

The High Calling

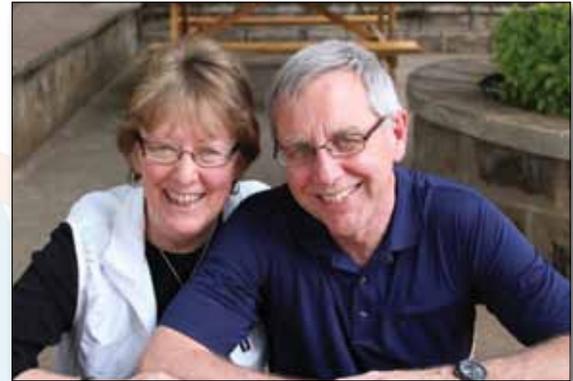
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The Gap

By Stan Key

Entitling this issue of *The High Calling* “The Gap” may cause some to think that we are promoting a trendy clothing store at the mall. No! We have something much nobler in mind. The articles in this issue all deal with that troubling chasm that exists in our lives between what we are and what we ought to be. This gap between the *is* and the *ought* provokes not only existential angst as we wrestle with our besetting sins and shortcomings but also intense doctrinal debate. Trying to explain theologically why those who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and filled with the sanctifying Spirit continue to live in spiritual mediocrity is more challenging than you may first imagine.

Although there is a gap that separates unbelievers from God, that is *not* our focus in these articles. Rather, this



issue is devoted to that yawning chasm that separates *believers* from victorious Christian living. Who among us is not painfully aware that we often fail to live up to our calling as Christians? Why does sin remain in our lives when it has been forgiven? If the Spirit is in us, then why can't we find victory? Why do we do what we don't want to do and not do what we do want to do? Such questions demonstrate the reality of the gap.

Continued on page 3

Pig Pen Christians

By Hubert P. Harriman and Barry L. Callen



Harriman



Callen

This article is a shortened portion of the final chapter of a book written by Hubert P. Harriman and Barry L. Callen entitled *Color Me Holy* (Glendora, CA: Aldersgate Press, 2013. pp. 119–137). It is available also as a tract from The Francis Asbury Society.

It is alarming to realize how friendly Christians have gotten with sin. Until there is a deep repugnancy and revolt against its presence in our lives, we will continue to live on a lower plain. It is disheartening to listen to theologians and want-to-be theologians decry bad living, even making a case for the need for holy living, and in the same breath speak of “sinning saints” as something inevitable and thus acceptable. We have convinced ourselves of our inability, even with God's assisting grace, to give God total control of all aspects of our lives. Our default position is that continuing sin is a natural and common failing, an unchangeable result of the fall of Adam and Eve, a weakness that is both predictable and expected even among the most sincere Christian believers. The truth of the matter is that when we accept

victory as impossible, failure is inevitable—and what is inevitable is predictable. And so, “we sin in word, thought and deed every day.”

Dallas Willard writes, “Should we not at least consider the possibility that this poor result is not in spite of what we teach and how we teach, but precisely because of it?... The current gospel becomes a ‘gospel of sin management’ (forgiveness is all that matters). Transformation of life and character is no part of the redemptive message” (*The Divine Conspiracy*. New York: Harper-Collins, 1998. pp. 39, 38).

Is this acceptable? Is this all there is? We need holiness to shine again!

Charles Shultz, in one of his famous *Peanuts* cartoons, shows Pig Pen and Schroeder playing together in the dirt with their toy trucks. Pig Pen says, “I think it's time to go home and take a shower.” Schroeder responds with interest, saying, “Going to get all cleaned up, eh, Pig Pen?” “Well,” says Pig Pen, “I've learned never to

Continued on page 8

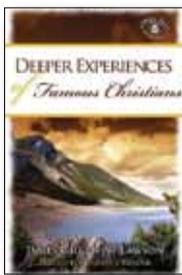
A Cloud of Witnesses

By Dallas Willard (1935–2013)



Dallas Willard was a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern California perhaps best known for his writings on Christian spiritual formation. In this heart-warming article, Willard testifies to the influence of “deeper life” teaching on his own Christian walk. This article is abridged from chapter 19, “When God Moves In: My Experience with Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians” taken from the book *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006. pp 214–20).

The one book other than the Bible that has most influenced me is a little-known book by James Gilchrist Lawson called *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*. It was first published in 1911 by Warner Press of Anderson, Indiana, and was most recently republished in 2000 by Barbour Publishing of Uhrichsville, Ohio.



From a literary or scholarly point of view, the book is of little distinction, which perhaps explains why it is not widely known and seems never to have been widely read or influential. But, given to me in 1954 by a college classmate, Billy Glenn Dudley, it entered my life at a very appropriate time, and, perhaps even more importantly, it opened to me inexhaustible riches of Christ and his people through the ages.

The book begins with discussions of biblical characters, from Enoch to the Apostle Paul. Then a section is devoted to outstanding Christians of the early centuries of the church, and, finally, a section (very brief) to “Reformed Churches” and the Reformation period.



Savonarola

The first individual selected by Lawson for a separate chapter was Girolamo Savonarola (born 1452), a major precursor of the Protestant Reformation. What most struck me about Savonarola—and I truly was *smitten*—was his drive toward *holiness*, toward a different and a supernatural kind of life—a life “from above”—and his readiness to sacrifice all to achieve such a life. Indeed, *this* is what stood out in all of the people Lawson dealt with in his book.

The experiences of these people did from time to time have the character of a filling or baptism, but more often than not they were moments of *realization*, of extreme clarity of insight into profound truth, together with

floods of feeling arising therefrom. These experiences often were what George Fox called “openings,” and they went right to the bone and changed the life forever.

