

Theology for Life
Faith Presbyterian Church

Lesson 12: Sanctification, God's Law, and Good Works

Opening Discussion:

What should the Christian life look like?

If we've been saved by grace, why should we do good works?

What role, if any, does God's Law play in your life?

Review: Justification

A.A. Hodges says that "Justification is a judicial act of God whereby he *declares* (rather than *makes*) us to be conformed to the demands of the law" (imputation vs. infusion).

Martin Luther called it an "alien righteousness." It came from outside of us and is a declaration not dependent on our actions.

Can someone be justified without any change in his or her life?

WCF 11.2. *Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.*

James 2:17, 22, 26 [17] *So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead...[22] You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;...[26] For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.*

Defining Sanctification: Becoming holy

What does the word sanctification mean?

Titus 2:11-14 *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."*

According to Titus 2, what role does grace play in our sanctification?

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q. 35. *What is sanctification?*

A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

Why do you think the WSC describes justification as an “act of God’s free grace” and sanctification as a “work of God’s free grace”?

“I became a Christian once for all upon the basis of the finished work of Christ through faith; that is justification. The Christian life, sanctification, operates on the same basis, but moment by moment. There is the same base (Christ’s work) and the same instrument (faith); the only difference is that one is once for all and the other is moment by moment . . . If we try to live the Christian life in our own strength we will have sorrow, but if we live in this way, we will not only serve the Lord, but in the place of sorrow, He will be our song. That is the difference. The ‘how’ of the Christian life is the power of the crucified and risen Lord, through the agency of the indwelling Holy Spirit, by faith moment by moment.” -Francis Schaeffer

What does a holy/sanctified life look like?

*“It consists not only in external works of piety and charity, but in the holy thoughts, imaginations and affections of the soul, and chiefly in love, from whence all other good works must flow, or else they are not acceptable to God; not only in refraining the execution of sinful lusts, but in longing and delighting to do the will of God and in a cheerful obedience to God, without repining, fretting, grudging at any duty, as if it were a grievous yoke and burden to you.”
Walter Marshall, *Gospel Mystery of Sanctification**

What stands out to you about this description of holiness?

God’s Law: Antinomianism and Legalism

What role does God’s Law play in the Christian’s life?

Three Types of Law: Jesus fulfills all three. All three condemn us in Adam.

- **Civil**—Israel’s government and civil laws
 - For a time, God’s people were called to function as a nation. Political power, land, and government overlapped what it meant to be the People of God.
 - Israel was saved by grace, but experienced blessings and curses in geopolitical terms.
- **Ceremonial**—Temple sacrifices and purity laws
 - Purification and dietary laws separated Israel from other nations.
 - Sacrificial laws and holy days represented and prefigured God’s work of salvation.
- **Moral**—Ethical laws of right and wrong.
 - Summarized in the 10 Commandments
 - Further summarized in the Great Commandment: Love God, Love neighbor

When we discuss sanctification, we are speaking of the Moral Law.

Legalism teaches that you were saved by grace, but you stay saved by works. If we do not obey God's Law, then we cannot be a Christian.

Antinomianism teaches that Christians are under no obligation to obey God's Law. The Law is seen as antithetical to the gospel.

What is wrong with legalism? What if you continued to observe the Law?

1. You would be denying Christ's fulfillment of the Law
2. You would be continuing to live in the old age.
3. The Law would bring your sin to light and condemn you.

What is wrong with antinomianism?

If antinomianism was biblical, why does the Sermon on the Mount include many commands that seem to intensify the moral law? Why does Paul include so many commands to live holy lives, die to sin, and enforce commands? (see Ephesians 4-6 for example where Paul quotes and expounds the Ten Commandments)

Indicative and Imperative:

1. Is Paul inconsistent? Are we to rest in "grace" or "work out our salvation"? Paul can tell us to "be holy" (imperative) and that we "are holy" (indicative).

"the new life in its moral manifestation is at one time proclaimed and posited as the fruit of the redemptive work of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit—the indicative; elsewhere, however, it is put with no less force as a categorical demand—the imperative. And the one as well as the other occurs with such force and consistency that some have indeed spoken of a 'dialectical paradox' and of an 'antinomy.'" –Herman Ridderbos

2. *The imperative ALWAYS accompanies the indicative, and the indicative ALWAYS precedes the imperative.*

Philippians 2:12-13

Colossians 1:29; 3:3ff.

Ephesians 3:20

Romans 6

We could also say that sanctification ALWAYS accompanies justification, and justification ALWAYS precedes sanctification.

3. The two are fundamentally linked. The indicative is conditional on the imperative BUT this does not change the order!

"Colossians 3:1 'If you then were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above.' 'If' in the first clause is certainly not merely hypothetical. It is a supposition from which the imperative goes out as an accepted fact. But at the

same time it emphasizes that if what is demanded in the imperative does not take place, that which is supposed in the first clause would no longer be admissible (cf. e.g., Rom. 8:9; Col. 2:20; Gal. 5:25).” -Ridderbos

4. When we apply this, it becomes incredibly great news!
 - a. The new life in you is really there, and not just a sign of life. It is not dormant but a militant life battling sin.
 - b. Each of us experiences the “now” and “not yet” of sanctification.

