

Beloved of God,

Let each of us be encouraged by **Hebrews 10:14**, which reminds us of the glorious reality of the Gospel, “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” This single verse is packed with encouragement for Christ’s church and for His people who desire “to be holy as He is holy” (Matt 5:48), but who are living in unredeemed flesh and facing multifaceted challenges taking place in our marriages, families, and society today.

The writer of Hebrews also reminds us that by saving faith, we stand before our holy heavenly Father perfected and complete in Christ Jesus. While our legal position in Christ is forever established by saving faith in the Gospel, we are now engaged in a present process of sanctification. We are “being sanctified” by faith in the promises of God and His grace that not only has justified us but continually empowers us to not sin (1 Cor 15:10) and intentionally moves us towards being holy as Christ is holy!

Beloved, while our saving faith reminds us to hate the sinful things that we **think, say, and do**, we tend to find ourselves in seasons where we are loving our sin and the idols of our heart more than the Savior! Nevertheless, I pray, by God’s grace, **TODAY**, you cling to the help and hope found in verses 14. By grace and the perfect sacrifice of Christ on Calvary’s Cross, we now stand holy and perfected for all time before God the Father, based on the righteousness of His Son (Rom 3:22; Phil 3:8-9). The same grace now empowers and transforms us into the likeness of Christ through our personal process of sanctification.

May we all resolve ourselves this very day to embrace all of the details of how God is working out our process of sanctification and being made more and more into the likeness of our glorious Lord and Savior! In his book, *The Root of the Righteous*, A.W. Tozer encourages us to praise God for the hammers, files, and furnace he sovereignly determines we face in our daily lives, as part of our sanctification:

It was the enraptured Rutherford who could shout in the midst of serious and painful trials, "Praise God for the hammer, the file and the furnace."

The hammer is a useful tool, but the nail, if it had feeling and intelligence, could present another side of the story. For the nail knows the hammer only as an opponent, a brutal, merciless enemy who lives to pound it into submission, to beat it down out of sight and clinch it into place. That is the nail's view of the hammer, and it is accurate except for one thing: The nail forgets that both it and the hammer are servants of the same workman. Let the nail but remember that the hammer is held by the workman and all resentment toward it will disappear. The carpenter decides whose head will be beaten next and what hammer shall be used in the beating. That is his sovereign right. When the nail has surrendered to the will of the workman and has gotten a little glimpse of his benign plans for its future it will yield to the hammer without complaint.

The file is more painful still, for its business is to bite into the soft metal, scraping and eating away the edges till it has shaped the metal to its will. Yet the file has, in truth, no real will in the matter, but serves another master as the metal also does. It is the master and not the file that decides how much shall be eaten away, what shape the

metal shall take, and how long the painful filing shall continue. Let the metal accept the will of the master and it will not try to dictate when or how it shall be filed.

As for the furnace, it is the worst of all. Ruthless and savage, it leaps at every combustible thing that enters it and never relaxes its fury till it has reduced it all to shapeless ashes. All that refuses to burn is melted to a mass of helpless matter, without will or purpose of its own. When everything is melted that will melt and all is burned that will burn, then and not till then the furnace calms down and rests from its destructive fury.

With all this known to him, how could Rutherford find it in his heart to praise God for the hammer, the file and the furnace? The answer is simply that he loved the Master of the hammer, he adored the Workman who wielded the file, he worshiped the Lord who heated the furnace for the everlasting blessing of His children. He had felt the hammer till its rough beatings no longer hurt; he had endured the file till he had come actually to enjoy its bitings; he had walked with God in the furnace so long that it had become as his natural habitat.

Friends, I hope and pray that we remain resolved to live by grace in loving obedience to the King this week. In addition, may this grace empower us to identify sinful desires and idols of our hearts that we lean into as a source of temporary joy and satisfaction more than in the unfathomable gifts of God's grace for our present and future.

The following is a **Personal Project for Growth** that can help you identify any personal idols of the heart that are impairing any facet of your relationship with Christ and others and stealing your satisfaction and joy in Christ alone!

Much Grace to You This Week!

