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**Justification, Sanctification, Theosis: An Evangelical View**

What is the distinguishing mark of an Evangelical? If asked to identify what characteristic Evangelicals consider the distinguishing mark of their faith, they would point to their personal relationship to Jesus. Various descriptors are employed: "Jesus lives in my heart," "I invited Him into my life," "I have a personal faith in Christ," "I have accepted Him as my Savior," "I have been born again." These are some of the expressions believers use to describe their faith in God through Christ. It is an Evangelical tenant that each believer has a connection to Jesus who died for our salvation and through Him to God the Father. This, more than any other doctrine, connects the wide denominational variety of Evangelicals into a movement.[[1]](#footnote-1) The key issue is not what church they attend but are they personally connected to the resurrected Christ on whom they have placed their hope. This common experience transcends denominational and theological differences; it is the Evangelical commonality.

This appropriation of salvation as a future hope and also a present reality, is what most would call their conversion. A person may have grown up in a Christian environment but the time of "owning" the faith for oneself is linked to being "born again."[[2]](#footnote-2) This experience of spiritual awakening then is the defining moment of a person's life. Testimonies revolve around when a person was born again and how that changed his or her life. In some circles, a person might to be challenged by the question "Have you been born again?"[[3]](#footnote-3) Ministers preach for conversion, seeking to have their hearers decide to place their faith in Christ.

Unpacking this further, the best summation is given by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15:1-4. The salvation message is simply "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." There are many methods of presenting this truth which have been developed for evangelism.[[4]](#footnote-4) The common elements are 1) an acknowledgement of our sin which brought death and separation from God, 2) our need for Jesus, God in the flesh, to repair that break by His death and resurrection, and 3) our acceptance of His sacrifice in our place. While there is a logical progression in these elements, some experience the steps in a different order.[[5]](#footnote-5) But eventually all the components are present. The confession is not just human sinfulness in general, but acceptance of personal responsibility for my sin. Conversion includes the realization that I cannot meet God's standard for holiness. Only Christ could and has met the standard God requires. It encompasses the understanding that Christ's death on my behalf has mercifully opened the way to the Father and I only need to accept His death as mine. In gratitude and love I walk in a new life in Him. "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism unto death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in the newness of life." (Romans 6:4)

This is what Evangelicals mean by a conversion experience, i.e., becoming a Christian. It is turning away from our sin and turning to God through faith in the completed work of Christ.[[6]](#footnote-6) Theologically, this is the doctrine of justification. "... who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification. Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 4:25-5:1)

The experience of a dynamic relationship with Christ through faith has several consequences. In the first place, the believer experiences a peace with God that was unknown prior to the commencement of this relationship. Some who were raised in a Christian home cannot recall a time when they did not believe in God. They often experience a dedication or consecration when they received full assurance of their relationship with Christ. Most Evangelicals point to a time of yielding to Christ, what they would describe as their conversion moment. But whether over a long period of coming to faith or a decisive moment, the freedom from the guilt of sin is a common experience. Those who have read *Pilgrims Progress* by John Bunyan will describe it like the loosening of the burden Pilgrim was carrying when he came to the cross.[[7]](#footnote-7)

A second result is, for lack of a better term, the "love of the brethren." "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." (I John 3: 14). The fellowship of Christians becomes a reality and we understand we are now part of the family of God. Our Christian family can become closer than our family of origin.[[8]](#footnote-8)"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household." (Ephesians 2:19)[[9]](#footnote-9)

A third benefit, though admittedly not always appropriated by believers is that the quality of our lives is now bound up with Christ in the heavenlies. We have passed from death to life and have eternal life. (John 5:24)[[10]](#footnote-10) This assurance of heaven is the portion of the believer, but the sense of already beginning to experience eternal life eludes some.[[11]](#footnote-11)

A fourth benefit and the one that should rank first on my list is that the believer experiences the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.[[12]](#footnote-12) I have placed it here, however, because it leads us to a discussion of the ministry of the Spirit. The testimony of the indwelling Holy Spirit not only confirms our relationship to Christ, the Spirit teaches us about Christ and guides the believer into all truth. (John 16: 13-15)

