

THE COMFORT AND CALL OF GOD'S GRACE

My Grace Is Sufficient
For *Thee*: For My Strength Is
Made *Perfect*
In *Weakness*

2 Cor 12:9

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THE COMFORT OF GOD'S GRACE

Do you sin? Are you a sinner? How often are you discouraged by your sin? You probably need the comfort of God's grace this week. Let me explain.

NO MORE CONDEMNATION

The Apostle Paul shares some great information for those who follow Jesus Christ. Read these refreshing words of comfort:

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit ([Romans 8:1](#)).

No condemnation!

This statement simply means that God does not hold you condemned or guilty over your sin. Isn't that incredible?

If you are like me, I tend to sin off and on each day. I do not want to sin in essence; however, I do. I understand the Apostle Paul's struggle in [Romans 7](#).

After years and years of following Christ, you would expect – at least I expect – to have a handle on this sin thing. Yet, I still struggle. What's up with that anyway? Maybe you are like me.

GREAT NEWS! THE COMFORT OF GOD'S GRACE

If you are like me, isn't this incredible comfort of God's grace?

You are not condemned! Jesus took your condemnation upon Himself on the cross.



Let's refer to Paul's writing again:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ([Romans 8:2-5](#))

Again, Jesus took our condemnation. He came as our substitute and vicariously suffered the payment of our sin for us. He is our substitutionary atonement.

If you are under the burden of your sin today, be encouraged. Jesus took your penalty. Jesus made it possible for you to simply ask forgiveness for your sin and God immediately restores the joy of fellowship with Him (cf., [1 John 1:5-2:2](#)).

Halleluiah friends! To God be all the glory for this!

Yes, you are a sinner. But praise be to God, you are not condemned. This, my friends, is the comfort of God's grace!

THE CALL OF GOD'S GRACE

In our [last post](#), we discussed the incredible comfort of God's grace for those of us who sin. We rejoice in this truth. We also recognize that God's grace not only includes the comfort of God's grace but also the call of God's grace. Let me explain.



ACCEPTANCE WITH AGENDA

God accepts us in Christ at salvation. As discussed in the last blog, we rejoice in that. Yet, God continues to desire to see us grow in our sanctification or our likeness to Christ. Notice how Paul describes it:

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ([Romans 8:12-14](#))

According to Paul, if we have been saved from our sins and have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, we then should no longer live according to our flesh but according to the Spirit. In other words, we should no longer live as if we are still in bondage to the flesh, as an unbeliever does; instead, we should live as one who has received the Spirit of God and empowerment from on high to live as a Christ-follower.

Simply put: we should now live as sons and daughters of God, not sons and daughters of Adam.

Whereas the flesh once dominated you prior to salvation, it no longer does as those who have experienced salvation.

ACCEPTED – YES! BUT WITH A CALL OF GRACE

No one can condemn you. You are secure in Christ. God accepted you in the midst of your sin – in spite of your sin. He justifies you, which means He declared you innocent of all past, present, and future sin. God poured out His anger on Jesus for your sin and placed Jesus' righteousness onto you ([2 Cor 5:21](#)). This is grace!

Now what? Although we are not condemned, we should no longer continue to sin. Instead, we should live up to our new position in Christ in the Spirit. The call of grace is to put to death the flesh in all its manifestations and live in the Spirit. The call of grace motivates us to become more like Jesus Christ.

The path forward by grace is toward Christlikeness.

HOW DO YOU PUT TO DEATH THE FLESH?

(PART ONE) WHAT IS THE FLESH?

This week in posts, we have already discussed from [Romans 8](#) both the incredible [comfort of God's grace](#) and the [call of God's grace](#). We rejoice in these twin doctrines or truth. As sinners who are in Christ, we no longer have any condemnation; instead, we have been adopted into God's family, become a joint-heir with Jesus, and can call God "Daddy." However, we recognize that although we are accepted into God's family as we are, God still has an agenda by grace to grow us more into Christ, the process we call sanctification. To do this with the greatest proficiency and effectively as possible, the Apostle Paul tells us to mortify or put to death the flesh. Today, we answer the question, "How do you put to death the flesh?" First, though, we start with a more basic question, "What is the flesh?"

WHAT IS THE FLESH?

