



## **Week 21 - “Justification, Sanctification, Glorification”**

Can Christians ever willfully sin?

How could we sin if we are ‘saved from our sins’?

What does salvation really mean if we still sin?

How do we reconcile the fact that professing Christians could commit adultery and drunkenness?

Are they really ‘saved’?

Is it possible to reach a state of ‘sinless perfection’ in this life?

The above questions have caused confusion in the minds of many Christians and deceived not a few. One of the best ways the above questions can be answered and understood is to first have a clear foundation and understanding of the distinctions between Justification, Sanctification and Glorification.

Much heresy and false teaching has its roots in a lack of understanding of, and false separations of, these three facets of salvation.

*2 Corinthians 1:10 He delivered us [past] from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us [present continuous]. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again [future].*

Christ delivers us from the sentence of spiritual death past, present and future. The three facets of salvation are summed up in these three terms.

## **Justification**

*Salvation from penalty of sin* (1Thess.1:10; Eph.1:7; Col.2:13,14; 2Cor.1:9,10; Matt.1:21)

*Past* (done once) (Rom.5:1; Heb.12:23; Rom.4:1-13; 8:32-34; Phil.3:9)

*Imputed* (legally credited) from outside (Rom.4:6-8,11,22-24)

*God's work for us* (Rom.5:8; 1Pet.2:24)

## **Sanctification**

*Salvation from power of sin* (2Tim.4:18; Phil.1:6; Rom.6:18; 2Cor.7:1)

*Continuous* (Progressive) (Phil.1:6; 2:12,13; 3:21; Rom.6:1-14,18;8:1-16; 2Tim.4:18; Col.3:10; 1Tim.5:22)

*Imparted from within* (Phil.2:13; 2Thess.2:13; 1Pet.1:2)

*God's work in us* (Scriptures as above)

## **Glorification**

*Salvation from presence of sin* (Rom.8:21-23; 2Cor.5:1,2)

*Future* (Rom.8:21-23; 2Cor.5:1,2)

*Created in Heaven by God* (2Cor.5:1,2; Rom.8:21-23)

*God's work to us* (Scriptures as above)

An understanding of the distinctions between Justification, Sanctification and Glorification will show clearly that salvation is past, present and future - spirit, soul and body.

## Justification

This refers to the act which declares a person righteous in the sight of God.

In Justification we are saved from the penalty of sin. This work is entirely of God (passive) and outside of us through the imputed (legally credited) righteousness of God in Christ.

It is past, finished, and as the Greek tenses often show - done once and non repeatable. This is done by grace through the vehicle of faith alone...

'Therefore being justified by faith...' (Rom.5:1). It affects our very spirits, making them legally perfect... 'the spirits [not souls or bodies] of just men made perfect' (Heb.12:23).

The Old Testament Hebrew equivalent of 'justify' is 'tsadheq' which is used essentially in a legal and forensic sense (Job.9:15; 13:18; Dt.25:1; Is.45:25).

This justification comes through imputation.

In Romans 4 the word 'logizomai' is mentioned 11 times in a classic Pauline and Reformation passage on Justification. 'Logizomai' is translated as: imputed, credited, reckoned, accounted.

*Romans 4:3 For what does the say Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted ['logizomai'] to him as righteousness'.*

This Scripture is a direct quote from Genesis 15:6 where the Hebrew equivalent 'chashav' is used. The idea is that God registered, counted, credited Abrahams faith as righteousness.

Again this word is used in a legal sense and is essentially an accounting term (Lev.25:27; 50, 52; 27:18,23). Hence the reformers called this a 'legal' and 'forensic' righteousness.

The Reformers also called it an 'alien' righteousness because it was and always will be a righteousness outside of us.

This righteousness is in fact a person, as Jeremiah 23:5,6 says: '...The Lord our righteousness...', ('Yehowah our tsadheq'; see also Phil.3:9). 'Our righteousness' now sits on the right hand of God!

Thus this righteousness is not of us but is substitutionary: 'He shall justify many for He shall bear their iniquities' (Is.53:11- literally: 'make many to be accounted ['tsadeq'] righteous')

## Sanctification

This refers to a separation from sin and the world; and a separation to God and His word. In Sanctification we are saved and being saved from the power of sin.

Sanctification is past ('positional' at salvation) and present continuous ('progressive') by the indwelling Holy Spirit from within:

*2 Timothy 4: 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

The word here, 'bring me safely', is the Greek 'sozo' - the same word for 'save'.

This work continues until Glorification:

*Philippians 1: 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

*1 John 3: 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

*Colossians 3: 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*

*Philippians 2: 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,*

The latter Scripture has nothing to do with working for salvation but rather co-operating with the Holy Spirit in the past salvation that was already received in Justification.