The Christian who relies on the indwelling Spirit of God is following the example of the Lord Jesus whose actions were also done in the power of the Spirit. (Matthew 12:28) The wonder of the Incarnation is that the Lord Jesus laid aside His power and prerogatives to live within human limitations.[[13]](#footnote-13) He became fully man and His power to work miracles was supplied by the Holy Spirit. As believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we can allow the Spirit to work in and through us so that the glory is not ours but God's.[[14]](#footnote-14) Not only do we operate in the power of the Holy Spirit, but each believer is gifted by the Spirit for the common good. (I Corinthians 12:7) That these gifts are not always recognized and utilized is a weakness in the Evangelical movement. Evangelical theology, while disagreeing over whether some of the "sign" gifts are valid today, still maintains the necessity of spiritual gifts for the health of the church.[[15]](#footnote-15)

For these reasons, Evangelicals want to introduce their family, friends, strangers and the whole world to Jesus who made such a profound difference in their lives.[[16]](#footnote-16)

The responses which are encountered mirror those to the Apostle Paul after his speech to the Areopagus. Some sneer, some are curious to hear more and some believe.[[17]](#footnote-17) Anyone who has shared her or his faith will over time find these same three responses.

Why do Evangelicals pray for people to make "decisions for Christ?" Whether it is in the context of a massive campaign by the evangelist Billy Graham pleading for people to receive Christ as their Savior or in a conversation between two individuals where the believer urges an unbeliever to accept Christ, the goal is the "salvation" of unbelievers.

The typical nominal Christian of any Church background thinks, if he or she thinks of this at all, that God will look at my deeds and hopefully see I have done enough good and not too much bad. To use an academic analogy, if a passing grade is such and such a percentage, I am probably short of the mark. But if God grades "on the curve," adjusting the passing percentage downward to include as many as possible in heaven, I will probably make it. The prevailing attitude seems to be that I am not perfect, but I am average, or perhaps a bit above average, in "goodness."[[18]](#footnote-18) God's standard according to Evangelical theology, however, is perfection in which all humankind falls short. (Romans 3:23)

It is an Evangelical conviction that persons without Christ are lost, dead in their sins and without hope facing an eternity separated from God.[[19]](#footnote-19) The assurance of heaven is a powerful motivation for witness, but it is not the only motivation. Those who minister in animistic societies where people are in fear of the spirit world have seen the liberating power of the gospel. Men, women and children formerly in bondage come to understand Jesus has power over all evil spirits.[[20]](#footnote-20) Anyone who has heard the testimony of a drug addict whose life has been totally transformed by his or her conversion will understand what is meant by new life. One does not, however, need to have a dramatic past to experience the joy of being justified. For the Evangelical this experience of a personal relationship with God through the finished work of Christ is what is termed Justification where God is the justifier and we, through Christ, become the justified.

Justification: East and West

The concept of Justification is viewed differently in the Eastern tradition. I have termed this difference one of theological frameworks. Part of the problem is that we use the same word, in this case Justification, but the respective framework affects its meaning.

The real issue that unites the West theologically and divides it from the East is the manner in which the theological understanding of the West was shaped by legal concepts. Tertullian is usually given the credit for introducing this juristic terminology into theology. However, the key figure whose theological understanding shaped and continues to shape the Western Churches' theology is Augustine. ... Augustine's thought dominates Western theology in many areas and determines the theology even of those who react against it.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Evangelicals are heirs of the Western mindset where human beings stand before a righteous judge who holds them accountable for their sin. "What must I do to be saved?" is the cry that echoes throughout the corridors of the Western Churches. "How can I, a sinner, stand before a holy God?" What must I do to be justified? This is the heritage of the juridical theory of justification formed in the Western tradition.[[22]](#footnote-22)

The entire history of Western theology, Roman Catholic and Protestant, can be written as a response to this one question of how to be justified. On the one side, the answer is that it is all of grace, the *sola gratia*  of the Reformation. There is nothing I bring to the transaction of salvation but my sin. Jesus did it all. In the middle, so to speak, are the various answers which mix grace and our works, in varying proportions. Finally there are the theologies which proclaim it is all of works, though many do not use such blunt terminology.[[23]](#footnote-23) I would argue that in Western theology, any mixture of works and grace has this subtext: "Only if I am good enough or do enough, can I please God." That is because any mixture has some measure of dependence on the believer. Classic Evangelical doctrine is that it is all of God's grace, *sola gratia.*

Does the Orthodox doctrine of Justification differ from that of the West? Can we locate points of similarity? I think that to approach the topic by looking for similarity is incorrect. What we need to ask for is the meaning of Justification in the Orthodox framework.

