

# THE NATURE OF THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST

BY JASON HENDERSON, 2018

As many of you have probably noticed, I have not posted any of my own writings or audios on our website for the last few years. The principal reason for this is that, in 2013, the Lord began to deal with my heart in a serious way concerning some very important things that I had misunderstood or overlooked in my understanding and experience of the gospel. And rather than just immediately talk about the various things that I was beginning to understand (as I have regretfully done in the past), it seemed far wiser to just shut my mouth for a time, allow the Lord to truly teach and change me, and then perhaps (one day) to communicate what my own eyes had seen, my own ears had heard, what I had looked upon and handled with my hands, concerning the Word of life.

I have not felt much freedom to talk publicly about what has been going on my heart in the last few years. And I have felt an almost constant sense of the Lord's caution not to speak beyond my measure, not to mistake vision for possession, not to preach what I cannot yet live, and more especially, not to do anything in His name without the power and direction of His Spirit.

I believe that a good deal of what I have preached and written in the past has come out from a Spirit-given understanding of the things of God, and for that reason I have not removed many of the teachings from the website (though I have removed quite a few). Much of what is contained in the various teachings online concerning the old and new covenants, the necessity of revelation, God's rejection of the fallen, natural man, types and shadows vs. spiritual substance, the kingdom and priesthood, Adam and Christ, etc. are (I believe) expressive of true things (however weakly and sometimes flippantly I spoke them.)

There are, however, a few very significant errors in understanding that are represented in many of the teachings and books that I have written in days past, which I now see more clearly. One of them in particular, I feel a need to clarify in this way, both because of a sense of having misled people (however unknowingly or unwillingly), and because I find myself regularly having to explain in emails and phone conversations the things that I hope to communicate here.

The subject I want to clarify has to do with *the finished work of the cross*, and how it relates to those who call themselves Christians. It was my former belief that those who had been truly born again of the Spirit, immediately entered into what I called "the finished work of Christ," where all things were already complete and perfect, and where the believer only lacked a Spirit-given view of what God had

done, and the automatic changes that this necessarily brought about in the heart. Though there may be a measure of truth in some of these statements (when rightly understood and applied by Spirit of God), I believe the general drift of this statement is incorrect and tends to open doors to great misunderstanding, error, and danger.

Now, to be clear, I absolutely believe that the perfect and complete work which Christ accomplished at the cross is the foundation and bedrock of our relationship with God, and of everything He offers us in His Son. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, Christ was “set forth as a propitiation in His blood,” offered Himself for us “an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma,” established “remission of sins that were previously committed” (Rom 3:25), created in Himself a new covenant, began a new creation, one new, spiritual, corporate man, and opened a bloody door for all who desire to follow Him out of spiritual Egypt. However, having established these things, there remains an extremely important question that must be rightly answered and understood, namely: *How, when, and in what way does what Christ accomplished through the cross actually affect me? Or, though Christ has finished His work, what has actually been finished in me? Am I experiencing the efficacy, power, and intended outcome of this incredible gift? Have I been changed by it? Am I truly dead to sin? Is Adam truly finished in me? Etc.*

Here is where the misunderstanding (or better yet, the deception) comes in. The enemy of our souls would love for us to believe, and declare to the world, that, despite our obvious lack of spiritual light, life, and righteousness, despite the lack of holiness (“without which no man can see the Lord” Heb. 12:14), despite not knowing the crucifixion of our lusts or the putting off of the body of sin, despite not producing the fruits of His Spirit, or knowing a conformity to His death, or having the love without which Paul says we are nothing, NEVERTHELESS (it is said), somehow, in God's eyes, we are as perfect as Christ is perfect, because Christ is our life; or that none of this really matters because we have come to a finished work.