The question, *What is the flesh?* needs to be addressed before we can answer, *How do you put to death the flesh?* For your understanding, let me give you a two-part understanding of it. I'll use [Romans 8](#) to describe it.



FIRST, THE FLESH DESCRIBES YOUR INNER DISPOSITION PRIOR TO SALVATION (OR JUSTIFICATION).

Sometimes I refer to this in computer terms as your **spiritual operating system**.

An operating system is the most important software that runs on a computer. It manages the computer's memory and processes, as well as all of its software and hardware. Without an operating system, a computer is useless. Your computer's operating system (OS) manages all of the software and hardware on the computer. Most of the time, there are several different computer programs running at the same time, and they all need to access your computer's central processing unit (CPU), memory, and storage. The operating system coordinates all of this to make sure each program gets what it needs. Operating systems usually come pre-loaded on any computer you buy. Most people use the operating system that comes with their computer, but it's possible to upgrade or even change operating systems. The three most common operating systems for personal computers are Microsoft Windows, macOS, and Linux.^[1]

The flesh as Paul refers to it here is just like an operating system. It is the control center of your inner man prior to salvation. The flesh, provided for you through your connection to Adam ([Romans 5](#)), comes standard with every person. It manages everything about you – how you think, what you want, what you love, how you feel, and, ultimately, everything that you do. The flesh operating system in Adam suffers under universal depravity, as all have sinned. We are born sinners and become sinners. because the outlook of the flesh is hostile to God, The flesh refuses to submit to the law of God, nor is it able to do so. The flesh is the operating system through which sin occurs. This sinful disposition can also be referred to as your *old man*.

Upon salvation or justification, God changes your spiritual operating system. Instead of an *in-Adam, old man, depraved inner man* dominated by sinful lusts, God provides you an *in-Christ, new man, righteous inner man* clothed in true righteousness and holiness (cf., [Eph 4:22-24](#); [Col 3:9-11](#); [2 Cor 5:17](#)). This new operating system both provides the desire to honor God and enables you to now honor the Lord. Specifically, Paul calls this new desire and enablement as being led by the Spirit ([Rom 8:14](#)).

SECOND, LIVING IN THE FLESH IS THE OPPOSITE OF LIVING BY THE SPIRIT.

One aspect then of the flesh simply refers to the spiritual operating system of an individual – either *in the flesh in-Adam* or *in the Spirit in-Christ*. The second aspect then refers to the way one lives. As discussed above, the spiritual operating system determines which way fundamentally one operates. As an *in-Adam* person, you produce the deeds of the flesh; that is, as you live, what you do (deeds) flows out of your fleshly disposition of your heart or inner man. Therefore, we would refer to this as living according to the flesh ([Rom 8:5](#)). The one who after justification as an *in-Christ* person is led by the Spirit and does those things which honor God, that person is living by the Spirit. The Spirit of God lives in him or her and produces His fruit in you, which becomes manifested in your behavior ([Rom 8:9-10](#)).

Sadly, even after justification, one can live (and, chooses to live) either according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. Although God changed the operating system, you still have functional control over your life. Even though you now are *in-Christ new man*, your heart remains active either for or against God. The power of the flesh is broken; you no longer serve under the power of the flesh as your operating system. Yet, until you get to heaven, the presence of sin remains even though the power of sin is broken.

As a person with a free will and active heart, you choose in every moment of every day to either follow the leading of the Spirit in righteousness (which is consistent with your *new man in-Christ operating system*) or you can live according to the flesh producing the deeds of the flesh.

Here is the difference. Whereas before salvation you could only serve the flesh and produce deeds according to the flesh,...

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God ([Rom 8:8](#)).

... now, you have a choice. While on earth, until you get to heaven either through the return of Christ or death, you can either live by the Spirit or according to the flesh. The ability to sin and the presence of sin will only be alleviated once we are in heaven and receive our glorified bodies (known as glorification).

Until then, we face a critical choice in every moment of every day, under what influence will we choose to live. Will we live by the Spirit or according to the flesh?

So then, brothers and sisters, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh (for if you live according to the flesh, you will die), but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. ([Rom 8:12-14](#)). Either we will by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the flesh or we will follow our fleshly desires and live according to the flesh.

IN SUMMARY “WHAT IS THE FLESH?”

