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"Rarely have I read such a book on sanctification that is simultaneously serious and fresh, . . . reflective and accessible. . . . Christians who want to be increasingly conformed to Christ will cherish this book."

— D. A. CARSON

AN INFINITE JOURNEY

Growing toward Christlikeness

ANDREW M. DAVIS

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I LOVE ANDY DAVIS' EXTRAORDINARY mind. I love the breadth of his reading. Most of all, I love his terrific understanding of the Christian life and his grasp of the gospel. He is a faithful brother, and this book is a gift to the church.

— **DR. J.D. GREAR**

Lead Pastor of The Summit Church and author of *Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart* and *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary*

BESIDES THE BIBLE, IT WOULD be difficult to find any other single resource with more biblically sound, theologically rich, pastorally helpful, and practical insight about Christian growth than this book. Moreover, it's not just a book about progress in Christlikeness, for I know Andy Davis and I can affirm that there's a life of growth in grace behind the book. I recommend it to anyone on the Infinite Journey.

— **DR. DON WHITNEY**

Associate Professor of Biblical Spirituality
Senior Associate Dean for the School of Theology
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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An Infinite Journey

Growing toward Christlikeness

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FOREWORD

DURING MY TEENAGE YEARS, I became steeped in evangelical revivalism. I often got the impression from pastors and evangelists that salvation more or less equaled justification. From time to time, we learned about sanctification and glorification, but these truths were often assumed more than they were expounded. The real action was in getting saved, which meant being justified by faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Lord and Savior.

I spent several years trying to nail down the exact moment I had been justified, since I was taught that my assurance of salvation is based almost entirely upon my decision to believe in Jesus for salvation. I often worried that I had not been sincere enough in my faith, because I still struggled with indwelling sin. I prayed some version or other of the "sinner's prayer" dozens of times in an effort to be sure I was really saved. As far as I knew, the Christian life was about getting justified, knowing you were justified, and helping other people get justified.

I was in college when it first dawned upon me that salvation is not a single moment in time, but rather is a spiritual journey. Justification is not an end unto itself—it is the beginning of a spiritual pilgrimage that begins in this life and ultimately ends in the next life. I had been saved by grace through faith (justification), I was being saved as the Holy Spirit conformed me more to the image of my Savior (sanctification), and I would be saved at the last day when I am finally and forever freed from sin, sickness, sorrow, and suffering (glorification). It was liberating to finally understand that "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6, ESV).

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Providentially, my wife and I became a part of the First Baptist Church of Durham, North Carolina in 2005. We had learned of Andy Davis and his ministry at the church from some mutual friends. We wanted a church that emphasized expositional preaching, God's sovereignty in salvation, meaningful church membership, and the importance of evangelism and missions; we found it at FBC Durham. Once we joined the church, we discovered that Andy often speaks of the Christian life as two infinite, interrelated journeys. In the past eight years, my own spirituality has been shaped by the awareness that I am on an inward journey toward sanctification and ultimately glorification, and an outward journey to proclaim the lordship of Jesus Christ here, there, and everywhere.

An Infinite Journey is the fruit of many years of preaching and teaching on the nature of the Christian life, primarily in the context of a local church. I have watched Andy Davis faithfully model the two infinite journeys for the people he shepherds. I have seen this vision of the Christian life shape the spirituality of public school teachers, medical doctors, lawyers, businessmen, stay-at-home mothers, retirees, converted convicts, international graduate students, seminary students and professors, and foreign missionaries. I have become convinced that speaking of two infinite journeys is a helpful and memorable way to describe authentic, biblical Christianity.

I am glad you have decided to read this book; I do not believe you have done so by accident. My prayer is that *An Infinite Journey* will be a means of sanctifying grace in your own spiritual walk as you continue on the two infinite journeys of the Christian life.

Nathan A. Finn

Elder, First Baptist Church of Durham

Associate Professor, Southeastern Baptist Theological
Seminary

October 15, 2013

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SECTION 1

UNDERSTANDING SALVATION'S INFINITE JOURNEY

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CHAPTER 1

AN INFINITE JOURNEY MAPPED OUT

GOD HAS SET BEFORE THE Church of Jesus Christ two infinite journeys. These two journeys have one destination, one ultimate goal, and in the end will prove to have been one and the same journey after all. Before the foundation of the world, God ordained these two journeys for his glory and for the joy of his people. He ordained that the Church would make them, and that the Church would finish them. Both journeys require immense human effort and untold suffering in order to be accomplished. If you are a Christian today, these journeys are your central work, your central means of bringing glory to God. And what are these journeys? 1) The external journey of the worldwide advance of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ to all nations. 2) The internal journey of an individual Christian from being dead in sin to gloriously perfect in Christ.