PROJECT FOR GROWTH:

“Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it flows the issues of life”

Proverbs 4:23

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Psalms 139:23-24

⇒ **First, ask yourself the following questions as a means of examining your personal heart attitudes:**

- What do you want, desire, seek, aim for, pursue, hope for?
- What are your goals, expectations, intentions?
- What do you feel like doing? Do you want what you want, or do you want Christ’s lordship over your life?
- Where do you look for security, meaning, happiness, fulfillment, joy, or comfort? Where do you put your ‘basic trust’?
- What would make you happy?
- What do you fear? What do you tend to worry about?
- What do you love and hate most of all?
- How do you define success or failure in a particular situation?
- What image do you have of who you are? Ought to be or want to be?
- At your deathbed what would you sum up your life as worthwhile?
- What do you see as your ‘rights’?
- When you are pressured or tense, where do you turn? What do you think about?
- What do you pray for?

⇒ **Second, place a next to the items / issues that you think might be current or potential “idols” in your life:**

Performance – especially **for significant others** – you try to please to get or to keep acceptance or approval. Example: for parents or spouse. When you please man rather than God, this is idolatry. If that is the case, then you are worshipping that person more than God. Fearful of what others think rather than obeying God – this is a problem.

Performance for Self (Perfectionism) – trying to perform up to our own standards that we have set. Can become a Pharisee. When I meet the standard, I feel good; when I don't I feel bad. Making a personal list for myself to follow that is higher than what God says.

Performance of Others – I make a list of what others should do. Example: For my spouse to be a good husband / wife he / she **must** do... (1,2,3, etc.). If he/she doesn't do these things, I become judgmental and unloving.

Good Health – My goal shouldn't be this, but to glorify God. It's OK to pray for healing but don't let getting healed become an idol. God may want you to be sick in order to glorify Himself (see John 9).

Love of Money – I take a promotion just to get more money

Success – What's a good day to you? Answering this question helps to reveal idols of the heart. What made it a good day in your mind? Usually it's "I got a lot accomplished / done." Or "I pleased significant others." Or "I got my way... Others did for me what I want them to do." Etc.

Fairness - Life has to be fair! (Psalm 73) "I've been trying to please God; these others aren't even trying and they prosper." This can cause you to almost forsake the faith (Psa. 73:2).

Hurt-Free / Pain-Free Life – I don't want to deal with problems. There shouldn't be any difficulties. I shouldn't have to go through anything unsettling... because I want peace.

Christian Marriage and Home – I'll be successful if my children turn out right. That can become an idol. Or I want people to look at our marriage and think we have the best marriage in the world. I cannot serve God and have joy until my spouse changes and starts doing _____ .