Now, as far as I remember, I don't believe I ever went as far in my teachings as to say that we are already perfect, or that there was no need for our growth in, and transformation by, the living Word of God. I always believed that it was the duty and responsibility of every heart to go on to know the Lord, to seek the revelation of Christ, to journey from inward Egypt to the inward Promised Land, to humble ourselves and cry out for truth, and to seek to be changed into His image from glory to glory, experiencing the inward increase of the kingdom of God, etc. Nevertheless, the way that I described the finished work of the cross, and our immediate inclusion and acceptance in it, led many people to wrongly apply the outward work of Christ to themselves, even while their hearts and lives remained in great rebellion against Him. It has caused some to say “God has done all for me,” even while they have resisted and rejected what He desires to do in them. It gave room for the flesh to keep on living, reigning, thinking, willing, running, and loving the world, all under a cloak of the “finished work of Christ.” Many, I am afraid, having read my books or listened to my teachings, have praised the Lord for the work of the outward cross, even while they inwardly “crucified again for themselves the Son of God, putting Him to open shame.” (Heb. 6:6)

For this reason, I want to say clearly and emphatically, that this is an extremely unsound, unscriptural, and dangerous doctrine, and to whatever extent my teachings have supported or permitted it, I am deeply regretful and truly sorry.

It is true that Christ has finished His work, and established and given us a gift that is perfect, powerful, living, and new. But the entire testimony of Scripture (both Old Testament and New) declares that, though this gift is indeed purchased for us by Christ, it is then sown in the heart as a small mustard seed, “the least of all seeds,” which, given the right conditions, has power fill the garden of the heart and displace all other plants. The perfect gift of God in Christ is compared by the Lord Himself to a pinch of heavenly leaven, that must fill all three measures of meal; to a little pearl of great price, that is only obtained and enjoyed by the loss of everything else. It is like a seed that is sown among roads, birds, rocks, weeds, and thorns, where the “the noble and good heart, keeps it and bears fruit with patience.” (Luke 8:15) It is like a small stone, cut out of a mountain without hands, that strikes the inward kingdom of flesh, and fills the soul with the mountain of God.

The *gift* is indeed perfect, but it does not immediately and automatically make men perfect. Much to the contrary, we are told to “receive with meekness the implanted Word which is *able* to save our souls” (James 1:21). We are told to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” (Phil 2:12-13). Peter tells us to “lay aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking, and as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.” And Jesus Himself, both in precept and example, manifested that the only way to grow in spiritual life is upon the narrow and difficult path of inward death, “denying” and even “hating” the life we have in the flesh, taking up our cross, and following Him.

Again, the gift *in itself* is perfect, complete, and cannot be improved, but the ground into which it falls is a hostile environment that would happily smother the seed in order to save its life. Because of this, the New Testament is replete with warnings and cautions and practical instructions to protect, cherish, and “stir up” the gift that was sown within. We are warned by Christ (in a variety of ways) that the talent or mina is given for an increase; and to the servant who kept what was given without permitting its growth, the decree of the master was, “take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.” We are warned by Paul not to “receive the grace of God in vain,” nor “insult the Spirit of grace,” “trample underfoot the Son of God,” “fall away unto perdition,” “believe in vain,” “make shipwreck of faith,” etc. And the reason for these (and many other) warnings, is that unless we give up entirely to the saving, purifying, sanctifying, and transforming power of this implanted Seed, we will find that “the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things enter and choke the Word, making it unfruitful.” (Mark 4:19)

Another way that the Scriptures declare this same reality, is to say that we have been brought into a perfect, established covenant with God. We have been brought “into Christ”; not merely “in Christ” as a status or position, but “in Christ” as a working, operating covenant, a defined and ongoing relationship and way to walk with God. According to Isaiah, Christ is “given to us as a Covenant” (Isa. 42:6; 49:8), and this covenant (this being “in Christ”) is the *way* that we must walk with Him, stay in Him, experi-

ence His powerful operation upon our souls, and know His acceptance. Neither the old covenant nor the new are presented as a one-sided, static, “congratulations, you're in”, type of relationship. In both cases, those who enter into covenant with God are required to *keep the covenant*, to walk with Him in a particular way, to be faithful to the boundaries of the covenant, and allow the relationship to have its transforming, purifying, teaching, purging, enlightening, crucifying and resurrecting effect, making them a people who bear the image of their Creator. Consider God's words to the children of Israel when He entered into covenant with them:

*'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' (Exo. 19:4-6)*

In other words, the covenant is a perfect, complete relationship with God; it lacks nothing, and nothing else needs to be added or consummated. Nevertheless, it is a relationship that works according to a specific way and *operation*, and thus brings about specific *results* in all who keep it. Israel could not disobey the terms of the covenant and still claim the benefits of it. They had to submit to God's way, and thereby learn His truth, keep His statutes, offer His offerings, be purified of sin, leprosy, and defilement, etc. In the same way, we cannot disobey or resist the inward working of this powerful, living relationship and still claim to be “accepted in the Beloved”, or “clothed in the righteousness of Christ.” We are placed into a perfect, living, dynamic, efficacious covenant, to which we must submit, and by which we must be changed.