To begin to find an answer we can look at the extended note on "Justification by Faith" in *The Orthodox Study Bible.*

This Reformation debate in the West raised the question for the Orthodox East: Why this new polarization of faith and works? It had been settled since the apostolic era that salvation was granted by the mercy of God to righteous men and women. Those baptized into Christ were called to believe in Him *and* do good works. An opposition of faith *versus* works was unprecedented in Orthodox thought. ...Justification by faith, though not the major New Testament doctrine for Orthodox as it is for Protestants, poses no problem. But justification by faith *alone* brings up an objection. It contradicts Scripture, which says, "You see then a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). We are "justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28), but nowhere does the Bible say we are justified by faith "alone. On the contrary, "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead"[[24]](#footnote-24)

The first thing we need to note is that justification by faith, according to this passage, is not the major New Testament doctrine in Orthodoxy. This gives some Evangelicals pause because of how central the doctrine is to Evangelical theology. But as I have said above, the key to mutual understanding is to see that our theological framework and interpretative structures are different. It is up to the observer to determine whether both are Biblical.

Continuing to cite *The Orthodox Study* Bible: "Rather than justification as a legal acquittal before God, Orthodox believers see justification by faith as a covenant relationship with God, centered in the union with Christ."[[25]](#footnote-25) Furthermore, "Orthodoxy emphasizes it is first God's mercy --not our faith--that saves us."[[26]](#footnote-26) It seems to me that Evangelicals can agree that we have entered into a covenant relationship with God through Christ. I take it as mainstream Evangelical doctrine that it is all of God's mercy. Any suggestion that our faith saves us makes faith into a type of work. The Evangelical position is that all we do is accept God's mercy. We certainly can't earn it.

Orthodox theology does not follow Augustine and his concept of the guilt of original sin being transmitted to all humankind. To be fair, not all Evangelicals follow Augustine. Theologically, Orthodoxy and Wesleyans have a lot in common on this point. Commenting on Romans 5:12 we read:

For Adam and Eve, sin came first, and this led to death. This death then spread to all men. The rest of humanity inherits death, and then in our mortal state, we all sin. Thus, all mankind suffers the consequences of Adam's "original sin." However, the Orthodox Church rejects any teaching that would assign guilt to all mankind for Adam's sin. We indeed suffer the consequences of others' sins, but carry guilt only for our own sins.[[27]](#footnote-27)

For Evangelicals, the imputation of Adam's sin is an area of theologoumena or theological discussion. Classic Reformed dogmatic statements clearly speak of the imputation of Adam's sin to all humankind.[[28]](#footnote-28) But other Evangelicals might well resonate with the Orthodox position.

In Orthodoxy the focus is more on the mystery of God's love for humankind. Vladimir Lossky can speak of the mystical theology of Orthodoxy.[[29]](#footnote-29) Making a clear distinction, John Karmiris writes:

... in contrast to the Western Church's legalistic concept of salvation, formulated by Anselm of Canterbury and continued down to the present day, in the Orthodox Church, under the leadership of such men as Irenaeus and Athanasius, the mystical concept of salvation, as held by St. Paul and the Apostles, was ever faithfully retained.[[30]](#footnote-30)

It is true that St. Paul speaks of mystery when he refers to Christ and the church. Certainly it is a mystery why Christ would die for sinners. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:7) "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. ... this mystery is great, but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:25, 32)

Do Orthodox and Evangelicals have complementary understandings of the Biblical material, both shedding light on the meaning of the text?

Sanctification and Theosis

The concept of sanctification has two basic meanings in the Bible. The first we see in the Old Testament where to *sanctify* something or someone is to set it apart for God's use. The Hebrew adjective *qadosh* means "to separate" and comes from the verb meaning "to cut off" or "to separate." This does not imply an intrinsic holiness in the object or person; it simply means to consecrate or set it apart for God's use.[[31]](#footnote-31) A common vessel is sanctified when it is set apart for God to use. The first born males of beasts or humans were consecrated or sanctified to the Lord. To return them to "ordinary life," they had to be redeemed. (Exodus 13:32)

This setting apart is not restricted to the Old Covenant. We see the same in the New Testament where Peter uses it to indicate believers are chosen to be God's people. (I Peter 2: 9-10). We are set-apart people. We are called in the Epistle to the Hebrews "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling" yet admonished not to sin and fall away from the living God. (Hebrews 3: 1, 12) Further on we read "in the case of those who have been enlightened and have tasted of the Holy Spirit ... and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them to repentance." (Hebrews 6: 4-6) Leaving aside the interesting question of whether this verse teaches persons can lose their salvation, it is clear in neither passage is the writer speaking of actual holiness but those who have been set apart in the sense of the Old Testament meaning.

