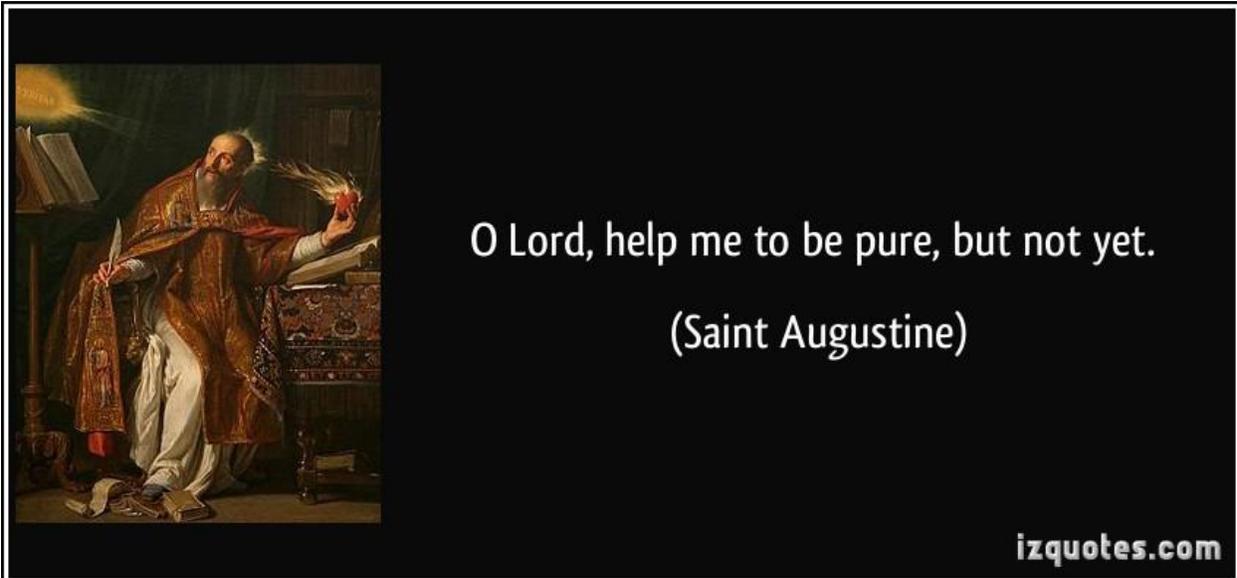


Daily Life with Christ. Love-31: Understanding the objective, universal, unchanging, eternal nature of love: 2nd person personal walk with/before God and purity (sanctification).



(Pdf copy at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/041018.pdf>; for background and complete series, see <http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>).

George: I think that your description of those who believe that fellowship with God is an instant in and out power connection based on 1 John 1:9 in terms of “scientism,” “conduitism,” “mechanistic” and even comparing their view of spirituality to plugging toasters in and out of electrical outlets is demeaning and disrespectful to Christians who are very serious about Bible doctrine and living by the Holy Spirit.

Stephen: I don’t mean to be disrespectful. I am just pointing out that the Bible teaches that fellowship is personal, not about a power connection—not power in the sense of something like electricity or circles, which is the way many describe it. Relationships do not work that way. I am not denying the crucial need of 1 Jn 1:9. What I am affirming is that fellowship is personal. This personal relationship is what is taught in 1 Jn. 1:1-7—note that the same word for fellowship (*κοινωνία*) is use of God and between fellow believers: 1 John 1:3, “that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship (*κοινωνία*) with us; and truly our fellowship (*κοινωνία*) is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” We do not receive power—like being plugged—when enjoy 2nd person personal fellowship with other believers. However, just like in human relationships, when there is offense, confession of sin can restore a relationship so there can be fellowship—but restoration is not the same as fellowship. Fellowship is active sharing of lives in 2nd person relationship. It is active, not passive, and not automatic based on lip service. To walk with the LORD is much different than just being in a state of confessed sin.

George: What do you mean by active fellowship?