Thus, of John Bunyan, Lawson writes, “Bunyan’s complete deliverance from his dreadful doubts and despair came one day while he was passing through a field. Suddenly the sentence fell upon his soul, ‘Thy righteousness is in heaven.’ By the eye of faith he seemed to see Jesus, his righteousness, at God’s right hand. He says, ‘Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed; I was loosed from my afflictions and irons; my temptations also fled away; so that, from that time, those dreadful Scriptures of God left off to trouble me! Now went I also home rejoicing, for the grace and love of God.’”



Bunyan

I think the book’s effect on me will be better understood if we indicate the individuals singled out for chapter-length treatment. After Savonarola came Madam Guyon, François Fénelon, George Fox, John Bunyan, John Wesley, George Whitefield, John Fletcher, Christmas Evans, Lorenzo Dow, Peter Cartwright, Charles G. Finney, Billy Bray, Elder Jacob Knapp, George Müller, A. B. Earle, Frances Ridley Havergal, A. J. Gordon, D. L. Moody, General William Booth, and, in the final chapter, “Other Famous Christians” (Thomas à Kempis, William Penn, Dr. Adam Clarke, William Bramwell, William Carvosso, David Brainerd, Edward Payson, Dorothea Trudel, Pastor John Christoph Blumhardt, Phoebe Palmer, and P. P. Bliss).

Now, clearly this is a very selective and not well-balanced list of “famous Christians.” But that was not something that bothered me as I took up the book and studied it. In fact, that these were, by and large, quite ordinary people only impressed upon me all the more that the amazing life into which they were manifestly led could be *mine*. I had been raised in religious circles of very fine people where the emphasis had been exclusively on faithfulness to right beliefs and upon bringing others to profess those beliefs. Now, that, of course, is of central importance. But when that *alone* is emphasized, the result is a dry and powerless religious life, no matter how sincere, and one is constantly vulnerable to temptations of all kinds.

Therefore, to see actual invasions of human life by the presence and action of God, right up into the twentieth century, greatly encouraged me to believe that the life and promises given in the person of Christ and in

Continued on page 10

“It was clear that these ‘famous Christians’... were seeking the Lord, his Kingdom, and his holiness (Matt. 6:33).”

The Bible introduces us to numerous people who illustrate the reality of this chasm between what is and what ought to be:

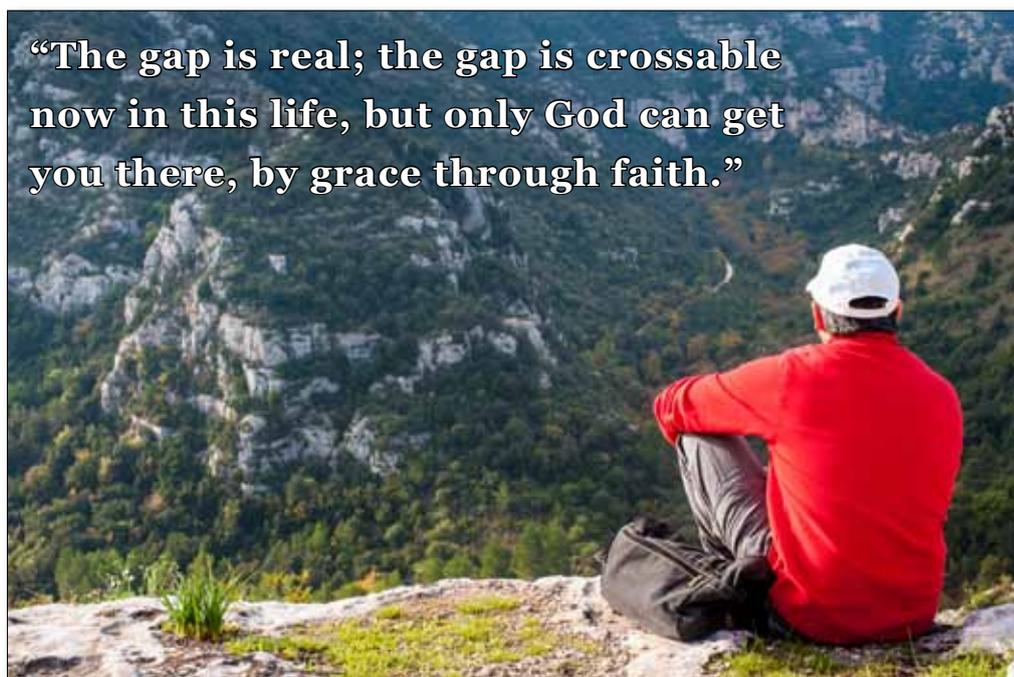
- *The Rich Young Ruler* did his best to keep the commandments. He came running and knelt at Jesus's feet in an act of surrender. Yet he knew something was missing. "What do I still lack?" he groaned (Matt. 19:20). Though kneeling in surrender at Jesus's feet, he was haunted by the gap that separated him from where he knew he ought to be.
- *Apollos* was one of the most gifted preachers of the New Testament era. He was "competent in the Scriptures" and "fervent in spirit." He "spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus." And yet Priscilla and Aquila rightly discerned the gap between his experience and his theology. Therefore, they took him aside and "explained to him the way of God more accurately." (Acts 18:24–26)
- It would be difficult to find a more exemplary church in the New Testament than *Thessalonica*. Yet Paul discerned the gap that separated their current state from where they ought to be. This observation prompted him to write them a letter announcing his plans to visit them "and supply what [was] lacking" in their faith (I Thess. 3:10).
- *Paul* himself experienced a season when he was painfully aware of the gap that separated him from the victorious life he knew he should be experiencing: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ...I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out... Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:15, 18, 24).

Both experientially and theologically, this gap is difficult to handle. Various responses to this troubling reality have been proposed down through the ages. In the contemporary evangelical church, there seem to be three popular options.

