

Salvation Belongs to the Lord (Sanctification – Part 3: Benefits)

(I was helped greatly to think through these benefits by Thomas Watson's work in *Theology: A Body of Divinity*)

So far under the topic of sanctification, we have seen that God is the one who sanctifies. Those who have been effectually called, regenerated, justified, are also sanctified, set apart as holy. In justification, we have been declared "righteous" because of the blood of Christ. And, God gives us his righteousness and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are being sanctified. As we gather together regularly as God's church, preaching and teaching and singing and praying the Word of God, taking the Lord's Supper, as we gather in our home groups, as we encourage one another in prayer and good works, etc., we are being sanctified. And to this end we work. As Paul says, "**work out your salvation with fear and trembling**" (Phil. 2:12). Today, I want to continue the theme of sanctification by speaking to the BENEFITS that accompany our sanctification. There are many! As we read in Eph. 1:8: "**in Christ God has lavished great blessings upon us.**" Thomas Watson says that sanctification is the seed from which flowers bloom. The flowers are the blessings.

So, what are some of these blessings. I want to highlight 5 this morning (very briefly – more as meditations than deeper teachings). The Westminster Shorter Catechism as well as the Baptist Catechism from 1693 mentions some benefits. Here is question #39 from the BC: *What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?* Here is the answer where we will find our 5 truths for today: *The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.*

1. The Assurance of God's love. Today, if you are in Christ, if you are sanctified, set apart by God in this great salvation, you know that God loves you. We see truth through Scripture. Throughout the letter of 1 John we see that the Apostle writes to a people that "know" they belong to God. In 2:3 we read, "**And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.**" And in 2:5: "**but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him . . .**" In 2 Tim. 1:12 Paul says, "**But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.**" In Gal. 2:20 we also read: "**I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**" Here we see an example with John and Paul that they had an inner assurance that God loved them and cared for them. Brothers and sisters, if you are a Christian, if you are sanctified, you have the Holy Spirit who cries out, "Abba Father." And you know that God loves you.

2. Peace of Conscience. In 1 Pet. 1:1-2 we read: "**Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for**

obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you . . .” Here we see sanctification linked with peace. To those who are sanctified, there will also be peace. There is an external peace that can be found in this world which comes and goes. A nation can have peace, a family can have peace, even a church can have peace. But, when it comes to sanctification and the work of the Holy Spirit, we speak of an internal peace, a peace that begins with God and then flows down to us and becomes ours. In 1 Thess. 5:23 we see that God the Father gives us peace: Paul says, **“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.”**

We also read that God, the Son, is the one who purchased our peace. Isaiah speaks of him in 9:6: **“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”** And Jesus says to us: **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you . . .”** (John 14:27). How can this be? Well, speaking of the Son, Paul says in Col. 1:19-20 **“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”** In vv. 21-22 we continue: **“And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him . . .”** In this text we see first what we were like in our sins before we came to Christ. We were *“alienated and hostile to God in our minds, doing evil deeds.”* As sinners who have fallen short of God’s glory, (and because of this fact, there is certainly no peace), **“God commanded his love toward us, in while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”** (Rom. 5:8). As Gal. 3:13 says, **“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us . . .”** If you are a Christian, God has punished his Son, in your place, you have been “redeemed,” you have been purchased by the precious blood Christ. And, the Son of God has not only purchased YOU, He has also purchased the peace that comes down to you. As Rom. 5:1 says, **“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Also, God the Holy Spirit is the One who makes sure we get this peace. In Gal 5, Paul lists many gifts of the Spirit. And one of those gifts (purchased by Christ) is peace. And how is this peace applied to our hearts? How does a conscience that was once fully destitute of peace come to know this peace? It is through the power of the Holy Spirit. You see, the Holy Spirit takes the gifts that Christ purchased (peace) and applies it to our hearts and to our minds (to our conscience). Do you remember the story of Hagar, Abraham’s concubine whom Sarah gave to her husband when she couldn’t have a child. Well, when she had Isaac, Abraham sends Hagar and the boy Ishmael away. And as they run out of water, as she comes to what she thinks is the end, the Angel of the Lord appears to her and opens her eyes to see a beautiful well water. In the same way, the Holy Spirit takes the grace of God in Christ and gives us peace. God the Father decrees peace; God the Son purchases peace; and God the Holy Spirit applies peace.