Though spiritual and inward in nature, the new covenant has requirements, boundaries, and laws, just as the old covenant did. Some would object here and say that the old covenant was “weak because of the flesh,” but the new covenant now provides all that it requires through the gift of the Spirit. This is very true; the new covenant includes the gift of grace and truth in the inward parts, and unlike in the Mosaic covenant, power is now given to become sons of God. However, the gift of the Spirit, and its powerful workings in the soul (cleansing, transforming, revealing, purging, teaching, etc.), do not happen either automatically or immediately in the human heart. Our entrance into the covenant may be immediate, but our continuance and growth in it, and its ongoing affects in us, are according to our faithful abiding in the Vine, and submitting to the cross of Christ, which is the power of God to crucify sin and self in every root and branch. Consider these Scriptures:

*Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit... If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. (John 15:2,6)*

*Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)*

Free from what? He tells them in the following verses: free from sin, and not just the guilt and consequence of it, but its power as well, and their inward slavery to it.

The human heart, when not submitting to the grace or power of God, when not abiding in the Word or Vine that is a cross to the fleshly nature, is “always going astray” (Heb. 3:10), always resisting the grace of God, always pursuing fleshly liberties (along with the theologies and world views that excuse its rebellion). The new covenant provides the perfect remedy to this problem, a perfect way to come out of our wicked, fallen, and alienated condition, by giving us a heavenly power that can destroy all of the works of the devil in our souls, a mighty Spirit that can bind the strong man, enter his house, and plunder his goods. But in order to benefit from this new and better covenant, “which was established on better promises” (Heb 8:6) and which has “brought in a better hope, through which we draw near to God” (Heb 7:19), we must walk in the covenant, keep the covenant, submitting to the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”, in order to be “made free from the law of sin and death.”

True, repentant hearts are visited in their slavery, and offered a door that leads out of spiritual Egypt into a perfect relationship with God in Christ. But after a short time of celebrating their initial victory on the banks of the Red Sea, the honest heart awakens in a wilderness to find that his heart is still teeming with all sorts of Egyptian desires and appetites, carnal expectations, wisdom from below, man-made and man-centered religion, self-love, distrust of God, unclean and corrupt passions, and so much more that the enemy has built and protected. The soul has found a loving God and a living covenant, but there is a long inward journey before “the reproach of Egypt is rolled away” (Jos 5:9) from the heart, until we have “laid hold of that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of us” (Phil 3:12). The only way forward is by a careful and constant submission to the grace of God, the indwelling Seed and light of Christ, the purging and transforming effects of the covenant.

Having received the implanted Word, we must be “diligent to enter our rest” by obeying the living and powerful Word of God which is “sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit.” (Read Hebrews 4:11 and 12 together). Having perhaps escaped the birds, we must now be watchful for rocks, weeds, and thorns. Having come out from the darkness of Egypt, and entered into covenant with God, “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Cor 7:1).

To suggest that this is already perfected in us, merely because we have received a perfect gift of God, is to confuse the seed with the tree—a deception of the enemy calculated to prevent the very purpose for which the gift is given. It is the fleshly part of man, the fallen adamic nature, that seeks to sit down at ease, to make treaties and alliances with the Philistine nature in the land, and cry “peace, peace, when there is no peace.” (Jer. 8:11; Ez. 13:10). And because I was formerly confused and deceived about this very thing, I would like to try to expose some of the enemy's most subtle and successful arguments in favor of it.