First, some have denied that the gap even exists. "Gap? What gap?" they seem to say. "Jesus was the perfect sacrifice who accomplished a perfect salvation. When he shouted 'It is finished' from the cross, it meant there was nothing more to add. We're clothed in *his* righteousness. Underneath, we're still dirty, rotten, no-good bums, but praise the Lord, when God looks at us, he sees the holy garments and not the unholy mess underneath." The

trouble with those who deny the gap and rest in a positional righteousness is that such a belief often results in reassuring people *in* their sins rather than announcing deliverance *from* their sins! Claiming to be righteous "in Christ" while in reality continuing to live in sin is confusing at best and irrational at worst. This kind of talk easily can lead either to hypocrisy on the one hand or spiritual bi-polar disorder on the other.

Others respond to the gap by telling us we should just try harder. These people don't deny that the gap is there, but they respond by trying to cross it in their own strength. "Get a running start so you can jump farther," they tell us. "You'll get there one day if you keep trying." But making ourselves holy by our own efforts is as likely to happen as jumping successfully across the Grand Canyon if we just try harder. Those who seek to cross the gap by



"The gap is real; the gap is crossable now in this life, but only God can get you there, by grace through faith."

<http://nataliaalejanara.deviantart.com/art/Crack-on-the-earth-texture-311722983>

their own efforts either become self-righteous Pharisees or give up in despair. The chasm is just too broad. Ironically, though many evangelicals today are quick to profess their belief in justification by faith, it is evident that they believe in sanctification by works!

A third response to the gap is those who conclude that it is simply impossible to be holy in this life and thus defer the question to the moment of death. "We'll never deal with the gap in this life," they say. "Get over this naïve idea that we can be holy. Accept the fact that our sins will define us until the day we die. When we get to heaven, *then*—and only then—can we be holy." The logic of this position is self-evident. However, delaying holiness until death has the effect of normalizing sin in the here and now. It makes Romans 7 a picture of the normal Christian life. Such a theology gives us permission to live in the land of spiritual mediocrity or even blatant sin.

Continued on page 11

Power Over Sin

By Keith Drury

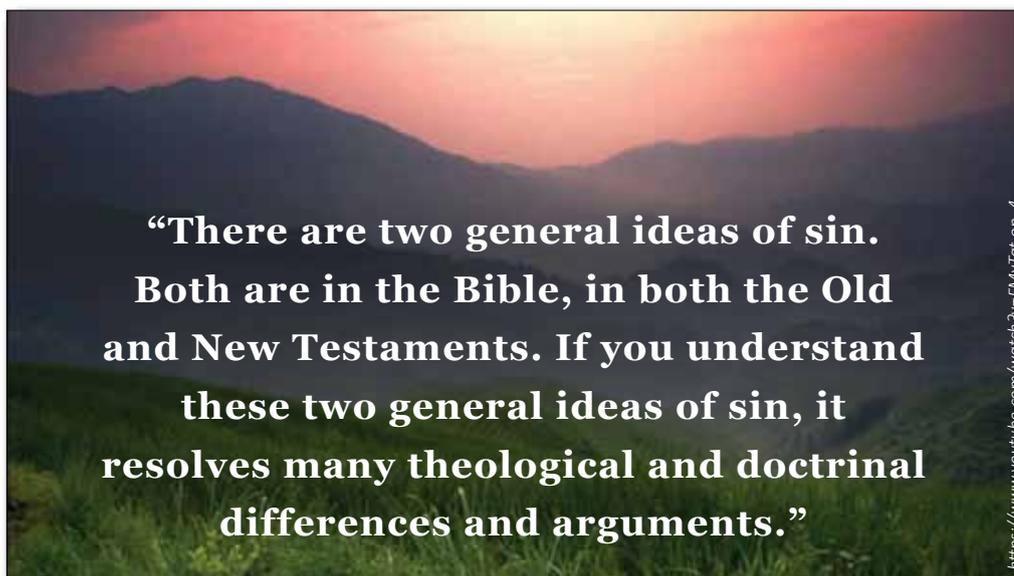


For many years a leader in The Wesleyan Church, Drury wrote a book, *Holiness for Ordinary People*, that continues to minister to honest seekers. This article is an excerpt from Chapter 6, “God’s Part in Sanctification” (Fishers, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1994. pp. 75–77).

Does God deliver me from all sin forever? Will I be absolutely perfect from that moment onward? Is this instant Christlikeness? Microwave perfection? Is there no more room for growth? Is this “sinless perfection”? There is more confusion and misunderstanding over this one point than any other holiness teaching.

There are two general ideas of sin. Both are in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. If you understand these two general ideas of sin, it resolves many theological and doctrinal differences and arguments. Here are the two ideas:

IDEA 1: *Sin is purposeful disobedience.* This idea of sin focuses on intentions. Did you know it was wrong and still you did it? Then it is sin. Did you “decide” to do it?



Or say it? Or think it? If your will chose to disobey, then you have sinned. You sin when you purposely disobey God. Sin is knowing it is wrong, yet doing it anyway. Sin is knowing God wants me to do it, yet refusing to do it anyway. Premeditated. Purposeful. Intentional. Sin is willful disobedience.

IDEA 2: *Sin is falling short of Christlikeness.* This idea of sin focuses on God’s standard of holiness, not human intentions. God’s standard is the “law of perfect love.” That is, anything that falls short of the mark of perfect Christlikeness is sin. Any word, thought, or deed that is less than Christlike is sin. Any unsaid word, unthought thought, undone deed that falls short of what Christ

would say, think, or do is sin. “Falling short.” The thought, word, or deed could be accidental or not. It does not matter. The standard is fixed, and any deviation from it is sin. This second idea of sin includes voluntary or purposeful transgressions, plus the thousands of accidental times I fall short of God’s perfection.