Transformation

Not only does the gospel save us, it begins a work of transformation. This is what the scripture calls being “born again” or “regenerated”. It is the present experience of the resurrection, now begun in our hearts:

WCF 13.1. They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

“We receive from Christ a new holy frame and nature, by which we are enabled for a holy practice, by union and fellowship with Him, in like manner (i) as Christ lived in our nature by the Father (John 6:57); (ii) as we receive original sin and death propagated to us from the first Adam (Rom. 5:12, 14, 16, 17); (iii) as the natural body receives sense, motion and nourishment from the head (Col. 2:19); (iv) as the branch receives its sap, juice and fructifying virtue from the vine (John 15:4, 5); (v) as the wife brings forth fruit by virtue of her conjugal union with her husband (Rom. 7:4); (vi) as stones become a holy temple by being built on the foundation, and joined with the chief corner-stone (1Peter 2:4-6); (vii) as we receive the nourishing virtue of bread by eating it, and of wine by drinking it (John 6:51, 55, 57), which last resemblance is used to seal to us our communion with Christ in the Lord's Supper.” Marshall 18

How does the fact of regeneration change your approach to sins that you struggle with? What would the practical effect be to battle sin that you knew would defeat you?

Perfectionism

WCF 13.2. This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

Sanctification is not perfected in this life:

- I John 1:10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.
- I Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.
- Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
- II Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.

Motives to Obey: Gospel Sanctification

What is your motive for becoming holy? How do you not only do good works but also do them cheerfully? Is this possible? What are the means?

Some argue that it is impossible: If our justification is assured by Christ's work, then we have no real motivation for obedience. The gospel stands in the way of sanctification.

What motivates you to do anything (not just the Christian life)? Guilt, fear, reward are all very powerful motivators.

When you serve God out of guilt, what effect will it have on your relationship with him. How about fear? Reward?

Initially the gospel seems to demotivate us from obedience, but perhaps it is the very key. Think about its baseline truth: God loves us despite our unrighteousness. This begins to frame our new relationship with God.

"The assumption that God only loves the righteous will tempt me to hide from him (and myself) the flaws under the public veneer of my character and my fears of deeper failures. However, when I know that God will not turn away from me when I unabashedly cry out for his pity, then I am more willing to acknowledge the monsters of sin in my own heart...Such honesty moves God to pity us in our desperation, even as the knowledge of this grace makes us willing to cry out for his pardon." Bryan Chapell

How does this begin to change our disposition toward God? If we truly understand the gospel, the effect is not brash licentiousness but love.

"Duty compelled by love may sound like an undemanding religion until we recall that there is no more powerful force to motivate the human heart than love. Fear is not more powerful. Guilt is not more powerful. 'There is nothing more powerful than love,' writes the seventeenth-century English minister Samuel Bolton. 'Things impossible to others are easy to them that love. Love knows no difficulties...Love is an affection that refuses to be put off by duties or difficulties which come between it and the person loved.'" Chapell

Four Weapons in the Battle of Sanctification

1. The Gospel!

“God has abundantly discovered to us in His Word that His method in bringing men from sin to holiness of life is first, to make them know that He loves them and that their sins are blotted out.” Marshall 11

Heidelberg Catechism 86

Q. Since we have been delivered from our misery by grace through Christ without any merit of our own, why then should we do good works?

A. Because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood, is also restoring us by his Spirit into his image, so that with our whole lives we may show that we are thankful to God for his benefits, so that he may be praised through us, so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits, and so that by our godly living our neighbors may be won over to Christ.

What stands out to you about this Q&A?

HC 64

Q. But doesn't this teaching make people indifferent and wicked?

A. No. It is impossible for those grafted into Christ through true faith not to produce fruits of gratitude.

2. The Goodness of God's Law

Once we understand the gospel, the Law no longer holds a threat of condemnation. It now is the path of life.

“If it were true obedience (as some would have it) to love our duty only as a market man loves foul ways to the market, or as a sick man loves an unpleasant medicinal potion, or as a captive slave loves his hard work for fear of a greater evil - then it might be performed with averseness, or want of inclination; but we must love it, as the market man gain, as the sick man health, as pleasant meat and drink, as the captive liberty.” Marshall

Three Uses of the Law: Moral Law remains and functions in the ways.

1. A mirror reflecting the perfect righteousness of God. It exasperates us and shows us our need as sinners for a savior.
2. To restrain evil: It doesn't change our hearts but it can inhibit lawlessness.
3. Moral guide for believers: It tells us what we are being made into.

Richard Gaffin: *“the antithesis between the law and the gospel ends the moment someone becomes a Christian.”* ... *“Briefly, apart from the gospel and*

outside of Christ the law is my enemy and condemns me. Why? Because God is my enemy and condemns me. But with the gospel and in Christ, united to him by faith, the law is no longer my enemy but my friend. Why? Because now God is no longer my enemy but my friend, and the law, his will, the law in its moral core, as reflective of his character and of concerns eternally inherent in his own person and so of what pleases him, is now my friendly guide for life in fellowship with God."

3. The True Nature of Sin Revealed

Sanctification includes the gradual destruction of the sinful nature, often called mortification (putting to death our old selves). We are living/dying trees. Sanctification has both a "negative" and a "positive" dimension.

Ask yourself, do you really believe that to "SIN" and to be given over to "selfish ambition" is your way to happiness and "freedom? Have you bought into the world's lie, that to be free from God and his mission in the world is to be liberated?

Once you begin to see the root of sin is idolatry and idolatry is slavery, sins allure begins to weaken. How can you do this in your own battle with particular sins?

Oppression Explored:

- The oppression of "various passions and pleasures" (Gluttony)
- The oppression of "Malice and envy" (Covetousness)
- The oppression of "Disobedience" (pride)
- The oppression of Endless talk devoid of walk (Hypocrisy)
- The oppression of incivility (chip on shoulder.. contenteousness)

4. Holiness is Our Future

WCF 13.3. In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

"holiness in this life is absolutely necessary to salvation, not only as a means to the end, but by a nobler kind of necessity, as part of the end itself. Though we are not saved by good works, as procuring causes, yet we are saved to good works, as fruits and effects of saving grace, which God has prepared that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10)."

Marshall