It is a holy occupation that is conducted while in the flesh, thus is imperfect, and grossly inefficient. The journey of sanctification is,

ultimately, a very human process.



Most believers have only the palest vision of the rich, deeply colored tapestry that God has planned for their life. Many Christians are either ignorant of the existence of the higher life—or have consciously decided to avoid it. Man and woman have so filled their built-in longing with other things, there is little room left for the One for whom it was created. As the landlord of his person, man has filled the rooms of his life with the accoutrements of a lower plane: corporate ambition, physical pleasure, acquisition of wealth, and the warm glow of human relationships. But in those who already know Christ, that longing can also be filled with an insidious roomer known as “religion.”

The plain truth is that man has always had a love affair with the familiar, the comfortable, the seen. God then comes in and says, *I want you to have a relationship with Me—but it will be based not on flesh, but on spirit. I want you to love Me—but you may not look upon Me. It will be a love affair of faith, not sight.* And these parameters make us uneasy, for we are people of the earth, people of flesh, and many of us are uncomfortable with even our own spirit—much less His.

So we cling to what we know: doing, rather than being. It is far easier to join a committee, or serve coffee at the social, than to have an intimate relationship with an invisible God. And, as a result, our faith becomes root-bound—not rooted and grounded in the love of Christ, but rooted into the familiar soil from which we came, and thus firmly anchored in the plane He is inviting us to leave. The higher life begins with understanding that a foot in the door is not the same as dwelling inside; buying a ticket for entrance through the Pearly Gates is not the same as living a life comfortable with what is inside.



The work of God is not finished in the heart and life of the new believer when the first act of inward adjustment has given him a sense of cleansing and forgiveness, peace and rest for the first time in his life! The Spirit would go on from there to bring the total life into harmony with that blissful “center.” This is wrought in the believer by the Word of God and prayer and discipline and suffering. It could be done by a short course in things spiritual if we were more pliable, less self-willed and stubborn; but it usually takes some time before we learn the hard lessons of faith and obedience sufficiently well to permit the work to be done in us with anything near to perfection.

A.W. Tozer