Can you see how these two ideas of sin affect a Christian’s theology? For instance, a person with the second idea of sin can easily say, “I sin every day in word, thought, and deed.” That person would be right (given the second definition of sin.) When we say God can enable us to “live above sin,” we are speaking about the first idea of sin—purposeful disobedience—not the second idea. Full sanctification is the reality of living in total obedience to all known commands from God. It is the power to stop willfully sinning against the Lord. It is the power to obey. It is not the power to be absolutely perfect in the sense of absolute Christlikeness. I still will fall short of his perfect standard (Idea 2).

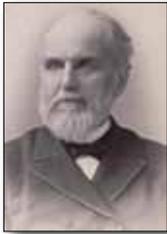
This idea should not be strange to anyone who is a parent. If a thirteen-month-old child knocks over her milk because of her immature clumsiness, will she get disciplined? No. She clearly falls far short of the perfect adult standard of table manners. But no sensible parent would punish a child for this. The parent overlooks this behavior because of the child’s stage of development. The child is declared “blameless.”

However, suppose you have an eight-year-old son and he is fooling around at the dinner table. You try to correct him. You give him several warnings to straighten up, but he keeps giggling and kicking his brother under the table. You warn, “Watch out, or you’ll spill your milk.” Just then, he looks up into your eyes, and a brazen look comes over his face. You are aghast as he deliberately reaches out his forefinger and knocks over his glass of milk. Milk splatters everywhere and begins dripping onto your dining room carpet. Now, how will you react to this deliberate rebellious action? He’d better run! This is the distinction between the two ideas of sin.

So, when we emphasize the power-over-sin side of entire sanctification, we mean that God is able to cleanse you from the inclination to disobey him. It then becomes possible to live without purposeful willful sin. This is “obedient living.” ✨

A Surprising Source of Help

By Daniel Steele (1824–1914)



Daniel Steele was a pastor, college professor, college administrator, and an influential voice in the 19th century holiness movement. The following essay (abridged and slightly edited) is taken from his book *Milestone Papers* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, first published in 1878. pp. 41–72). Entitled “The Tense Readings of the Greek New Testament,”

Steele convincingly demonstrates how the Bible calls believers to cross over “the gap” in a decisive, once-for-all act of faith. Though technical in nature, this article is revolutionary in application.

So that the reader may understand our argument we will give the following definitions: The *present* tense denotes what is now going on and indicates a continuous, repeated, or habitual action, as “I am writing.” The *imperfect* tense denotes the same continuity or repetition in the past, as, “I was writing.” The *aorist* tense expresses the simple momentary occurrence of an action in past time; a singleness of act, as “I wrote.” The *perfect* tense denotes an action as already finished at the present time, as, “I have written.”

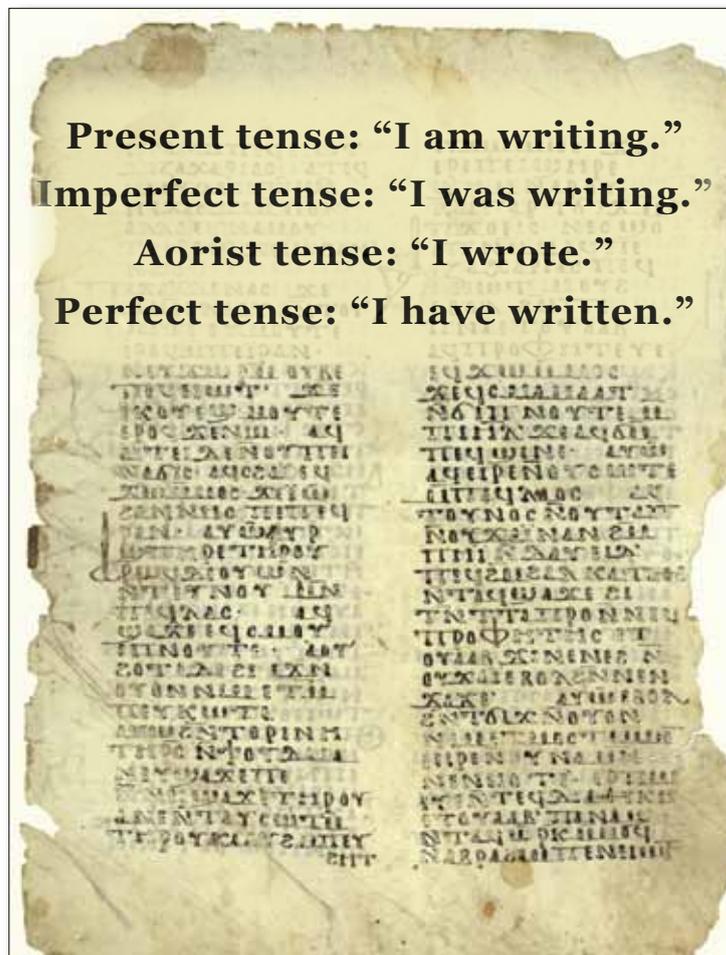
Now notice that all exhortations to prayer and to spiritual endeavor in the resistance of temptation are usually expressed in the present tense, which strongly indicates persistence.

- Matthew 7:7—Keep asking [*present*] and it shall be given you; seek [*present*] again and again, and ye shall find; knock [*present*] persistently and it shall be opened unto you.
- James 1:5–6—If any of you lack wisdom, let him frequently ask [*present*] of God....
- Hebrews 11:6—For he that persistently comes [*present*] to God must believe [*aorist*] that he exists, and that he is becoming a rewarder to those who diligently and repeatedly seek him.

The next fact that impresses us in our investigation is the presence of the present tense whenever the conditions of final salvation are stated. A careful study of the Greek will convince the student that it is a great mistake to teach that a single act of faith furnishes a person with a

paid-up, non-forfeitable policy, assuring the holder that he will inherit eternal life, or that a single energy of faith secures a through-ticket for heaven. The Greek tenses show that faith is a state, a habit of mind, into which the believer enters at justification.