The second use of sanctification is of personal holiness. "It designates not merely the fact that believers are formally set apart, or belong to Christ, but they are then to conduct themselves accordingly. They are to live lives of purity and goodness."[[32]](#footnote-32) This is what we usually mean by sanctification, our growth in Christ-likeness.

For Christians, these two meanings are not mutually exclusive. Any Christian who has lived in a situation among professed non-Christians knows that they watch the behavior of Christians. The small band of Christians at my secular university was held to a higher standard of conduct by non-Christians than we held ourselves to within our fellowship. They expected us to live holy lives and their idea of holiness involved a lot of abstinence from activities we considered neutral but the non-Christians considered sinful. In their eyes, at least, both senses of sanctification, i.e., being separated and being pure, were united.

How does a person become more Christlike? If there was ever an argument for Evangelical *theologoumena,*  then it is in the discussion of Sanctification.[[33]](#footnote-33) There is basic agreement that Christians are called to be holy but not agreement on what that holiness looks like or how it is achieved. For some it is by faith alone, for others through a special work of the Holy Spirit, and for others it is faith and the believer's responsible participation. Rather than have that discussion now, I only want to point out our agreement that we are to grow in Christ and purity.

We have already seen the strong focus on justification that marks Evangelicalism. While there is certainly encouragement toward holiness and purity, the traditions that focus on avoiding certain behaviors and habits, have provoked a reaction among Evangelicals in the opposite direction. Though theologically agreeing with the main points of Evangelical doctrine, Fundamentalists, most of whom would strenuously deny being Evangelicals, have external standards for holiness. The basic ones would be abstinence from alcohol, dancing, use of tobacco, and certain forms of entertainment.[[34]](#footnote-34) All these standards have historical roots which involved other sinful pursuits. Classic Fundamentalists would not engage in the dialogue we are having here. It would violate their belief in being set apart.

Because of this emphasis on prohibited behavior, Evangelicals are generally as glad to distance themselves from Fundamentalists as the Fundamentalists are to distance themselves from Evangelicals. This distinction is often missed by those outside these two camps with the consequent confusion and confounding of the two positions in the minds of critics.[[35]](#footnote-35) The mistake is understandable as both Fundamentalists and Evangelicals share a common core of beliefs on the essentials of the faith.

This highlights one of the main problems in a discussion of sanctification, namely, that it can quickly devolve into a code of conduct mostly denoted by negatives. We don't do this or that and by abstaining we demonstrate our holiness. But we read in Colossians that these prohibitions: "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch" (Colossians 2:21, NASV) while having the appearance of wisdom are of no value against fleshy indulgence. What Paul is highlighting here is that externals are just that, external. The real battle is in the spirit against the spirits. And because we have died with Christ, we have died to the power of those elemental spirits.

Make no mistake, behavior counts as Paul goes on to say in chapter 3 of Colossians. He asks the Colossians to put aside the evil that comes from within the heart of the person. There is then agreement with the teaching of our Lord who said it is what comes out of the person that defiles, not what the person eats or drinks that defiles. (Matthew 15:17-20) But many standards of holiness are focused on externals, things that are handled, tasted or touched.

What Paul advocates is a recreation into the new image, an image formed after the likeness of our Lord Jesus.[[36]](#footnote-36) If we look at the purpose of God from Genesis to Revelation, from creation to eternity, we see God initially created humankind after His own image. That image, now marred by sin, only dimly reflects God. With the Incarnation, a fresh example of the perfect image was found in Christ. Those who believe on His name and follow Him are being recreated into the image of God which we will bear for all eternity. This is sanctification in its fullest sense.

