The Gospel - Faith, Promises & Motives

Let us consider the relation of faith to sanctification. As we have seen, sanctification is that work of God conforming us into the image of Christ progressively over time. We have noted that it is a cooperative process where we are also called to exert effort and diligence to see it come to fruition. God works in sanctification and we work. It is an ongoing cooperative process. God’s work is primary and our effort is secondary. Therefore we are called to God-dependent effort throughout the New Testament. Now what we mean by God dependent effort is that we are dependent on God’s power to give us the necessary energy and divine enablement to both forsake the old nature of sin and also to exercise the virtues of the new nature within us by the Holy Spirit. As we look to God in faith in seeking these virtues, and seek the filling of the Holy Spirit, we receive power from God both to put off the old nature and to put on the new. This calling to exert effort is what we call imperatives. They are commandments, exhortations and admonitions to obedience.

This dependence of looking to God for His power is an exercise of our faith in God’s promises to lead us, guide, us and fulfill His good work in us and through us. And this faith is belief in God’s Word and based upon the grace that God has shown us in Christ, through His good work in the Gospel, and the sufficient grace for us to persevere in faith to the end of our life that is our possession because of Christ. Not only has God promised that we are now justified by grace, through faith in Christ alone, but He has promised to fulfill His good work of sanctification in us causing us to bear His image in greater degree over time until the Day of Christ when we are finally glorified.

Philippians 1:6 – 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. NASB

1 Peter 1:3-5 - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. NASB

These promises to us are what we call indicatives. They indicate to us all of God’s promises that are ours because of Christ and are also sometimes expressed as warnings and warnings with consequences. So we believe the powerful Word of God with all of its promises and warnings to us (indicatives), and we seek to obey its exhortations and admonitions to us (imperatives).

Imperatives always grounded in Indicatives

In believing the Gospel, we have been justified by grace, through faith in Christ alone. This justification we could not have achieved by legal obedience to the Law because all have sinned. He has merited God’s favor for us, we have laid hold of it by faith, and Christ’s life, death and resurrection have sufficiently covered all of our sins and provided perfect righteousness for us, reconciling us to God so that he has adopted us into His family as His own children, having caused us to be born again by the Holy Spirit resulting in eternal life (Rom 3:21-28, 5:8-10, 5:19-21, 6:23, 1 Cor 1:30, Eph 2:5-9, Col 1:21-22, 2:13-14, 1 Pet 1:3-5). These are the indicatives which indicate the fullness of the grace that we now stand in. Nevertheless, in the Gospel we have imperatives from Christ to repent of our sins, to trust in Him and believe Him fully for righteousness, and to go and sin no more, pursuing a life pleasing to God which expresses both love toward God and love toward our neighbor. These are the imperatives that are non-negotiable exhortations and admonitions to become in practically who we already are in