- John 1:12—But as many as received [*aorist*] him [*by a momentary and definite act*], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that are believing [*present*] perseveringly on his name.
- John 6:54—Whoever eats [*present, keeps eating*] my flesh and drinks [*keeps drinking*] my blood, has eternal life.
- Romans 1:16—For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who perseveringly believes [*present*].



But when it comes to consider the work of purification in the believer’s soul, by the power of the Holy Spirit, both in the new birth and in entire sanctification, we find that the *aorist* is almost uniformly used. This tense, according to the best New Testament grammarians, never indicates a continuous, habitual, or repeated act, but one which is momentary and done once for all. Here are a few illustrative passages:

- Matthew 23:25–26—Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for you are constantly cleansing [*present*] the outside of the cup and the platter, but within are full of extortion and injustice. You blind Pharisee, first cleanse [*aorist*] at a stroke the inside of the cup and of the platter, that the outside may instantly become [*aorist*] clean also.
- John 17:17—Sanctify [*aorist*] them once for all through thy truth...
- Romans 6:13—Do not render [*present*] repeatedly your members as instruments of unrighteous to sin; but render [*aorist*] by a final act of unreserved surrender, once for all, yourselves to God as alive from the dead.

Continued on page 11

The Dangers of Holiness

By John Oswalt



Professor of Old Testament and long-time member of the FAS team, Dr. Oswalt reminds us of the dangers of holiness. Just as there were giants to face when the Hebrews crossed the Jordan and entered Canaan, so there are dangers for those who have crossed over “the gap” and entered into a deeper experience of grace. In the final chapter of his book on the deeper life, Dr. Oswalt warns of some of these dangers. (Excerpt taken from Chapter 13, “Walking in Holiness,” in *Called to Be Holy*. Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury Press, 1999. pp. 185–194.)

One of the dangers for those of us who seek to live a life that is truly holy is *perfectionism*. We listen to inspiring speakers and we read biographies of holy people, and we become convinced that they never failed or fell short of their goals (unlike us). The result is that we live with a constant sense of guilt and condemnation. We become increasingly fixated on ourselves and on our performance as holy people instead of on the Lord Jesus. This is to slip back into a self-oriented way of living!

Coupled with perfectionism is *legalism*. How do I know I am holy? Well, because I do not use addictive substance, or because I do not dress in immodest or ostentatious ways, or because I fast and pray a lot and am often in church. [But] holiness is first of all a matter of the heart and a matter of relationship. Holiness is a love relationship, and any attempt to quantify it will change it from the saving, freeing relationship it is intended to be into one of legalities and judgments.

That introduces the third danger: *judgmentalism*, which is a concomitant of the previous two problems. We set high standards for ourselves and those standards involve certain kinds of behavior. Of necessity, this demands measurement, and measurement means passing judgment. We begin to become increasingly judgmental of others. *Our* failures are not so bad, because *theirs* are so much worse.

All of this leads to yet a further danger. This is the danger of *privatism*; that is, making my holiness strictly personal and interior. It has to do with my not telling lies, my not showing anger or impatience, my not cheating, my having regular devotions, my giving a significant portion of my income to God’s work, etc. The danger is seen in the pronoun. That pronoun is *my*. Our enemy is not very

particular about the ways in which he can get us to focus upon ourselves. He would prefer to do it by getting us enslaved to the grosser sins of the flesh. But if he cannot do it that way, he is perfectly willing to do so by getting us to focus upon our piety.

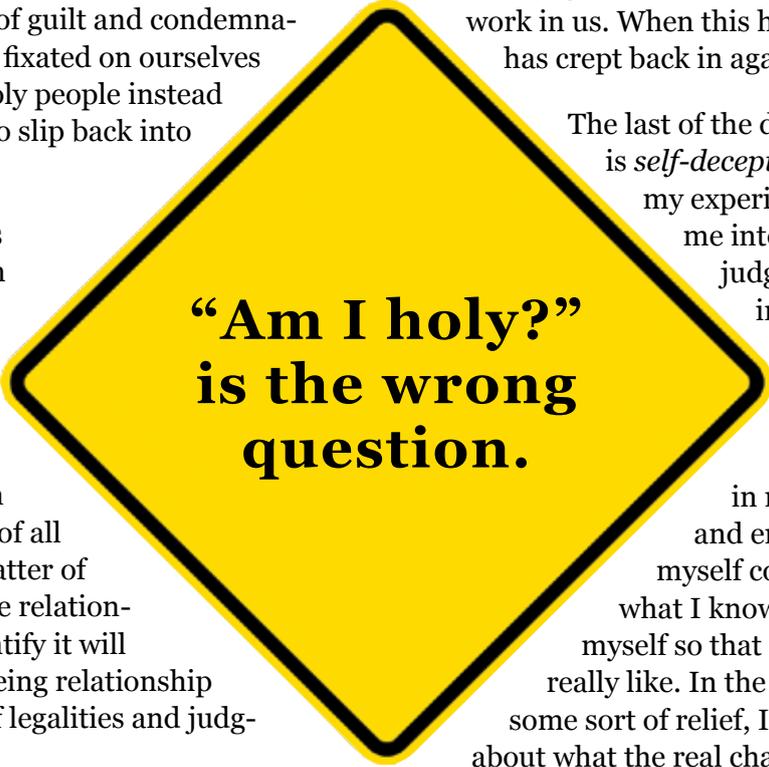
This focusing upon our piety leads to another danger: *introspection*. We begin to ask whether we really *feel* holy or not, whether what we just did was really motivated by love or not, whether it was sinful to have had that feeling or not. We fall into a habit of self-examination and self-doubt. The problem comes when the self-examination begins to become morbid. The evidence of that morbidity is twofold: when we cannot stop examining ourselves and when it begins to make us lose our confidence in God’s work in us. When this happens, self-centeredness has crept back in again.