The Greek tense and voice of 'work out' is present imperative showing this is continuous as well as a command for all Christians.

Sanctification is synonymous with the word 'holiness' and is by the Holy spirit.

It is '...salvation through sanctification of the Spirit...' (2Thess.2:13; 1Pet.1:2).

Sanctification is also inextricably linked to the Word: 'Sanctify them through your Word...' (Jn.17:17).

Although Sanctification involves surrender and yielding to the Holy Spirit, the 'feet' to that surrender is action.

We are to '*present*' our bodies (Rom.12:1);

'*...keep yourself pure*' (1Tim.5:22);

take up our cross daily (Lk.9:23; 14:27);

'*exercise yourself unto godliness*' (1Tim.4:7);

and '*work out your own salvation*' (Phil.2:12).

We are *progressively* sanctified by being in the written Word and separating ourselves from sin and the polluted thinking of the world.

The holiness experience throughout life is a *battle* (Rom.7:23-25).

We are told to *resist* and not to *yield* to unrighteousness (Rom.6:12,13);

to '*strive*' (Rom.15:30);

'*fight*' (1Tim.6:12; 2Tim.4:7; 1Cor.9:26; Heb.10:32);

'*wrestle*' (Eph.6:12);

'*mortify the deeds of the body*' (Rom.8:13; Col.3:5);

*deny* our sinful ways (Tit.2:11,12);

'*subject the body*' (1Cor.9:27);

'*cast off the works of darkness*' (Rom.13:12);

'*take the whole armour of God*' (Eph.6:11,13);

and to '*cleanse ourselves*' and be '*perfecting holiness*' (2Cor.7:1)

The Scriptural words linked with Sanctification are fighting terms! - '*mortify*', '*strive*', '*fight*', '*wrestle*'... We must be careful here not to make Sanctification our work separate to the Holy Spirit's work. The work of Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit.

However, Scripture clearly attests to us having a part to play in His work. We co-operate and are 'partakers of His holiness' (Heb.12:10; 6:4).

Justification is the outside and past work of Christ by imputation, Sanctification is the present work of the Holy Spirit from within.

In Justification we do not grow, yet in Sanctification we do grow, mature and develop. In Justification we do not work - righteousness comes by grace through faith alone (Gal.2:16; 3:2,5,10; Rom.4:5; 3:27; 9:32).

But this cannot be said entirely for progressive Sanctification. In the latter we do co-operate, strive, and 'work out our own salvation' with the Holy Spirit who is doing the work within us (Phil.2:12,13).

John Bunyan wrote: 'If you do not put a difference between justification wrought by the man Christ without and sanctification wrought by the Spirit of Christ within...you are not able to divide the Word aright, but contrariwise, you corrupt the Word of God, and cast stumbling blocks before the people'.

*2 Corinthians 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.*

Here 'completion' is the Greek present active showing the progressive action by the Christian. Positional or 'entire' Sanctification without progressive Sanctification will lead to two opposite errors or degrees of such - 'Sinless Perfection' and 'Antinomianism'. Antinomianism is Latin for 'against the law'. In common terms it is when a person has a 'low view' of sin and might think: 'I'm saved, sealed and delivered and so it does not matter if I sin'.

Both sinless perfection and antinomianism are opposite extremes. Both deny sin yet in different ways. On both sides there will ultimately be a denial of effort, responsibility, separation and mortification to do with sin.

The core of the Gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ on our behalf as sinners (1Cor.15:3,4). The Gospel is God's work for us, not in us. We must not distort the Gospel by turning people to what God might do in them. We must teach them to look away from themselves. The Gospel is about Justification not Sanctification!

The Gospel is objective and outside of us - it is the work of Christ 2,000 years ago.

## **Glorification**

This refers to that final change and redemption of the body.

In Glorification we are saved from the presence of sin in us and in the world.

*Romans 8: 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

*2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

Why do we 'groan'? - because we live in sinful flesh and await the redemption of such!

The experience and the dissatisfaction with sin in Romans 7 and the victories over it in Romans 8 are concurrent. To separate the two is to deny one or the other. It is also arguable that we cannot know the experiences in Romans 7 if we are not experiencing the victories in Romans 8.

In other words we will become increasingly dissatisfied with sin in ourselves the more we know the power and the working of the Holy Spirit.

Thus we will want to strive more and more against sin and the flesh. This has been the consistent testimony of the great saints down through the centuries.

### **So what about our questions concerning Christians sinning, etc? What is sin?**

Several different words are found in the Greek but the general word is 'hamartia' which means missing the mark of the absolute holiness and righteousness of God.

Who would dare say they never miss this mark?

In the flesh and in the world the presence of sin still reigns!

Romans chapters 6,7 and 8 teach the gamut of the doctrine of sin.