The flesh in one sense refers to our *in-Adam, old man, depraved spiritual operating system* prior to salvation. It dominates us prior to the miraculous work at salvation where God takes away the old spiritual operating system and grants you a new spiritual operating system, which refers to an *in-Christ, new man, righteous spiritual operating system*. This new man desires to follow the Spirit, honor God, and say no to the flesh.

The flesh in another sense refers to your tendency to turn back to the selfish desires of your old man which used to dominate you and live according to those former strong passions and desires which could not honor God. For the follower of Christ, the battle rages at this point. Will we choose to live as those led by the Spirit or those who walk in the flesh?

As those who are *in-Christ* new man people who have been justified by God at salvation, how then do we live by the Spirit and not according to the deeds of the flesh? Next, we will answer this question, How do you put to death the flesh?

HOW DO YOU PUT TO DEATH THE FLESH?

(PART TWO) 8 STEPS



Now, in our second section related to putting to death the flesh, we look at eight steps to help you mortify the flesh. Earlier this week in posts, we have already discussed from [Romans 8](#) both the incredible [comfort of God's grace](#) and the [call of God's grace](#). In [part one](#) of this post, we answered the question, "[What is the flesh?](#)" Remember, as sinners who are in Christ, we no longer have any condemnation; instead, we have been adopted into God's family, become a joint-heir with Jesus, and can call God "Daddy." However, we recognize that although we are accepted into God's family as we are, God still has an agenda by grace to grow us more into Christ, the process we call sanctification. To do this with the greatest proficiency and effectively as possible, the Apostle Paul tells us to mortify or put to death the flesh.

Today, we answer the question, “How do you put to death the flesh?” with eight steps to mortify or put to death the flesh.

HOW DO YOU PUT TO DEATH THE FLESH?

Understanding the difficulty of living consistent with our *in-Christ*, new man, righteous inner man which is clothed in true righteousness and holiness, Paul explained that we must seek to put to death the deeds of the flesh. As we discussed yesterday, although the power of the flesh is broken, the presence of sin remains. Sadly, even after justification, one can live either according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. Although God changed the operating system, you still have functional control over your life. Even though you now are *in-Christ* new man, your heart remains active either for or against God. Therefore, we must actively put to death the flesh.

UNDERSTANDING THE BATTLE

Paul describes the battle between the flesh and the Spirit in [Galatians 5](#).

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ([Gal 5:16-21](#))

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ([Gal 5:24](#))

Paul describes it as a battle. The Spirit leads you toward righteousness but your own fleshly desires and passions fight against that leading. For this reason, back in Romans, Paul instructs:

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. ([Rom 13:14](#))

In a similar way to Galatians, he essentially highlights the battle between the Spirit and the flesh. Here, he refers to it as putting on Christ, which simply means to live consistent with your *in-Christ, new man, righteous inner man*. But, this is only part of the battle. In reference to the flesh, he admonishes us to starve it out or make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. Or, to put to death the flesh

HOW DO YOU MORTIFY OR PUT TO DEATH THE FLESH? EIGHT STEPS

IDENTIFY AREAS OF WEAKNESS AND SIN.

Where are those places where you find it most easy to follow the desires of the flesh versus the leading of the Spirit? There may be many areas (that would not be uncommon). Simply pick the first place to begin work there. There are two basic strategies here. You could pick an area of struggle that is relatively minor and watch that be transformed, or you can pick a relatively deeper struggle and go after change in that area.

TAKE NOTE OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING IT.

Once you find the place to focus your work, begin with making circumstantial observations. Where does it often happen? With whom? How does it typically take place? How often? What key features are typically involved? At this point, you are seeking to become situationally aware. Essentially, in this step you are identifying part of the pressures or influences around you when you are tempted to sin.

EVALUATE YOUR DESIRES AND MOTIVES.

Once you begin to understand the circumstance surrounding your sin, now you want to focus on the inner man. In the midst of your circumstance or situation, what do you want? What is your goal or purpose? Do your desires and motives reflect your former *in-Adam, old man, depraved inner man* or your *in-Christ, new man, righteous inner man*? If your motive does not reflect the purposes of Christ, then repent of a poor motive and work toward a Christ-exalting, Spirit-led motive.

CONSIDER GOD'S PERSPECTIVE: YOUR POSITION IN CHRIST, YOUR IDENTITY WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST, AND GOD'S DESIRES.