These two journeys are referred to directly and indirectly in many places in Scripture. They are not always referred to as journeys, but that is what they are. The essential idea of a journey is progress; i.e., advancing gradually to a desired destination. The external journey of the worldwide advance of the Kingdom of Christ—from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, through the ministry of the gospel—is a gradual process requiring great effort, labor, and suffering. The internal journey of individual, personal salvation—from justification, through sanctification, into glorification—is also a gradual process requiring great effort, labor, and suffering.

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Both infinite journeys are displayed in Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 1.

- 1) The external journey of the gospel: *"I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel"* (Philippians 1:12).
- 2) The internal journey of sanctification: *"Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith"* (Philippians 1:25).

Both verses use the same Greek word, *prokopē*, to speak of "progress" or "advance." This word, used twice, thus speaks of two journeys.

THE EXTERNAL JOURNEY OF GOSPEL ADVANCE

In the first case, Paul wants the persecuted Philippian church to know that his arrest and chains have actually helped the gospel make progress throughout the Praetorian Guard (Philippians 1:13). These elite soldiers were among the finest in the entire Roman empire, the toughest, most loyal, and most dedicated men the emperor had. It seems that Paul may have been chained to some of these Praetorian guardsmen, and had seized the opportunity to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to them one after the other. Undoubtedly Paul's supernatural joy in Christ—despite his dreadful circumstances—must have made quite an impression on many of them, and they gave his message a careful listening. Paul hints that some of them may even have become Christians as a result (note that there are believers in "Caesar's household," Philippians 4:22). What is more, once the rest of the church saw how courageously and joyfully Paul was suffering for Christ, they were now emboldened to share the gospel fearlessly (Philippians 1:14)! Church history shows that, within one generation of Paul, there were Christian churches as far north as wild and forbidding Britain. Could it be that some Praetorian Guards believed Paul's

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An Infinite Journey Mapped Out 19

gospel and became even more loyal to Christ than they were to the emperor, and spread the gospel to such distant places?

This is the progress of the gospel that Paul was speaking of: the gradual advance of the Kingdom of Christ through the verbal proclamation of the gospel message. “*Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice*” (verse 18). This worldwide advance of the gospel is the heroic story of missions, commanded and predicted by the resurrected Christ: “[Jesus] said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem’” (Luke 24:46–47).

The Church has been traveling this journey for almost two thousand years. Since the time when Philippians was written, the gospel has been carried heroically to the most distant parts of the earth’s surface. Missionaries have crossed the burning sands of the Arabian Desert, the forbidding slopes of the Karakoram Mountains, the measureless expanses of the Pacific Ocean, and the dangerous wilds of the jungles of Irian Jaya. Martyrs have suffered persecution and died, families have suffered tropical illnesses and died, missionaries have suffered starvation and died, all to accomplish the “advance of the gospel,” to make progress along this external journey.

THE INTERNAL JOURNEY OF SANCTIFICATION

The Apostle Paul also mentions the other of our two infinite journeys, in Philippians 1:25 : “*Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your **progress** and joy in the faith.*”

The issue here is Paul’s ongoing concern for the individual Philippian Christians after they have trusted Christ and been baptized. He is immensely concerned about their “*progress and joy in the faith.*” Another name for “progress in the faith” is sanctification, the internal journey of gradual growth into Christlikeness. This internal journey is as important to Paul as the external, and

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that is why he wrote Philippians to begin with. His desire is that his letter will help them make “*progress in the faith*,” and to this end he constantly preaches, teaches, prays, and labors. He is greatly concerned that they become fully mature in Christ, letting the manner of their life be worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27), responding to persecution with his same joyful attitude (1:28), putting others’ needs ahead of their own with the perfect servant heart of Christ (2:1–11), working out their salvation with fear and trembling (2:12–13) as Paul did, by focusing totally on Christ, pressing on toward the goal for the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (3:7–14), and learning to constantly rejoice, trust, think, and be content in Christ (4:4–13).

This internal journey is the personal struggle of each Christian with the world, the flesh, and the devil. It requires a different kind of valor in the face of suffering than does the external journey, but it is the essence of the ongoing saving work of Christ in the individual Christian. This internal journey is a major and constant emphasis in the New Testament. Christ spoke of two roads, a narrow one leading to life and a broad one leading to destruction, and commanded us to “*enter through the narrow gate*” (Matthew 7:13–14). He also taught of the “way” to the Father, saying, “*I am the way. . . . No one comes to the Father except through me*” (John 14:6). Christianity itself was originally called “The Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22), indicating this sense of a “way of salvation” (Acts 16:17). The book of Hebrews commands us to “*run with perseverance the race marked out for us*” (Hebrews 12:1), while Paul commanded that we should “*run so as to obtain*,” and said he did not “*run like a man running aimlessly*” (1 Corinthians 9:24, 26). In many of his epistles, he spoke of his own “race” (Acts 20:24, Galatians 2:2), and at the end of his life, he said “*I have finished my race*” (2 Timothy 4:7). All of Peter’s and Paul’s references to Christian spiritual growth (e.g., 1 Peter 2:2, Colossians 1:10) are allusions to the same issue—the internal journey—using different metaphors.