Stephen: It is walking with the LORD, before the LORD, and after the LORD in a very personal way. Active fellowship is living in His presence in a 2nd person orientation throughout all the details of every day. It is no accident that the Bible teaches us to pray without ceasing, thanking God in all things ‘for this is God’s will’ (1 Thess 5:17-18), and that we are to please the LORD in all things (Col. 1:10). There is a world of difference between thinking that fellowship is just about being in a state of being confessed up versus the active fellowship as per the above—and in 1 Jn 1:7 and 4:16. I would argue that no active fellowship or spiritual growth takes place apart from actively walking with/before/after the LORD in all the details of life. It is in walking with the LORD in a second person relationship where we really grow in a personal relationship with Him and make those adjustments in life. When we walk with the LORD, we and God are both headed in the same direction. Also, I would argue that a believer can be very faithful to a conduit view of 1 John 1:9 (fellowship = being confessed up) and be going in the wrong direction due to his false views of fellowship and the need for personal adjustments, which are only possible before God. As Amos put it, “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (3:3). So, agreement with God includes more than simply agreeing with God on sin as per ‘saying the same thing as God’ (meaning of confession/*homologeo*). The root of life with God is 2nd person love relationship with Him. It is walking with/before/after God that leads to true spiritual maturity—not gimmicks, formulas, spiritual sacrifices, or rededications. Only by walking with and before God can we progressively grow in sanctification and reach maturity: the status of being a friend of God, like with Abraham.

George: Where does Scripture teach that Abraham became a friend of God by walking with God?

Stephen: Genesis 17:1, “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and you will be blameless.”

George: But it does not say he walked “with” God.

Stephen: Right, but walking before God can only take place if one is already walking with God. Moreover, walking before God is a natural result of walking with God. When we walk with God we are conscious that He is at our side all the time. He is our Ally. Throughout all the details of life, we walk with Him in a very person way as if we are walking with a dear friend. We are aware of His presence in all that we do. We never feel alone. He is the source of our blessedness, tranquility, power, forgiveness, and everything good and noble. When we walk with the Lord we literally share in His life and love which overflows to others in that we come to share His life and love with others.

George: But I asked what it meant to walk “before” God.

Stephen: As I noted, it is a result of walking with God. If I am walking with God, then I will live consciousness of my own life before His eyes and make the appropriate adjustments—which is why God told Abraham to walk before Him and he would be perfect! This is a divine promise. As we walk before God, we are aware of His unconditional love for us. We are also aware that there is a divine opinion formed of all we do. God is watching us. No one will walk “before” God unless he first walks with Him. It would be unbearable to walk before His presence if we

are not walking with Him. When we walk with Him, we partake of His life and have power over sin. If we do not walk with Him, we default to sin and in such a state the last thing we want to do is to think about Him watching us. So, the natural tendency is to push Him out of mind. It is not difficult to see how living before the LORD gives us power over sin as we live in His presence. As we live before His loving and faithful eyes, we also become aware that even though we are not what we should be, He is always what He has promised to be.

George: What do you mean? How does walking before Him keep us from sinning?

Stephen: Do you think we would do some of the disgusting things we do if we lived in great awareness of God watching us? Well, He is. I would argue that the only time we do sin is when we ignore Him: He is no longer real—until we need His forgiveness and grace again. We are great at compartmentalization. The only solution to the sin problem is love Him with all our hearts, but this requires the miracle of sanctification wherein He heals our fractured hearts by bringing up our lower sense desires to our higher and truer selves—to do what we know is true, good, and beautiful as image bearers of God.

George: What do you think is the biggest obstacle to sanctification? What keeps God from purifying and elevating our lower based desires?

Stephen: Us!

George: How so?

Stephen: We really do not want it as we should even though the grace is available for all.

George: What do you mean? What? We believers really do not want sanctification?

Stephen: We do not want it that much . . . we prefer our own power, pleasure, and denunciation of others over God's presence, love, and glory. We prefer sin over purity. Consider the prayer of Augustine, "Lord make me pure, but not yet."