*Romans 6: 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*

We still live in sinful flesh.

The possibility of allowing the flesh to encroach is evident by many Scriptures: 6:12:

*Romans 6:13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.* (note it does not mention spirits but 'members')

'Do not present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness', ('members' refers to the seat of lusts and passions)

7:15-18: - describes the war between the flesh & the spirit.

In the flesh sin may reign, (vs.17)...7:20:

If I sin it is in the flesh...8:12:

We are not 'to live after the flesh'...13:12-13:

*Romans 13: 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.*

'...They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God' (9:8)

'For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace...For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live' (8:5,6,13).

In contrast, in the new man/creation we are 'freed from sin' (6:7).

Thus we are to 'reckon [ourselves] dead to sin' (6:11) and '...sin shall not have dominion...' (6:14).



In summary, there are two 'laws' - one in my members ('the law of sin') and one in my mind ('the law of my mind'). '...With the mind I serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin' (7:25). Because our sinful flesh wars against our righteous soul (1Pet.2:11; Gal 5:16), we struggle to walk the walk at times.

However, in a true believer it is a war with one side stronger and with one side having 'dominion' over the other!

It must be remembered that Christians are undergoing this process of Sanctification at differing rates and depths.

The success in the struggle against sin will vary from person to person and from time to time. But Justification will produce Sanctification and change will be apparent.

The habits of sin may still be evident in the flesh but now there is a new master. Sometimes it may be almost impossible to tell a true believer who has fallen into grievous open sin from a false 'believer' who is deluding himself that he is saved.

However, the 'new man' is 'created in righteousness and true holiness' (Eph.4:24). He should sin less than the 'old man'.

The spirit of this new Born Again creature is 'sinless' now (1John 3:9; 5:18) but lives in a sinful body that will one day be glorified and made sinless also.

'And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life [Sanctification] because of righteousness [Justification].

But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies [Glorification] by His Spirit that dwells in you' (Rom.8:10,11).

To say that we Christians do not wilfully sin ('miss the mark' of the absolute perfection of God), is arrogant and proud. To do so would be to put ourselves equal with God Himself!

The scriptures do not set up divisions of sinning as 'willful' or 'unwillful'. All sinning is in the 'members' of the flesh. Such people who claim 'Christians cannot wilfully sin' do place themselves in a most dangerous position of pride and deception.

The tendency of such people is to legalism, sectarianism and a judgmentalism which is offensive to other Christians.

It is usually not difficult to see pride and sin in their own lives. 'They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on mens shoulders...' (Matt.23:4). Such a mindset places unnecessary bondage, legalism and moral demands on self, family and friends to the point where many are prime targets for cult groups or suffer mental or emotional breakdowns.

**The keeping of moral codes or a way of life is not the primary essence of Christianity.**

If that were the case then many cults and false religions today would suffice for our salvation!

Christianity is uniquely a divine appointment to eternal life through faith and the substitutionary death and resurrection of Christ. It is perhaps arguable that hardly a day passes without most Christians on earth having sinned (1Jn.1:7-10; 1Cor., etc).

The Corinthian Christians willfully sinned! Paul found drunkenness and fornication yet called them 'brethren'! However, by urging them to repent and seek forgiveness he was not condoning or excusing their behaviour. But it has to be acknowledged that such sinning did and could take place! God forbid that any Christians should willfully sin - but it would be foolish to say they cannot.

As Christians, we have been set free from the penalty and power of sin but not from the presence of sin.

We have in the **past** been set free through the work of Christ without and delivered once and for all from the penalty of sin in **Justification**. We **have been** and **are being** delivered from the power of sin in progressive **Sanctification** by the Spirit within. We **will in the future be** set free from the presence of sin in **Glorification**.

If we have trusted in the true Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the substitute for our sins, and His righteousness alone - in his death burial, resurrection...then Justification, Sanctification and Glorification are a foregone conclusion (Rom.8:28-30; Eph.1:3-14)!

May we be students of the doctrines of, and the distinctions between, these three facets of salvation. May we repent of and hate sin. But may we forever give praise to the God of our salvation whose plan and system of Justification, Sanctification and Glorification is masterful and perfect to deliver us from sin!

## **Things to Mull**

1. Define Justification in your own terms.
2. Explain Justification in “Court Room” “Legal” terms.
3. Why did God decide to save us using Justification?
4. Define Sanctification in your own terms.
5. Describe briefly how God has guided you through Sanctification.
6. Why do we desire grace from others as we are being sanctified but have little grace for others going through the process. (What verses speak to this?)
7. Describe Glorification in your own terms.
8. Why is Glorification put off until after our death? Wouldn't it be a much better testimony to God's existence if He did it now?

## **Bibliography**

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