Physical Appearance

Being respected / Admired

Being self-sufficient / Independent

- A Material Thing – car, house, jewelry, etc.**

- Athletic Abilities / Achievements**

- Hobbies ~ sports, reading, whatever**

- An Ideal ("Pro-life movement, "Peace Movement," political party, etc.)**

- Being Treated Fairly**

- Success / Position / Power**

- Worldly Pleasures (drugs, alcohol, food, sex, etc)**

- Being in Control**

- Meeting Goals / Achievements**

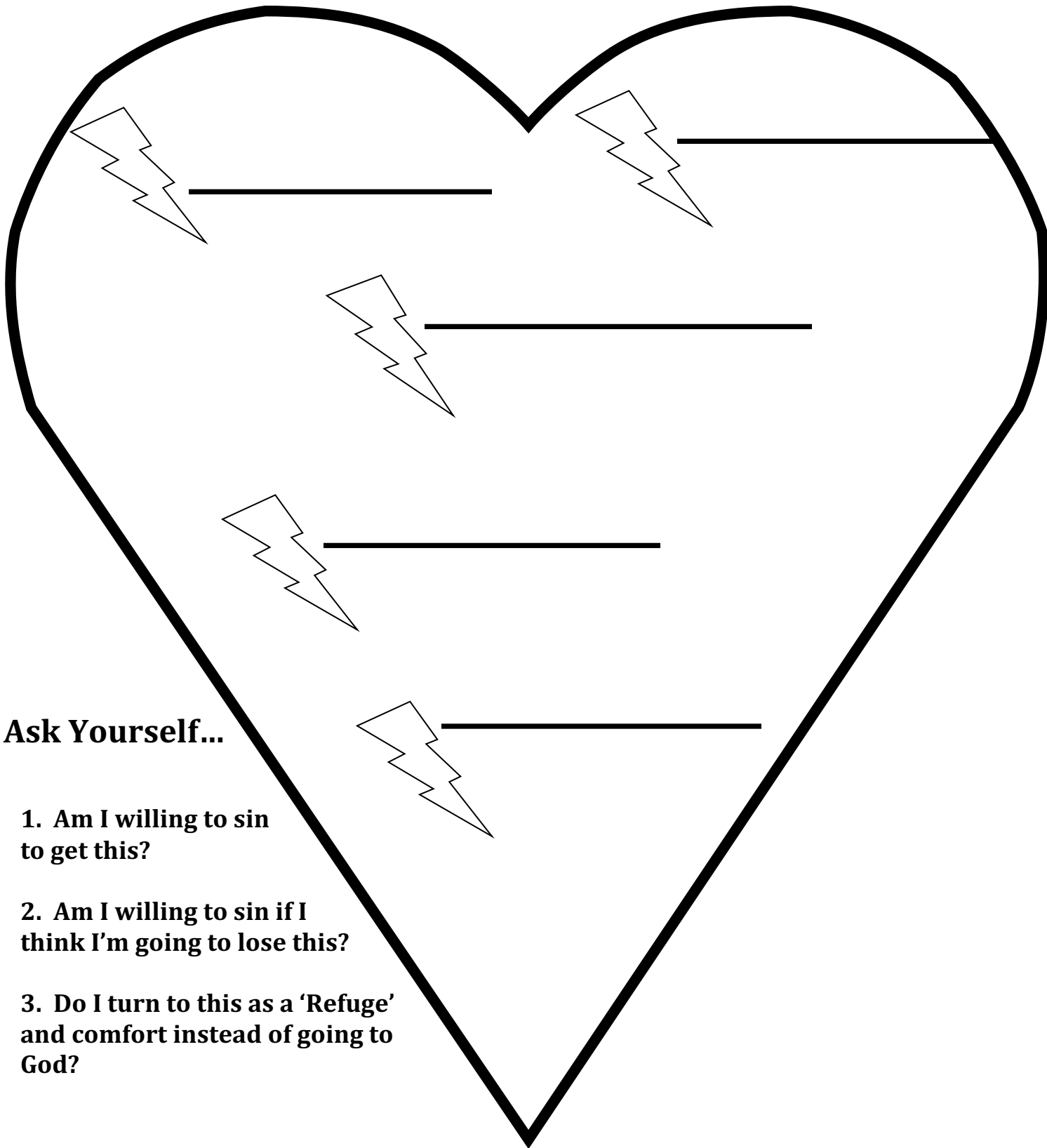
- A Child or Children**

- Getting Married**

- Having Your 'Needs' Met**

- Other? _____**

⇒ **Third, now write the TOP 5 Present or Potential “Idols” from your checklist onto this heart:**



Ask Yourself...

- 1. Am I willing to sin to get this?**
- 2. Am I willing to sin if I think I’m going to lose this?**
- 3. Do I turn to this as a ‘Refuge’ and comfort instead of going to God?**

**“Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.”
Jonah 2:8 (NIV)**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE: Mediate on the Following Verses to Instruct and Encourage Change and Growth IN CHRIST:

- ❖ **Psalms 51: 1-3, 7-10** - *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love, according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness, let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*
- ❖ **Isaiah 1:1**- *Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*
- ❖ **Romans 12:2 NLT** - *Don't copy the behavior of the world, but let God transform into a new person by changing the way you think.*
- ❖ **2 Corinthians 3:18** - *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*
- ❖ **2 Corinthians 7:10** - *Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*
- ❖ **Ephesians 3:16** - *I pray that out of his glorious riches, that Christ may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.*
- ❖ **Colossians 3: 1-2** - *Since, then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*
- ❖ **Hebrews 4:12** - *For the word of God [is] living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*
- ❖ **James 1:12** *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*