The last of the dangers I want to mention is *self-deception*. What happens when my experience of God’s holiness leads me into perfectionism, legalism, judgmentalism, privatism, and introspection? I end up with a burden too heavy to carry. I have set standards for myself which are beyond what the Holy Spirit can do in me at my stage of spiritual and emotional maturity. I find myself continually falling short of what I know I should be. I withdraw into myself so that others will not see what I am really like. In the end, in order to give myself some sort of relief, I begin to deceive myself about what the real character of my life is. I begin to excuse myself and to say that what someone else might call a sin really was not.

So how can we avoid these dangers?

Above everything else, we must remember that holiness is a relationship and not an “it.” When we think of holiness as a thing in itself, something to be acquired or attained, as the Pharisees did, we immediately invite trouble. Holiness is a byproduct of a relationship. In a word, holiness is Jesus. So, “Am I holy?” is the wrong question. The questions are: “Is Jesus the sole, reigning Lord of my life? Is Jesus’s mind being created in me? Is Jesus being glorified by my behavior? Are people being drawn to Jesus because of my life?”

Continued on page 11



The Sanctification of Eustace Clarence Scrubb

By C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)



Sometimes an illustration or a picture helps teach a truth that an abstract doctrinal description has difficulty conveying. In this sense, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the 7-volume work by C. S. Lewis, is an amazing piece of systematic theology! In the 5th volume, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (New York: HarperCollins, 1980. pp. 106–112), Lewis describes the transformation

of an egotistical, self-centered, pompous little jerk named Eustace Clarence Scrubb. While visiting a deserted island, Eustace discovered a cave full of treasure. Wanting to hoard the wealth all for himself, his greed turned him into a dragon! This was the background for his life-changing encounter with the lion Aslan (the Christ-figure in the Narnia stories). The following is excerpted from Eustace's explanation of what happened.

“Well, anyway, I looked up and saw the very last thing I expected: a huge lion coming slowly towards me... I was terribly afraid of it. You may think that, being a dragon, I could have knocked any lion out easily enough. But it wasn't that kind of fear... Well, it came closer up to me and looked straight into my eyes and told me to follow it... It led me a long way to the top of a mountain. And on the top of this mountain there was a garden—trees and fruit and everything. In the middle of it there was a well. The water was as clear as anything and I thought if I could get in there and bathe it would ease the pain in my leg. But the lion told me I must undress first.

I was just going to say that I couldn't undress because I hadn't any clothes on when I suddenly thought that dragons are snaky sort of things and snakes can cast their skins. Oh, of course, thought I, that's what the lion means. So I started scratching myself and my scales began coming off all over the place. And then I scratched a little deeper and instead of just scales coming off here

and there, my whole skin started peeling off beautifully, like it does after an illness, or as if I was a banana. In a minute or two I just stepped out of it. I could see it lying there beside me, looking rather nasty. It was a most lovely feeling. So I started to go down into the well for my bathe.

But just as I was going to put my foot into the water I looked down and saw that it was all hard and rough and wrinkled and scaly just as it had been before. Oh, that's all right, said I, it only means I had another smaller suit on underneath the first one, and I'll have to get out of it too. So I scratched and tore again and this under skin peeled off beautifully and out I stepped and left it lying beside the other one and went down to the well for my bathe.

Well, exactly the same thing happened again. And I thought to myself, oh dear, how ever many skins have I got to take off? So I scratched away for the third time and got off a third skin, just like the two others, and stepped out of it. But as soon as I looked at myself in the water I knew it had been no good.

Then the lion said—but I don't know if it spoke—“You will have to let me undress you.” I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now. So I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it.

The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off. You know—if you've ever picked the scab of a sore place. It hurts like billy-oh but it is such fun to see it coming away...

Continued on page 9



expect too much from a shower. I have to be satisfied if it just settles the dust.”



Must we be Pig Pen Christians with our sins forgiven while more sin always collects for the next shower time? Or are we like the little fellow who was being scrubbed by a mother who

insisted on getting him clean? He cried, “Mommy, that hurts!” “I’ve got to get you clean,” she explained. To which he replied, “Couldn’t you just dust me?” So many of us think that God will be satisfied with—maybe is only capable of—a temporary dusting of our sinful lives.

One of the great tragedies of our day is that we have made sin bigger than God in our thinking. We have made it both omnipotent and omnipresent, thinking that it is inevitable in our lives. Sadly, many Christians have accepted this kind of reductionist thinking. They are like the fish that was the subject of a scientific experiment.

A fish was placed in a sizeable fish tank with full access to the food-rich tank. After a time, the researchers removed all food and put a glass wall down the middle of the tank. Letting the fish get very hungry, they then placed food on the opposite side of the glass from where the fish was. The fish naturally went after the food, but was immediately brought to a sudden halt when slamming against

the invisible glass. The fish tried again and again, only to be rebuffed every time by the glass. Finally, it went back to a corner of the tank and just floated there. Then came the point of the experiment. The researchers removed the dividing glass and put in more food, but the fish just stayed in the corner. The food was moved closer to the fish, but the fish just stayed in its corner, convinced that food was still impossible to reach. Death became inevitable.

Is this the sad scene in today’s church? Christ has come. The dividing wall between sinful humans and God has been removed. The riches of God’s redeeming and transforming grace have been poured out and are within reach. And yet people just have quit trying to eat and mature spiritually because they have become convinced that they cannot have that for which their hearts hunger. To such deprived believers we say this: Don’t quit reaching! Don’t quit hoping! Satan wants us to believe that the glass wall is still there as the great impossible in your life. Make another turn. Try one more time. God has removed the partition!