It is fair to note that for most Evangelicals the key issue is whether or not a person is justified by faith. There is both internal and external pressure to see people saved so that their eternal future is assured. By external I mean Evangelical preaching and teaching on the fate of unbelievers. By internal I refer to the normal human desire to see friends and family spend eternity with Christ. There is nothing wrong with desiring to see people fulfill God's purpose in creation by being conformed to the image of God for eternity. It is also true that Evangelicals are very concerned, and rightly so, about the mass of humankind that is "without God" and therefore "without hope."[[37]](#footnote-37) The gospel promises not just "pie in the sky, by and by" but real hope and life here. Those who have worked in places where the population is under bondage to elemental spirits, fearful of demons and other invisible entities, know the freedom that comes to those people when they understand Jesus Christ has power over the spirit world. But whether it is bondage to spirits or fear of economic and political forces over which they have no control, the message is the same: Jesus Christ has all power; there is nothing to fear for those who trust in Him.

Difficulty comes when there is a push for salvation decisions but not a corresponding emphasis on sanctification. It can appear that the decision to follow Christ is the only thing that matters. It is sometimes assumed that once a person is on the right road, sanctification will happen.[[38]](#footnote-38) While sanctification is believed to be vital, two views can derail it. One view doesn't stress sanctification enough and the other turns it into legalism.[[39]](#footnote-39)

This does not mean, however, that no thought is given about who is truly sanctified. Evangelicalism has a hierarchy of spirituality. At the top as the most spiritual are the missionaries, followed by pastors and then those engaged in full-time ministry. I am fairly certain that those in the above named occupations, conscious of their own short-comings and temptations, do not see it that way. I believe, however, that the spiritual ranking I have described pretty well fits across the board for laity. The important thing to note is that these ranking are external, based on what people do. The inner spiritual struggles faced by those considered spiritual and, unfortunately, their occasional failings are not understood. Actually, I suspect the same is true within Orthodoxy where monastics are considered to have the highest level of spirituality, but their spiritual struggles remain unknown to the laity.

Therefore we both have a common problem moving our people beyond "justification" as Evangelicals and "baptism" (and the accompanying signs) as Orthodox into true holy living.

Which brings me to a brief discussion of *Theosis.* A concordance search of "justification" turns up a number of passages, depending on which translation you are using. Likewise, if you search the New American Standard Version or the King James Version using "sanctification" you will be rewarded with a number of verses. *Theosis,* however, is not found in our English Bibles.

That doesn't mean that the meaning of *Theosis* is missing. In addition to the key passage used to demonstrate the concept, 2 Peter 1:4, where we read we are to "become partakers of the divine nature," I would add all the passages that speak of being created in the image of God.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Personally, I like the term *Theosis* because in it we have a more complete Biblical concept. I have come to embrace a holistic concept of the process of justification (being made righteous) and sanctification (being made holy) so that we conform to the image of God as revealed in Christ. This is my goal in my own life (feeble as my attempts are) and in my encouragement to others.

A concluding thought

Father John Meyendorff was extremely helpful to me as I was writing my doctoral dissertation and we had many fine discussions. I once asked John Meyendorff how he would answer the question "Are you saved?"

His reply: "I was saved, I am being saved, I will be saved." I appreciated his answer because I saw it as the essence of St. Paul.

As pointed out above, the problem seems to be that some Evangelicals stop at "I was saved" and somehow think it is enough. Without our entering into the debates on the perseverance of Christians, it seems to me that all of us, while affirming the initial (and important) step in the Christian faith, need to preach and teach the "*being* saved" aspect of the faith. For some in both of our respective traditions, the absence of "I was saved" has led to individuals converting to another tradition. The complaint is most often lodged against Evangelicals who are accused of proselytizing. But the knife cuts both ways and there have been those who have turned to Orthodoxy to find more substance to "I am *being* saved."

May we all know the joy of being able to say, with Father John, all three are true in our lives.

1. This, in my opinion, is even more central than the doctrine of the authority of Scripture. Evangelicals, especially theologians, can have different views on the "infallibility" of the Bible, but the personal experience with the living Christ unites Evangelicals. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The terminology comes from John 3:3 in the discourse with Nicodemus. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. I have experienced this in African cultures where the questioner dispenses with small talk and directly asks for evidence of a conversion experience. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. "The Four Spiritual Laws" by Campus Crusade for Christ consists of four simple statements backed by Scripture texts. 1. God **loves** you and offers a wonderful **plan** for your life. 2. Man is **sinful** and **separated** from God.

   Therefore, he cannot know and experience God’s love and plan for his life. 3 Jesus Christ is God’s **only** provision for

   man’s sin. Through Him you can know and experience God’s love and plan for your life. 4. We must individually **receive** Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God’s love and plan for our lives.

