

KIRBSTONES

ALONG THE NARROW WAY

curb-stone (kûrb'stôn') - *noun* - one of the stones or a range of stones forming a curb, as along a sidewalk or roadway. Historically, the curbstones were placed vertically along the edges of the roadbed, and the paving material was backfilled against the row of curbstones. The curbstones served ¹to hold the material in the roadbed, ²to prevent the scattering of the material along the edges, and ³to define the road itself from all the adjoining areas.

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¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT." - MATTHEW 7:13-14 - NIV



Spiritual growth is not accidental. It is an intentional journey marked by grace, surrender, and transformation, leading to God's perfection. As a congregation seeking to faithfully follow Jesus Christ, it is helpful to understand that this journey unfolds in three distinct, successive, but connected movements: (1) *through human effort*, (2) *to personal holiness*, and (3) *toward total submission to Christ*. Each growth stage matters, but our perfection in Christ, the final destination, remains as *full surrender*.

We begin with *human effort*. Scripture affirms that our choices matter. While salvation is by grace, our personal responses to God's love require our engagement, daily discipline, and obedient willingness. Paul writes that we are to actively participate in all God is doing within us. Prayer, worship, Scripture reading, generosity, and service are not electives in the life of a Christian. These are foundational to the training ground of the soul.

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling...

Philippians 2:12 - NIV

At this stage, we learn to say "yes" to God. We develop habits that align our lives with his will. We turn away from obvious sin and recognize the call of Christ on our lives. Yet, if we remain at this stage, our faith can become mechanical or performance-driven. Human effort alone cannot produce the life God desires. It can shape behavior, but it *cannot* fully transform the heart.

This leads us to the second movement, which is *personal holiness*. As we grow, the Holy Spirit begins to work more deeply within us, not just changing *what we do*, but *who we are*. Paul continues in the next verse.

¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Philippians 2:13 - NIV

John Wesley taught that holiness is not merely moral improvement. Growing in personal holiness is the inner reordering of all our *desires, thoughts, and affections*.

¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

1 Peter 1:15-16 - NIV

Personal holiness means being set apart, distinct in character, and reflecting the nature of Christ. The Christian life becomes less about obligation and more about transformation. We begin to love what God loves and reject what grieves him. Sin becomes less attractive, and obedience becomes more natural. Personal holiness is *not* the final goal. It is possible to pursue holiness and still retain control of our lives. We may become refined, disciplined, and even admired, but *not* fully surrendered.

The third movement is *total submission* to Jesus Christ.

²³ Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Luke 9:23 - NIV

This is not partial commitment or selective obedience. It is a total surrender of the will: yielding our plans, our ambitions, and our identities—*everything*—to Christ. It means that we no longer ask, "What do I want?" but "What does Christ desire?" It means that we trust him not only as our Savior, but as Lord of our lives. It means that we relinquish control, and that we allow the Holy Spirit to govern our lives—our relationships, decisions, resources, for a different future outcome.

This is where most people hesitate. Human effort feels manageable because we have a pretty good idea of our limitations. Personal holiness can feel attainable with discipline and devotion. But total submission requires *death to self*. It requires that we trust God at the deepest level. It requires us to believe God's will is not only right, but that it is best for us and our lives in him.

God desires this for us, not because he seeks to diminish us, but because he longs to fully redeem and restore us. When we hold back, we limit what God can do in and through us. When we surrender, we will experience the fullness of his life within us.

This truth is as crucial corporately as it is individually. We are not called to be active in the church or moral in the community. We are called to be fully yielded to Christ *together*. Our ministries, decisions, and direction must reflect not our preferences, but leadership from the Holy Spirit. A church that is partially submitted will be partially effective, but a church that is fully surrendered becomes a powerful instrument in the hands of God.

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