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An Infinite Journey Mapped Out 21

In the final analysis, these two journeys are really one and the same thing, and they are carried on for the same ultimate goal—the glory of God in the final perfection of the Church. God has ordained that his chosen ones shall most certainly be saved to the uttermost; they shall be resurrected from being “*dead in transgressions and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1) and brought to absolute perfection in Christ. Christ came to “*save his people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21), and that means to save his chosen ones from everything that sin has done to them. The final end of salvation is total conformity to Christ (Romans 8:29), and he will not stop until each of the elect are brought into this perfection. Thus do the two infinite journeys become one: only when each individual elect of God is 1) brought to personal faith in Christ through the missionary work of the Church (the external journey), and 2) totally glorified in Christ, perfect in body, soul, and spirit in the Kingdom (the internal journey), will the work of God in this world be complete. These two journeys have one goal: “*the praise of his glory*” (Ephesians 1:12, 14).

WHY I CALL THESE JOURNEYS “INFINITE”

The word “infinite” is perhaps misleading, if one gathers from it that we will never reach our destination in these two journeys. The astonishing fact is that perfection is actually guaranteed in both of them! The Church of Jesus Christ will most certainly finish these journeys, and will enjoy the fruit from them forever. Personal perfection cannot be attained in this lifetime, but it will be granted us when we see the Lord. But we will attain the goal of the internal journey, total conformity to Christ.

So why call them “infinite?”¹ Simply because only an infinite power source can accomplish them, and because both will extend to the ends of our lives. Only the infinite power of God can enable the Church to advance the Kingdom of Christ to the end of the earth. As we quoted above, Christ said, “*You will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in*

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Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Paul said it was only by his power which works so mightily in him that he was able to carry on his ministry as apostle to the Gentiles (Colossians 1:28–29, Ephesians 3:7, 1 Corinthians 15:10). Without the infinite power of the Holy Spirit, the gospel message would never make a single convert, and the messengers would give up because of Satan's overwhelming opposition.

In the same way, it takes the infinite power of God and the infinite effectiveness of the ongoing priestly work of Christ to save us *"to the uttermost"* (Hebrews 7:25, ESV). Concerning the infinite power at work in us to complete our salvation, the Apostle Paul prayed specifically that the Ephesian Christians would be able to grasp the magnitude of the power that God is exerting to complete our salvation (see Ephesians 1:18–19). He said that this power was like the working of God's mighty strength in raising Christ from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavenly realms. And in the same way, God had raised us up from being dead in our transgressions and sins and will sit us with him in heaven as well. Therefore, sanctification is an infinite journey, because only the infinite power of God can complete it. And only the infinitely powerful priestly ministry of Christ at the right hand of God can keep us from all spiritual harm and enable us to make a single step forward in our sanctification.

Jesus summed it up when he said *"Apart from me, you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). Only with a lively sense of dependence on the infinite power of God will we make progress in these two journeys.

EVANGELICALISM'S NEGLECTED JOURNEY: SANCTIFICATION

The modern evangelical movement has been far more concerned about evangelism than about discipleship. "Bible-believing" churches have seen the church somewhat as a "weekly, stationary evangelistic rally."² The success of the church is measured in

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ADVANCE PRAISE FOR AN INFINITE JOURNEY

An Infinite Journey is a labor of love from the heart of a faithful pastor who dearly loves his people. It is a marvelous treatment of the doctrine of sanctification and a call to grow in Christlikeness. It is biblically grounded, theologically rich, and practical in application. It felt like I was reading a modern Puritan. Do not be hesitant to delve into this treasure because of its size. The precious nuggets of truth that leap from its pages will make the investment a wise one indeed.

— **DANIEL L. AKIN**

President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

I love Andy Davis' extraordinary mind. I love the breadth of his reading. Most of all, I love his terrific understanding of the Christian life and his grasp of the gospel. He is a faithful brother, and this book is a gift to the church.

— **J.D. GREER**

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— **DON WHITNEY**

Associate Professor of Biblical Spirituality and Senior Associate Dean for the School of Theology, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary



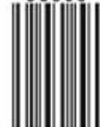
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