1.) Despite their often conspicuous lack of the fruits of the Spirit, or any true conformity to the image and nature of Christ, many (like me! in many of my former teachings) base their assurance of having

come to an already finished and perfected work on the verb tenses used by the apostles in their letters to the churches. They say, “Notice how Paul says, “Through the law I DIED to the law, that I might live to God. I HAVE been crucified with Christ.” Or “But you WERE washed, but you WERE sanctified, but you WERE justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

Again, the fleshly mind (which always seeks to avoid the cross) is quick to read these past-tense verbs and insist that, despite not feeling even remotely dead, washed, sanctified, or justified, this is nevertheless true of us, because these things are said to have already taken place. But there is a glaring and inescapable problem with this kind of reasoning: namely, it presupposes that what Paul says with respect to himself (“I have died”), or to a particular person or church (“you were washed”), automatically applies to everybody, in every condition, who might be reading this letter. But why would we assume that these sorts of statements apply to us, and so many other critical statements (written with respect to other conditions) do NOT apply to us. The same author, in numerous other places, tells his recipients that they are still carnal, that many are enemies of the cross, that they have begun in the Spirit but are seeking to be perfected in the flesh, that they are bewitched by a false gospel, and he fears to have labored for them in vain, etc. James addresses some readers as “adulterers and adulteresses” “double-minded” men who have “fattened their hearts as in the day of slaughter.” Peter and Jude have even stronger words of warning and censure. Why do we not automatically apply *these* verses to ourselves, and assume that they relate to our condition? I think the answer is obvious. It is far more preferable and comforting to assume (despite all internal and external evidence) that we are in the condition of those who have submitted to the transforming power of the cross, and so deserve to be praised and encouraged.

The apostles knew to whom they were writing, and their letters were written to different people in different spiritual states. John writes to “children, young men, and fathers” in the church, and encourages them according to their various conditions. Paul writes to heavenly-minded Ephesians, carnal Corinthians, and backsliding Galatians, and has warnings, counsel, or praise depended upon the states of his recipients. As we read Scripture, I think we should be careful not to determine for ourselves which words best apply to our condition, but rather allow the Spirit of Truth (the true author of all Scripture) to apply His words to us according to His understanding of our state.

2.) Another common reason why people believe and teach this view of the finished work of the cross is because, having begun to see (rightly!) that Christ Himself is the substance and reality of salvation, they run into a false conclusion, assuming that because Christ is perfect, their salvation by Him is also perfect and complete. These often quote 1 Corinthians 1:30, and similar verses, insisting that “Christ is made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” Now, there is no doubt that Christ IS salvation, that He is perfect, complete, and unmixed in Himself, and that he is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. But the important question (which few consider) is HOW? Is He made unto us these things in an indiscernible, unfelt, imputation... where we read some verses and claim to possess what we do not actually experience? Or is He made unto us these things by the actual increase of His nature, power, and government in our souls? I believe Scripture insists upon the latter. Christ is most certainly the sum off all spiritual things—the life, power, substance and reality of all righteousness, wisdom, and salvation. And apart from Him being given to us, and

working in us, we could have none of these things. But the general idea in the church today is that Christ is somehow automatically, kind of magically (poof!!) made these things unto us, regardless of whether His life is formed in us, or whether or not give up to follow Him in the way of regeneration.

I believe the Scriptures unanimously testify that Christ is made unto us these things according as the body of sin, the first, fallen nature, is put off, and Christ's is put on, or according as we submit to His fiery baptism which "thoroughly purges His threshing floor," or according as the Seed of His life puts down roots, sprouts upward, and brings forth the fruits of His Spirit in our soul... but not otherwise. Again, it is an attractive idea to the fleshly mind to somehow possess a righteousness that we don't need to experience, or to be considered sanctified without having to change, or to be redeemed in the sight of God even when we are clearly not redeemed from sin, vanity, foolish talking, lust, and the love of the world. I have been made to see and feel that God sees through all of these false, fig-leaf theologies, sewn together in an attempt to hide our nakedness from His all-seeing eye. It is good and right to recognize Christ as the substance and reality of all spiritual things. But it is shameful and wrong to use this incredible truth as a cloak or an excuse for continuing in the nature that Christ came to destroy.