Sometimes we refer to this step as preaching the Gospel to yourself. Here, you want to review all the spiritual blessings of being in Christ. Remind yourself of the comfort of the Gospel. You are adopted, indwelt, and under no condemnation. God invites you to call out to Him as your Daddy. Remember what God wants, what God has provided you, and what God promises to do in you. Remember God's character as your Dad, especially His never-ending faithfulness, dependability, holiness, and patience.

PRAY FOR GOD'S HELP THROUGH THE GOSPEL.

God promises you help. He invites you to come to Jesus for comfort, grace, and help in times of need. You are invited to cast all your anxiety and care on Him. As you consider what needs to change and how, take a few moments to pray. Tell God your burden. Explain to Him in pray how you understand it. Take the time to be honest with God in prayer. God already knows. In this step, you are admitting your dependency upon Him as well. Be sure to rehearse in prayer key elements of Gospel truth as well.

DETERMINE WHAT WOULD BEST HONOR GOD AS THE NEXT STEP.

What is the next step? What specifically does change look and sound like? Is there something you need to think differently? An attitude that needs to be changed? An action to stop? Begin? Change? Of course there may be 1,000 next steps, but you initially want to begin with the first.

MAKE A PLAN TO IMPLEMENT CHANGE.

Now that you know what change looks like (the next step), you have to determine the best strategy. Begin to think of ways to specifically make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. Determine what you need to put off and what you need to put on in replacement of it. Again, think strategy and logic. What should be first, next, then next, ect? As you see in the next step, you may need to bring wise and godly individuals into the mix to help you.

ASK FOR HELP FROM ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS.

Ask at least two people if they are willing to walk with you in your battle. Look for those who can give you spiritual wisdom, will speak in loving candor, and who hold your battle with personal integrity (no gossiping, etc.). Meet with them regularly to discuss your areas of concern, victory that you have experienced, places where you have struggled or failed, and help in waging your war against the flesh.

TAKE THE FIRST STEP IN HUMBLE ANTICIPATION OF CHANGE

Up until this point, all you have been is insightful. Now, you need to take the first step. The way you walk any distance is one step at a time. In order for you to journey down the path of Christlikeness toward future glorification in heaven is one step at a time. Therefore, determine right now to take the first step.

Next, we will discuss how to live with the balance of God's grace.

THE BALANCE OF GOD'S GRACE

We have explored the [comfort of God's grace](#), the [call of God's grace](#), the [identity of the flesh](#), and [how to put to death the flesh](#). Now, we consider the balance of God's grace. Understanding the balance of God's grace helps the follower of Christ both move forward in personal sanctification as well as when helping others in personal ministry as well.



GRACE HAS A DIRECTION

As Paul has described the work of God in [Romans 8](#), he included a two-sided sense of grace. The comfort of God's grace means that the adopted child of God no longer faces condemnation, enjoys the personal work of the Holy Spirit, and can call God "Daddy." As those who still sin, this comfort reverberates deep in the soul. Each person understands the incredible toll that personal sin can have. Moving throughout a particular day or season, personal sin weighs heavy.

The comfort of God's grace can easily slip out of one's thinking and consideration. When this happens, the Christ-follower becomes further alienated from Christ and the Gospel. Therefore, the comfort of God's grace helps provide buoyancy for daily living. We are accepted in Christ without condemnation. Praise the Lord.

However, as discussed this week, grace also has a direction. We are not simply accepted in Christ to do whatever we wish as those who are not condemned. Instead, since we walk in the Spirit as those in Christ, we now are to put to death the deeds of the flesh. In other words, grace has a call toward increasing Christlikeness, which we refer to as personal sanctification.

Therefore, we would summarize by emphasizing that grace has a direction.

Justification → Adoption → Sanctification → Glorification

As those who have been declared innocent of our sins because of the work of God in Christ (justification), we enjoy adoption as children (joint heirs with Christ) of God. As children, we strive to look more like our Savior / Brother Jesus. We diligently work to put off deeds of the flesh and walk in the Spirit (sanctification). As we do, we are encouraged in our faith, assured of eternal life, and anticipate the future day of complete redemption in heaven (glorification).

GRACE IS GRACE UNTO CHANGE

Often we simply define grace as unmerited favor from God to us. Further unpacking grace emphasizes both the mercy and grace of God. In mercy God chooses to not give us what we deserve. Our sins and rebellion demand a payment.

