

Salvation Belongs to the Lord (Sanctification Part 1)

The last few sermons we have been talking about righteousness, particularly what it means to be “righteous” in God’s sight. Our problem as sinful people is that we do not possess the righteousness God requires to be saved. As Paul says in Rom. 3:9-10: **“For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: None is righteous, no, not one . . .”** Because of sin, ALL of us who stand in God’s court of law are guilty as charged! As sinners we do not possess the righteousness God requires. We are NOT justified before God. BUT, the good news is given by Paul in Rom. 3:21-22: **“But NOW the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law . . . the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.”** This “righteousness” is displayed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. As the sinless Son of God, he laid down his life on the cross as a RIGHTEOUS sacrifice. And those who believe in him are declared righteous. To the one who has faith in Jesus, God says, *“you are justified.”* To the one who has faith in Jesus, God says, *“Your sins are forgiven. You are free. My Son has paid the penalty for your law breaking. I have punished Him in your place. I have laid your sins upon Him. And, He has given you his righteousness. You are saved!”* This is the doctrine of justification. Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us. And now, **“There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”** (Rom. 8:1). There is no better news for the sinner!

Well, this is ONE part of the great work of God in saving his people. As we’ve seen in Rom. 8:30: **“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”** But, now turn with me to 1 Cor. 6:11 as we continue with another emphasis on the righteousness of God, the doctrine of sanctification. Here, Paul tells the Corinthians (and us): **“But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”** Here, we see, that in the grand scheme of salvation, God does not merely “DECLARE” a sinner as righteous, He also WORKS in the same to produce righteousness. I think of Eph. 2:10. After vv. 8-9 (being saved by grace through faith), we read: **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”** Brothers and sisters, God does not stop with justification; He sets you apart as holy. And, He works in you by the Holy Spirit so that you become more and more godly throughout your life. This is the doctrine of sanctification. Right now, I am looking to preach two sermons. Today, will be more general. I have 2 truths: 1) I want to define sanctification. 2) I want to show that sanctification is the will of God for his people.

1. Sanctification Defined. Sanctification is a big word; but it is very important. The most basic meaning is to set something apart as holy. We must begin our definition with God. God says to Israel in Lev. 22:32: **“And you shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel . . .”** In other words, God, and his name are to be set apart (sanctified) unlike any other name. And because God is holy, he commands us to be holy. We see this word in Gen. 2:3 as God **“blessed the seventh day and made it holy.”** In Lev. 21:8,

speaking of the priest, God says to Aaron: **“You shall sanctify him . . . He shall be holy to you, for I, the LORD, who sanctify you, am holy.** Generally speaking in the OT, we see that God sets his people, Israel, apart as a “*special*,” “*holy*” people. They are distinct from the other nations of the world. When we come to the NT, we see the same truth. When Paul writes to the Church at Corinth, he says, **“To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .”** (1 Cor. 1:2).

With this in mind, as we look in the NT particularly, we see that God both sets us apart as “holy.” AND, He also works in us to “make us” holy. This means that sanctification is both DEFINITIVE and PROGRESSIVE. This means that if you are saved, you are set apart as holy (definite). And you are being made holy in the way you live your life (progressive). Let’s consider both of these realities for a few minutes.

i. Sanctification is definitive. In other words, God sets you apart as holy. The word sanctify stems from the root meaning of “to cut.” I think of you mothers and teachers of young children who cut out letters so your class can color them and paste them on paper, etc. You “cut” the paper and take out a letter such as “A” so you can use in a special way. In the same kind of way, God “cuts” people and places and things apart so they can be used in special ways. I think of Peter’s words when he says, **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”** (1 Pet. 2:9). Think back to 1 Cor. 6:11: **“But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God . . .”** When God saves you, you ARE sanctified. You ARE “set apart as holy.” Now, since you are sinful, in and of yourself, as one who has fallen short of God’s glory, how can God say that you are NOW sanctified? You know the answer! It is because of the person and work of Christ. Today, you are sanctified by the “blood of Christ” (Heb. 10:29). In Heb. 10:10 we read: **“And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”** In Heb. 13:12: **“So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.”** In the context of marriage, Paul says to the Ephesians, **“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word . . .”** (Eph. 5:25-26). Today, if you are a Christian, if you have been saved, you are now “set apart as holy” because of Jesus. The death grip of sin has been broken. No longer does sin have dominion over you. Now, there is no condemnation associated with your sin and your standing before God (Rom. 8:1). In this way, sanctification is definitive.