   Another simple evangelistic presentation is "The Romans Road", where the seeker is led through a series of passages in the Epistle to the Romans. (Romans 3:23, 6:23, 10:9 and the promises of Romans 5:18, 8:38-39) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Some may be overwhelmed by the love of God, only to discover later the extent of their rebellion against God as they move into that love. More typically the sense of sin drives them to seek a remedy. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Even our turning away or repentance is possible only because of God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. Our repentance is not a "work" prior to conversion. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Bunyan's Pilgrim was burdened by a load carried on his back (representing his sin). "This *Legality,* therefore, is not able to set thee free from thy Burden. ... Ye cannot be justified by the Works of the Law; for by the deeds of the law no man living can be rid of his burden..... upon that place stood a *Cross,* and a little below, in the bottom, a Sepulchre. ... just as *Christian* came up with the *Cross*, his Burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the Sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more." John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1977 reprinted from the edition of 1895) pp. 19, 35-36. Bunyan's work was originally published in 1678. A good visual representation of the joy and relief of Pilgrim is provided in a scene from *The Mission.* This movie is about the Jesuit missionary work among the Guaraní Indians in South America. Many of my students, when I showed this film in class, compared Pilgrim's experience at the cross with the scene where the slave trader Mendoza drags a heavy bundle containing his armor and sword up the Iguassu Falls. The Indians, in a dramatic moment, instead of killing Mendoza cut away his burden and which falls down to the river. The difference, however, is that Mendoza is dragging his burden as penance. When he returns to fighting the armor and sword are retrieved. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Examples of this abound as believers share their lives in Christian fellowship. "There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother" Proverbs 18:24. The life of the Jerusalem church in the early chapters of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles illustrates this point. The communal life, unfortunately, is not always present. The church in Corinth suffered from party factions. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Lest I be accused of only citing part of sentence, the context is that we are built on the foundation laid by Christ and His apostles, of whom the prophets testified. Ephesians 2: 19  "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes in Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For some the assurance of eternal life eludes them as their denominational tradition does not teach the doctrine of eternal security of the believer. In these traditions, however, as long as the believers are in a state of grace and not consciously sinning, they experience this eternal life. Their church doctrine tells them that they cannot only fall from the state of grace but risk losing their salvation as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." [Romans 8:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8:9&version=NASB) **(NASV) Cf.** Romans 5:5, I John 3:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. What exactly Christ laid aside in being human is subject to theological debate. (Philippians 2:5-11 ) However, the Bible is clear that Jesus did not use the powers that were available to Him, particularly to avoid the cross. See Matt. 26:53 where Jesus says as He is being arrested that if He asked, the Father would put at His disposal seventy two thousand angels. If two angels overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, what could 72,000 do? [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Jesus told His disciples that "he who believes in Me, the works I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go to Father." John 13:12 (NASV) This discourse is in the context of the sending of the Spirit to be with the disciples. Leaving aside who (apostles, bishops, clergy, laity) will do these greater works, it is clear from the context that these works will only be done in the power of the Holy Spirit. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Pentecostals and Charismatics practice the gifts of speaking in tongues and prophecy which some other Evangelicals believe belong only to the Apostolic Age. The gift of healing, practiced widely among Charismatics, is acknowledged by most Evangelicals though not generally practiced as often as it is among Charismatics. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. We are reminded of Bebbington's marks of Evangelicalism, the first one being "Conversionism." The other three are Activism, Biblicism, Crucicentrism. David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989. pp. 5-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Those who sneer are not only adherents of other faiths or atheists. I can recall a conversation when some Greek Orthodox friends of mine were indignant as they discussed Evangelical Christians who had assurance of their salvation. The presumption of these Christians to know they were "saved" offended my friends. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. This paragraph is a composite based on conversations with many individuals over the years. The common theme is that while acknowledging their shortcomings, they hope their good deeds will outweigh their sin. These conversations reveal a lack of understanding of the role of Christ in paying the complete penalty for human sin. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The prospect of eternal punishment of unbelievers was historically a powerful motivation for Evangelical missions. There is a current debate on whether eternal punishment is really eternal or has some time component. Cf. *The Nature of* *Hell: A report by the Evangelical Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth Among Evangelicals*. (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Publishing, 2000). For a discussion of the different views see William Crockett, ed. *Four Views on Hell,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996) and Edward William Fudge and Robert A. Peterson, *Two Views of Hell: A Biblical & Theological Dialogue,* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. An excellent, but hard to find, book by a missionary working in an animistic culture is Robert C. Blaschke, *Quest for Power* (Guardian Books, 2001). Blaschke points out that many missionaries never deal with the questions that the people they are witnessing to are struggling with. The title addresses the need for an answer to the spiritual forces of evil oppressing potential believers. We are reminded of St. Paul's words " For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the **powers**, against the world forces of this darkness, against the **spiritual** *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."