Paul described it so simply, “For the wages of sin is death” ([Rom 3:23](#)). However, in mercy, God allowed Jesus to be our vicarious substitute. Jesus suffered death so that we did not have to do so – mercy ([Rom 5:8-9](#)). Furthermore, God did not simply keep us from suffering under the just damnation of our sin, He also provided eternal life, a forever familial relationship with Him, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and hope. In other words, we were not simply spared from God’s wrath which we deserved, we also enjoy the richness of God’s grace ([Rom 5:15-19](#); [Eph 2:4-7](#)). We receive grace upon grace, the abundance of God’s kindness. God does more than withhold punishment (mercy), God provides for us so much more – grace.

This kind of grace is grace unto change. By grace unto change, we refer to two different aspects of grace. We are accepted just as we are at salvation; then, we grow to become more like Christ as a result.

I love how David Powlison described it as the **From – To** agenda of grace. **From** what we were – **To** what God makes us. Paul Tripp helped me initially understand this back in the late 1990s. His help has since provided me both a new outlook on daily living as well as the sanctification process.

THE BALANCE OF GOD'S GRACE – IN RELATIONSHIP TO EACH OTHER

We desire to understand God’s grace in balance. If we only think of the comfort of God’s grace, we miss that grace has a direction and agenda. If we only consider the call of God’s grace, we end up being legalistic, list-oriented, and evaluating our relationship with God almost exclusively by our spiritual resume of service. Yet, both are necessary. In our struggle to live every day as a Christ-exalting, God-honoring, Spirit-enabled adopted child of God, we need the comfort of God’s grace when we face temptation and sin.

Further, as we rejoice in the comfort of God's grace, we need the call of grace to keep us on agenda, moving in our sanctification, and using our spiritual energy to walk in the Spirit and by love serve others.

As we live together as brothers and sisters in Christ who enjoy all the benefits of relationship in the body of Christ, there is work for us to do personally and corporately. As recipients of God's grace, we become stewards of that grace. Thus, we need to offer others the same grace we have received. Let me suggest four cautions when we offer others the same grace we have received from God.

EXPLAINING GOD'S GRACE AS COMFORT WITHOUT INCLUDING THE CALL OF GOD'S GRACE.

As we serve others, we do them a disservice where and when we fail to include the call of God's grace with the comfort of it. God did not accept us without an agenda. We and those we serve must embrace the forward call of grace while rejoicing in the comfort of grace.

EMPHASIZING THE CALL OF GOD'S GRACE WITHOUT THE FOUNDATION OF THE COMFORT OF GOD'S GRACE.

We likewise want to be careful here as well. We do a disservice to others when we explain grace as a call to change without resting that call on the rich foundation of the comfort of God's grace. While we seek to change, we do so as adopted children of God who are no longer condemned.

CONSIDERING GOD'S GRACE WITH ANOTHER PERSON WITHOUT OFFERING THEM HELP TO EMBRACE THE COMFORT OF IT AND MOVE FORWARD IN THE CALL OF GOD'S GRACE.

As we seek to help others understand grace, we are not simply “explainers” or “teachers” of grace. We must also roll up our shirt sleeves and help them embrace it in life-lived. We walk with the other person along the pathway of sanctification.

ACCEPTING THE WONDERFUL COMFORT OF GOD'S GRACE FOR US PERSONALLY WHILE JUDGING OTHERS SIMPLY THROUGH THE CALL OF GOD'S GRACE.

We must be careful here as well. Along the pathway of life, it can be easy at times to understand and desperately depend upon God's grace for our personal sins and weaknesses. We rejoice in the comfort of God's rich and bountiful grace for us. In fact, we may describe God as kind, persevering, and so patient with us as we continue to live imperfect Christian lives. Yet, when we look at others, we judge them through the call of God's grace. When others struggle in their own weakness and sin, we look at them failing to see our own weaknesses and sin. We accept God's comfort for our sin while emphasizing the failure of the other person to walk consistent with the call of God's grace in his or her own life.

The balance of God's grace includes implications for our own walk with God and how we see, teach, and help others with God's marvelous grace in their lives as well. May we embrace living a [Romans 8](#) lifestyle with God in Christ through the Spirit.

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