Some have taken this doctrine as far as to say that Christians shouldn't expect to experience a true transformation of nature, or that it is not important whether we do or not, because only Christ is perfect, and though we are placed in Him and counted perfect because of Him, we will always be fallen, miserable sinners in ourselves. But though this idea carries an illusion of honoring Christ, it greatly dishonors the purpose for His coming, and blatantly contradicts the consistent testimony of Scripture. We are most certainly not meant to stay miserable sinners all of our lives! We are meant to "behold in a mirror the glory of God and be transformed into His image." We are supposed to "put off the old man" with his deeds and desires, and "put on the new man," being "conformed to the image of Christ," "sanctified entirely, in body, soul, and spirit," "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We are commanded by our Lord to "be perfect, even as our heavenly Father is perfect," and are warned that "if our righteousness does not exceed the Pharisees, we will not enter the kingdom of heaven." We are joined to the Vine in order to bear His fruit, fruit that lasts and glorifies the Father, and though we indeed begin our journey as miserable sinners, we are meant to be "washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." We are supposed to "purify our souls in obedience to the truth" (1 Pet. 1:22), because "if we live according to the flesh we will die; but if by the Spirit we put to death the deeds of the body, we will live." (Rom 8:13). Thus we become "dead to sin" (not in theology, but in experience), "crucified to the world," "slaves of righteousness," "no longer walking as the Gentiles do in the futility of our mind," and no longer "grieving the Holy Spirit of God." For, "This is the will of God, your sanctification... for God did not call us to uncleanness, but to holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit," (1 Thes. 4:3,7-8). And the apostle John goes as far as to say, "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." (1 John 3:6, 9).

To any who believe that the finished work of Christ immediately and automatically perfects them in the sight of God, I humbly and lovingly entreat you to read Revelation chapters 2-3, and consider the way that Christ Himself deals with His own churches, by His own Spirit. Tell me if there is anything in

Christ's words that would lead any unbiased reader to conclude that these believers were already perfect and complete in the sight of God. Here Christ both encourages and strongly reprimands and warns His seven churches, saying things like, "I have not found your works perfect before God... hold fast and repent," or "I could wish you were cold or hot, so then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth," or "You say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked," etc. These are warned to "be zealous and repent", to "buy white garments that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed," to "repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand," etc. and the promises of the covenant, in each individual case, are extended only to those who "overcome."

None of these remarks take one ounce of relevance or importance away from what Christ accomplished for mankind through His death, burial, and resurrection. In fact, I believe that my motivation in sharing and clarifying these things arises from a desire than none of us mishandle the gift and miss the intended effect of His incredible sacrifice. Through the work of the cross Christ has "tasted death for every man," that "through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives." In this way He has become "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him", and "by that one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." This is an incredible gift, but by these same verses we can see that He is *not* the author of eternal salvation for those who do not obey Him, nor does His one offering perfect forever those who are *not* being sanctified. Therefore (says nearly every page of the New Testament in its own distinct way), let us follow the Captain of our salvation in the way that He has opened for us. Let us draw near "in the new and living way He has consecrated for us... having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." "Let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith." Let us "deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Him". And "today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness...Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.' So I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter into My rest.'"

I will conclude with a short quote from William Penn:

However people may mistake, misconstrue, or misrepresent our views on this important subject, I pray that they would not deceive themselves in the great business of their own salvation, and while happily declaring that Christ has done all, be found disowned by Him on the last day. Read the 7th of Matthew: it is the one who hears Christ—the great Word of God—and does what He enjoins, commands, and recommends by His own blessed example, that is compared to a wise builder with a strong foundation. No other house will stand in the final shaking and judgment. For this reason we are often plain, direct, and earnest with people to consider that Christ came not to save them in, but from, their sins. Those who think to dismiss themselves from His yoke and burden, His cross and example, and secure themselves by praising Christ for His hav-



ing done all for them (while He has wrought little or nothing in them, nor have they parted with anything for the love of Him) will finally awake in a dreadful surprise, at the sound of the last trumpet, and this sad and irrevocable sentence, “Depart from Me you workers of iniquity, I do not know you.” May all avoid this terrible end by timely hearkening to wisdom's voice, and turning at her reproof. For surely she will lead you in the ways of righteousness, and in the midst of the paths of judgment your souls will come to inherit substance—even durable riches and righteousness in the kingdom of God.