[Ephesians 6:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+6:12&version=NASB) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today,*  (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2001), pp.7-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. It is useful to see Western theology, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, as part of one tradition theologically because the themes of Protestantism are formed in accordance with or reaction against, Catholic themes. I am fond of Alexis Khomiakov's saying, "To use the concise language of algebra, all the West knows but one datum *a*; whether it is preceded by the positive sign +, as with the Romanists, or with the negative sign -, as with the Protestants, the *a* remains the same." Alexis Khomiakov in a letter to an English friend, which was printed in W. J. Birkbeck, *Russia and the English Church,*  p. 67, quoted in Ware, *The Orthodox Church,*  p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. It is my conviction that liberal theology or any theology, which stresses activism as a requirement of salvation, falls into this category. Whether it is done as acts of charity, as the 'robber barons' (fabulously rich industrialists and merchants who gained their wealth by exploiting the working classes, at least in some people's eyes) who gave away part of their great wealth to charitable projects like libraries, museums, and educational institutions or by the sacrificial service of workers who see their ministries as acts of penance, these are examples of the belief that works-righteousness leads to salvation. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *The Orthodox Study Bible,* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), p. 1529. This extended note is interleaved between Romans 5 and 6. *Italics* in the original. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Ibid.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *Ibid.*  p. 1530. A very useful book on this subject is John S. Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, trans. George S. Gabriel, (Ridgewood, NJ: Zephyr, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Cf. *The Belgic Confession* (1561) Art. XV "Of Original Sin" "..original sin ...is a corruption of the whole nature... wherewith infants themselves are infected even in their mother's womb." *The Canons of the Synod of Dort* (1619), III Head, Art. II "...all the posterity of Adam, Christ only excepted, have derived corruption from their original parent, not by imitation, as the Pelagians of old asserted, but by the propagation of a vicious nature." *The Westminister Confession of Faith*(1647), Chapter VI, Art. IV "From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil..." Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. III, The Evangelical Protestant Creeds* (New York, Harper and Row, 1877), *passim.* [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church,* (Cambridge, England: James Clark & Co., 1968). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. John Karmiris, *A Synopsis of the Dogmatic Theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church.* translated by George Dimopoulos. (Scranton, PA: Christian Orthodox Edition, 1973). p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. A person who was set apart could be become unclean by breaking certain taboos (touching a dead body, etc.). After a prescribed period of time and cleansing actions they were considered clean again and thereby set apart. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), pp. 968-969. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. C.f. Donald L. Alexander, ed., *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification,* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1988). The five positions covered are Reformed, Lutheran, Wesleyan, Pentecostal and Contemplative. See also Stanley N. Gundry, *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987). Interestingly this book does not exactly overlap with the first book as it covers Wesleyan, Reformed, Pentecostal but substitutes Keswick (a holiness position) and Augustinian-Dispensational View. Each position in the two books has an author that holds to the view he writes about. The other authors then comment on each viewpoint. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Card playing, seeing "Hollywood type" movies, certain types of music; the prohibited lists varied from group to group but included the ones mentioned. Interestingly with the advent of movies on video and cable TV, the prohibition against going to movie theaters, which was a big issue, has diminished. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. For example, James Barr, *Fundamentalism,* 2nd Revised edition (London: SCM, 1981) where he makes this mistake. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. 2 Corinthian 5:17, Romans 6:4-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Ephesians 2:12 I have reversed the order as Paul wrote it "without hope and without God" for literary effect. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. This view is contracted by Jesus in what is generally know as the parable of the sower (Mt.13:3-23, Mark 4:3-20, Luke 8:5-15), which more appropriately should be called the parable of the soil. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Some would maintain that salvation is not complete without holy living while others would believe the elect of God remain elect no matter their spiritual condition at the time of their death. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. "Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the **image** of the heavenly." [1 Corinthians 15:49](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians+15:49&version=NASB). "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"—[Colossians 3:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3:10&version=NASB). "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" [Romans 8:29](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8:29&version=NASB). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)