Barack Obama entered into his first term of office as president of the United States on the theme “Yes, we can!” We contend that, when it comes to the sin problem, we need to alter that phrase by changing one word, and then placing God back into the highest of all offices on the theme, “Yes, God can!”

The Apostle Paul raises this possibility to a new level, saying, “We have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in

newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.... Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:4–6, 11 NASB).

The shift from death to life is the path to Christian holiness. We are to be more than forgiven of past sin. We are to be made new creatures in Christ, the forgiven who are actively walking on the road of holiness, now alive to God in Christ Jesus. This incredible new life provided by God’s grace had to be what John the Baptist was feeling when he saw Jesus coming to him that dramatic day by the



“Must we be Pig Pen Christians with our sins forgiven while more sin always collects for the next shower time?”

Continued on page 9

Jordan River. Seeing Jesus, John exclaimed what ought to be our Christian mantra message: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). YES, GOD CAN!

God wants to reverse the “great impossible” that has dominated our vision and determined our theology for too long. God wants us to know and pursue holiness as a doctrine to be believed, an experience to be received, a message to be declared, and a way of life to be demonstrated before a hungry world.

This holiness is not something *out of* this world. It is holiness *in* this world. We are not talking about strange saintly figures lost in unreality with halos over their heads, but normal human beings dealing with all the nitty-gritty issues of life. Sin is not “normal” in God’s world. The grace-full colors of God are ready and able to redesign discolored lives in real time and in real circumstances—making human beings more fully human as God made us originally, “crowned with glory and honor” (Ps. 8:5). Holiness does not result in artificial super Christians, but in humble believers who have taken hold of God’s promise. What promise? That God will keep his children each moment of every day, showering them with divine holiness and making them witnesses to God’s transforming power.

Will you join us in this prayer for the church as a whole? Will you personalize it and make it yours? God is wanting to answer your prayer.

Abba, Father, please cleanse the canvas of our hearts, removing the dark colors of sin and self that cloud our lives, and sanctify us with the brightness of your pure colors so that our lives might glow with a testimony of your presence and beauty, that all who come in contact with us might taste and see that it is good and give you glory for lives lived in your holiness and with your righteousness. Amen! ✨

The Sanctification of Eustace... *continued from page 7*

Well, he peeled the beastly stuff right off—just as I thought I’d done it myself the other three times, only they hadn’t hurt—and there it was lying on the grass: only ever so much thicker, and darker, and more knob-bly looking than the others had been. And there was I as smooth and soft as a peeled switch and smaller than I had been. Then he caught hold of me—I didn’t like that much for I was very tender underneath now that I’d no skin on—and threw me into the water. It smarted like anything but only for a moment. After that it became perfectly delicious and as soon as I started swimming and splashing I found that all the pain had gone from my arm. And then I saw why. I’d turned into a boy again....”

The Gap

By Stan Key

I’d almost given up all hope
Of finding ways to help me cope
With this great chasm, broad and deep,
That breaks my heart and makes me weep;
This gap that’s there for all to see
Between what is... and ought to be.

On one side, Lord, I see Your power,
That gives me grace for every hour:
Your blood that cleanses from all sin,
Your Spirit giving strength within,
Your Word that guides me in the way,
And feeds my soul for each new day.

But here on this side, Lord, I see
An opposite reality.
For when I try to do what’s right
I find the will... but not the might.
This inner turmoil makes me sore,
I am a walking civil war!

Is this gap forever there?
Mocking me with empty air?
If Your Gospel, Lord, is true,
Is this all that grace can do?
Humbly now, I must confess;
Though I’m Yours, I’m still a mess!

Then You turned to me and said,
“Victory comes when you are dead.
You will never be set free
Till you’re crucified with Me.
Then My power you’ll understand,
And this cursed gap be spanned.”

The gap today is still a part
Of truths that often break my heart;
But now its breadth is not so wide,
And crossing to the other side,
Is simpler; for I’ve found the key:
“More of Him and less of me.”

“I think you’ve seen Aslan,” said Edmund....

It would be nice, and fairly nearly true, to say that “from that time forth Eustace was a different boy.” To be strictly accurate, he began to be a different boy. He had relapses. There were still many days when he could be very tiresome. But most of those I shall not notice. The cure had begun. ✨

A Plain Account of the Other Side of the Chasm

By John Wesley (1703–1791)



Historically, Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* may be the most important Protestant statement ever written on "the gap," explaining how to get across and defining what it's like on the other side. Essentially, Wesley's emphasis was on a perfection of love, not a perfection of performance. He insisted that the means to get to the other side was by grace through faith, not

by works. A short excerpt from the final paragraphs of this lengthy classic is included below (*A Plain Account of Christian Perfection as Believed and Taught by the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, from the Year 1725 to the year 1777. The Works of John Wesley.* Volume XI. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1978. pp 366-446).

In the year 1764, upon a review of the whole subject, I wrote down the sum of what I had observed in the following short propositions:

1. There is such a thing as perfection; for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture.
2. It is not so early as justification; for justified persons are to "go on to perfection" (Heb. 6:1).
3. It is not so late as death; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect (Phil. 3:15).
4. It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone.
5. It does not make a man infallible: none is infallible, while he remains in the body.
6. Is it sinless? It is not worthwhile to contend for a term. It is "salvation from sin."
7. It is "perfect love" (I John 4:18). This is the essence of it; its properties, or inseparable fruits, are, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks (I Thess. 5:16–18).
8. It is improvable. It is so far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase, that one perfect in love may grow in grace far swifter than he did before.
9. It is omissible, capable of being lost; of which we have numerous instances. But we were not thoroughly convinced of this till five or six years ago.
10. It is constantly both preceded and followed by a gradual work.
11. But is it in itself instantaneous or not? In examining this, let us go on step by step. An instantaneous change has been wrought in some believers: none can deny this. Since that change, they enjoy perfect love; they feel this, and this alone; they rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. Now this is all that I mean by perfection. But in some this change was not instantaneous. They did not perceive the instant when it was wrought. It is often

difficult to perceive the instant when a man dies; yet there is an instant in which life ceases. And if ever sin ceases, there must be a last moment of its existence, and a first moment of our deliverance from it. But some may counter: "Sin is only suspended in them; it is not destroyed." Call it which you please. They are all love today; and they take no thought for the morrow. "But this doctrine has been much abused." So has that of justification by faith. But that is no reason for giving up either this or any other scriptural doctrine. "When you wash your child," as one speaks, "throw away the water, but do not throw away the child." ✱

