

Theology for Life
Faith Presbyterian Church
Lesson 23: Sanctification

Last time: *God wants us to have, but doesn't guarantee, assurance of our salvation. Assurance will not be found by looking inwardly at our performance or our experience. It can only be found by looking at what Christ has accomplished.*

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?

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

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

Connecting the Dots: Where Theology meets Life

Summary: The moment God converts us he begins a work of sanctification. Sanctification is God's work but he works holiness into us through our use of means. Our sanctification is not complete in this life but will be in heaven.