

The Cross Chart

The Paradox of Christian Growth

People tell me I'm growing in grace, but I don't feel I'm any better—especially when I consider my thought life (envy, lust, jealousy, greed, a critical spirit, the lot). The truth is, I need the Holy Spirit's power now more than ever. That's the paradox. I know I'm stronger than when I was a new Christian, but I *feel* weaker. Perhaps that's the point. Could it be that weaker *is* stronger? (1Cor. 15:9)

The chart explained: Before I knew Christ, I was in the dark concerning God's holiness and the magnitude of my sin. (the solid gray area on the left) The new birth changed all that. As a babe in Christ, two things began to dawn on me—the absolute holiness of God, and the ugliness of my sin—especially in light of the new life of love to which God was calling me. But, when I made a mess of it, I would repent, look in faith to Jesus, and trust in his righteousness to "bridge the gap" between what I should be and what I was. (the small cross)

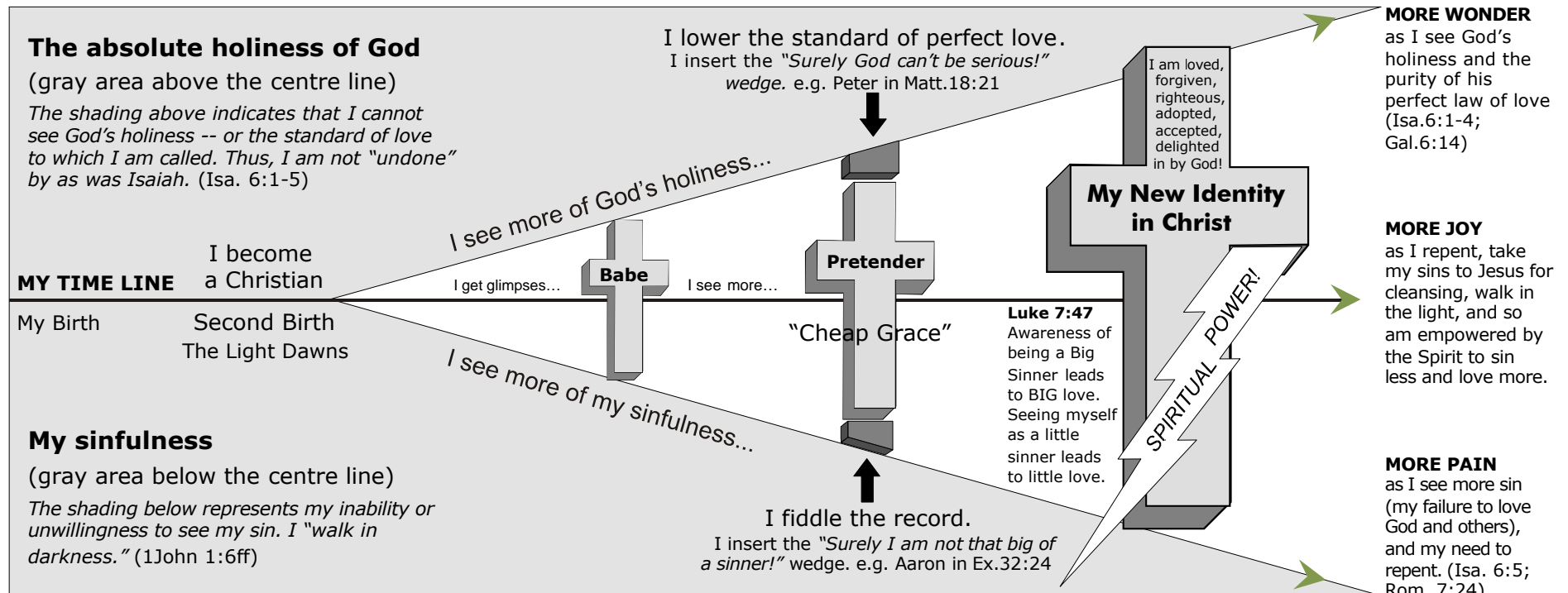
Still today, the battle is in the choosing. Every time I'm exposed as a sinner, I'm faced with a choice.

1. I can try to save face by lowering the standard, rationalising, fiddling the record, shifting the blame, or otherwise making excuses for my shortcomings ("inserting wedges"). At this point, my growth will "flat-line".

2. Or, in repentant faith, I can bridge the gap by "letting the Cross grow bigger" as I run to Jesus with my sin. (the big cross) There is no power in the discovery of sin. New life comes as I "work the Gospel"—i.e. take my sin to Jesus, rest in my new identity in him, and rely on the Holy Spirit to produce his fruit in me. (Gal. 5:22)

READ & DISCUSS Luke 7:36-47 (see reverse side) With which character do you identify in this story?

The Cross Chart illustrates the Luke 7:47 principle - that "He who is forgiven much loves much, but he who is forgiven little, loves little."



THE POINT? Spiritual growth comes as I see my sin, admit it, and "let the Cross grow" in my life. The power to change flows from this faith-action.

Concept by Richard Lovelace (*Renewal as a Way of Life*, IVP, page 162). Adapted by Paul Miller for *Sonship* ©1988. Adapted by John W. Long, Jr. for *SONSHIP for Africa* ©2002, and *Grace4Life* ©2006 London UK.