A Cloud of Witnesses continued from page 2

scripture were meant for us today.... It was clear that these "famous Christians" were not seeking experiences, not even experiences of the filling or baptism of the Spirit. They were seeking the Lord, his Kingdom, and his holiness (Matt. 6:33).

Now, "deeper" also meant "broader." Lawson was remarkably unbiased in his selection of the "famous Christians," and this taught me a lot. The individuals selected for presentation ranged very broadly as to cultural and denominational connections. There were a lot of Baptists in the group, which was my own denominational background. That helped me. But there were also Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Salvation Army, and others. Seeing that the experience of God in the calling to holiness and power did not respect sectarian boundaries taught me that I should disregard a lot of things that make for doctrinal and practical insularity in others and place no weight upon them for myself.

It taught me, in Paul's lovely image, to distinguish the treasure from the vessel (II Cor. 4:7) and to attend to the treasure: Christ living in the individual life, and the individual living into obedience to Christ. The blessing of God has a natural tendency among men to create denominations, but denominations have no tendency to uniquely foster the blessing of God on anyone.

I never cease to be thankful for James Gilchrist Lawson and his little book. It came to me at the right time and helped me to see the actual presence of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom and Spirit in the real life of real people. Any reader should take from the reading of this book the simple but profound truth that they too can know by experience the truths of Christ and his Kingdom that are set forth in the Bible: that if with all their heart they truly seek God, they will be found and claimed by him (Jer. 29:13). This is what human life is for. ✱

- Romans 12:1—I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present [*aorist*] your bodies as a living sacrifice [*as a single act, never needing to be repeated*].
- Ephesians 4:22,24—Put off [*aorist*] the old man [*in one and decisive act*]... and put on [*aorist*] the new man....
- Galatians 2:19–20—For I through the law died [*aorist*] quite suddenly to the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified [*perfect*] with Christ [*and stay dead till now*], and it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me.
- Galatians 4:19—My little children, for whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed [*aorist*] in you.
- I Thessalonians 3:13—So that he may establish [*aorist*] your hearts blameless in holiness [*in a single and momentary act*].
- I Thessalonians 5:23—Now may the God of peace himself, sanctify [*aorist*] you wholly once for all...
- I John 1:9—If we persistently confess [*present*] our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive [*aorist*] us our sins, and to cleanse [*aorist*] us from all unrighteous. [*The cleansing is just as definite, distinct, and decisive as the forgiveness.*] ✨

This means that holiness is a passion and not a performance. When we think of holiness as something we must do, all of the dangers of perfectionism, legalism, etc., are lurking nearby. But it is not holiness we want; it is God. Holiness is not something we do for God. Holiness is something that results in us because God lives there. Holiness is not a contest to see who can do it best; it is the glow on the face of one who knows herself loved without reservation.

Then let us remember that holiness is a result of both crisis and process. How do we become holy? At one end of the scale is process. We struggle to “mortify the flesh,” that is, to kill by starvation that rebellious self-will that is the enemy of God in us. But what is that except a refined version of the Galatian heresy? It is the flesh trying to make the flesh holy! And it will not work. Instead, John Wesley and his followers have rightly maintained that we are made holy just as we are converted: by grace through faith. But in order for that grace to become operative, there must come a moment when we surrender to God in faith for the crucifixion of our self-centered will. Wesley labeled the result of this moment “entire sanctification” (I Thess. 5:23) in order to distinguish it from the progressive sanctification which continues both before and after this moment. ✨

Doctrinal Clarity

Distinguishing between justification and sanctification helps immensely in understanding the deeper work of grace promised believers in the gospel. At the risk of over-simplification, some of the differences include:

Justification	Sanctification
What Christ does <i>for</i> us	What Christ does <i>in</i> us
Delivers from the guilt and penalty of sin	Delivers from the power of sin
A judicial act in the mind of God	An inward change in the heart of the believer
Forgiveness of sins	Cleansing of sin
Imputed righteousness	Imparted righteousness
Change of status	Change of nature
Restores us to the favor of God	Restores us to the image of God
Deals with outward actions—what I’ve done	Deals with inward nature—who I am

This issue of *The High Calling* offers another way. When seen in contrast to the three popular options listed above, one might be tempted to think that what we are talking about here is new and innovative. Hardly. The full gospel of salvation is as old as the words of God to Abraham when he said, “Walk before me, and be blameless” (Gen. 17:1). It is as new as the words of the angel to Joseph, “You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). And it is as revolutionary as the words of John who said concerning the New Jerusalem, “nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false” (Rev. 21:27). In short, the message conveyed in these articles is simply this: the gap is real; the gap is crossable now in this life, but only God can get you there, by grace through faith. Amen! ✨





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- In this Issue:**
- The Gap (Key)
 - Pig Pen Christians (Harriman & Callen)
 - A Cloud of Witnesses (Willard)
 - Power Over Sin (Drury)
 - A Surprising Source of Help (Steele)
 - The Dangers of Holiness (Oswalt)
 - The Sanctification of Eustace Clarence Scrubb (Lewis)
 - A Plain Account of the Other Side of the Chasm (Wesley)

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The High Calling

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