ii. Sanctification is progressive. At the same time, sin remains. Does sin remain in your life? Does sin remain in your household? Does sin remain at your workplace? Does sin remain even among us as we relate to one another? Of course it does! This is why sanctification is also progressive. In other words, sanctification is a process. It begins with our justification and the righteousness of Christ given to us. But, as we’ve seen from Eph. 2:10, the process continues.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” As Paul says to the Philippians, **“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”** (Phil. 1:6). 1 Thess. 5:23-24: **“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”** Jude 24: **“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy . . .”**

So, what does this mean for you? That sanctification is both definitive and progressive? It means that NOW, because of the righteousness of Christ in justification, you are set apart as holy. And, it means that God is working in you (by the Holy Spirit – next week’s sermon) to make you more and more godly in the way you live your life! This means that as Christians we are “salt” and “light” in this world. We are like a city that sits up on a hill for everyone to see. This also means that we are not what we will be. How many of you have grown in godliness over the last year? Last years? This month? How many of you mothers and fathers have learned more about being a good fathers and mothers as you read and apply the Scripture over time? As husbands and wives, how here at Grace, I am sure you have grown in godliness. Grandparents, those of you who have been Christians for a while, how many decisions do you make now that you wouldn’t have made years ago? (There are so many examples . . . Because you are sanctified and are being sanctified, you are not today what you will be as you continue down the road to heaven.)

2. Sanctification is the will of God for his people. We see this general truth from 1 Thess. 4:3 as Paul says to the church in Thessalonica: **“For this is the will of God, your sanctification . . .”** Brothers and sisters, No one will be saved without sanctification. This is God’s will! This is God’s design. This is God’s plan. God’s people WILL BE sanctified. I immediately think of Jesus’ prayer in John 17:17-19, when he says, **“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”** Here we see God the Father and God the Son saying the same thing. And in fact, THIS IS WHY JESUS CAME . . . that we might be sanctified. I think of Paul’s words to husbands in the church of Ephesus: **“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish”** (Eph. 5:25-27).

Consider other verses as well (there are many). In 2 Thess. 2:13 we read: **“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”** Rom. 6:22: **“But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.”** 1 Cor. 1:30: **“And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and**

sanctification and redemption . . .” On and on I could go. But, God’s will is your sanctification. This is why we read in Heb. 12:14: **“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”**

Brothers and sisters, Of ALL the things in this life, all the decisions we make, all the ways we ask, *“What is God’s will for my life,”* the answer is godliness . . . godliness in every area of your life. Have you ever asked the question: *“What is God’s will for my life?”* Well, the answer begins with your sanctification, your practical godliness. (Next, we will get to the power of sanctification and the means to sanctification.) But for now, how do you know God’s will for your life? Our choices at certain times in our lives abound. Who shall I marry? Which career decision should I pursue? Where should I move my family? Which church should I attend? So many decisions in life! And many Christians are just waiting for the “Spirit to show them.” They expect some word, some dream, some sign from heaven, etc. And then you look at their lives, and practical godliness falls so short. Well, I think I can promise you based upon the Word of God that if you pursue godliness, those kinds of things will work themselves out. Sometimes two decisions are equal. So just pick one. And in the meantime, be godly in all you do. Read the Word to find out what this looks like. And be godly. Everything you need for life and godliness is given to us in the Word. And, we (the body) are here to help one another with the decisions of life.

Your sanctification is God’s will! And No one is saved without being sanctified.

Let me end with reading 1 Cor. 6:9-11: **“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”**