3. Joy in the Holy Spirit. Here we find another fruit of sanctification applied by the Holy Spirit: joy. And not just any joy, but joy in the Holy Spirit. This “joy” is also a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Rom. 14:17 says, **“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”** In Rom. 15:13 Paul prays, **“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”** In 1 Thess. 1:6 Paul also says, **“And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit . . .”** One of the fruits of the Spirit that God gives to his people is joy. It is a gift that also flows down to us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And since it comes by the power of the Holy Spirit, this means what we have as Christians is not given to the world. Now, the world can have joy, but it comes and goes as the circumstances of life come and go. But, not so with the Christian. The joy given to us flows from deep within our hearts; it is a part of who we are.

Thomas Watson says, *“Joy is setting the soul upon the top of a pinnacle – it is the cream of the sincere milk of the word. Spiritual joy is a sweet and delightful passion, arising from the apprehension and feeling of some good, whereby the soul is supported under present troubles, and fenced against future fear.”* So, what is this “good” that gives us joy and supports us in this life that is full of troubles?

Look over with me to 1 Pet. 1:3-9 for the answer: We read: **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice,** (We rejoice in the gospel, particularly that we are “born again.”) And then he continues: **“though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”**

(Recall this week with the 2+2 folks from SEBTS with all the troubles and hardships, yet, joy inexpressible.)

4. Increase of Grace. Another benefit of sanctification is an increase in grace. We may refer to this truth as “growth in grace.” 2 Pet. 3:18 Peter admonishes his readers to: **“grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”** In Col. 1:9-10 Paul says, **“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God . . .”** In 2 Thess. 1:3 we read: **“We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and**

the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.” In Eph. 4:15-16 Paul commands the Ephesians: **“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”**

A good picture of this truth is a tree planted by an abundant ever flowing stream. Ps. 1:3 says: **“He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”**

In Ps. 92: 12-14 we get an even better picture: **“The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green . . .”** If you are a Christian, if you are sanctified, you will be like a healthy plant from a garden. As my green beans grow until I pick a mature harvest, so do we grow in the grace of God all the way to the either death or the coming of the Lord Jesus. Either way, growth continues and is constant. And we grow like this because we benefit from the real tree of life, God Himself, who has taken on flesh in the Lord Jesus, lived a sinless life, laid down his life on the cross, risen from the dead, and has now ascended in his glorious body to the right hand of God where He continually prays for his people.

Brothers and sisters, this is the experience of the Christian in sanctification. Personally I think of 1 Tim. 4 as Paul tells Timothy: **“If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus . . . Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come . . . For to this end we toil and strive . . . Command and teach these things . . . Set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity . . . Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers”** (1 Tim. 4:6-16). But, this truth today isn’t just for the elders. They are fall all those who are sanctified, for all those who are being sanctified. How is it going?

5. **Perseverance.** If a fruit of sanctification is growth in grace, it merely follows that the Christian will persevere to the end. Our fifth and last benefit of sanctification is perseverance in the grace of God. I think of the golden chain of salvation found in Rom. 8:29-30: **“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”** If you are sanctified, if you are being sanctified in Christ, you will endure to the end. Again, let me read from I Pet. 1:3-5 we read: **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is**

imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time . . ."

Now, I know that many Christians believe we can lose our salvation. And I grant that those who merely profess Christ for their own purposes may fall away. I grant that if believers were left to themselves they would fall away (I am only here today because God is keeping me). I also believe that at times, in the providence of God, when God's grace is found in less measure, that for his purposes and our good, He allows us to go in our own ways. But, we are still being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Grace may be like a fire that goes out, but the coals below are still glowing. But, God will keep his people! And I would argue that this truth, the truth that God will preserve his people, is the truth that brings the most comfort to the Christian. Brothers and sisters, no matter what you are going through, God is keeping you! In closing let me finish with two applications.

Application: There is a strong link between faithfulness in our Christian walk and assurance. Obedience always strengthens faith and the assurance that follows. (though I believe all Christians over time will have assurance. By the Holy Spirit, we will say, "Abba." And this will continue as we look to Christ, particularly in his finished work on the cross, the resurrection, his ascension and ongoing intercession for us.

Application: Consider the benefits of sanctification compared to what the world thinks are benefits. (health, wealth, prosperity vs. "assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, growth in grace, perseverance). I think of 1 John 3:1: **"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him."** The best things in life are still free. And God knows how to give his children good gifts. These are the kinds of things God, in Christ, has lavished upon us (Eph. 1:8). Therefore, give thanks. And, continue to press on brothers and sisters.