

The Cross and Sanctification¹



SABBATH—MARCH 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 6:1-16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Galatians 5:16-25; Colossians 3:1-4.

MEMORY VERSE: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

A FEW YEARS AGO, SOMEONE READ THESE FAMOUS WORDS BY ELLEN WHITE, “Jesus was treated as we deserved. In that way, we might be treated as He deserves. He was punished for our sins, which He did not deserve. In that way, we might be justified² by His righteousness (holiness), which we do not deserve. He suffered the death that was ours so that we might receive the life that was His.”—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25. This person was so thankful and happy for the wonderful news of Jesus’ glorious and costly sacrifice.

He said: “Jesus did so much for me. I am accepted by God through Jesus’ righteousness. Now I hate the sin that is in me. O, Jesus, I love You so much. Please change me. Please make me pure. Make me more like You!”

This week, we will take a look at what the Cross does to the life of the person who accepts it.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: What is cheap grace? What does *sanctification* mean? In what ways is sanctification complete (full) at conversion?³ How does a person live righteously (holy) throughout life? How are we sanctified? What part does the law play in the Christian life?

Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 19.

¹sanctification—becoming like Jesus with the help of the Holy Spirit; Jesus living in us so we can develop His character; Jesus’ work of making us holy.

²justified—to have forgiven and made a person righteous; to have cleansed from sin.

³conversion—when a person accepts Jesus as his or her personal Savior and decides to live a Christian life.

SUNDAY—MARCH 13

CHEAP GRACE AND THE CROSS (Romans 6:1-16).

Last week, we studied justification by faith. Justification is the good news that the perfect life of Jesus, His perfect righteousness (holiness), is credited to us. It is as if we ourselves live His sinless life, even though we do not. We saw, too, that justification is given to us through faith, not through works. We have faith in Jesus' righteousness. So God recognizes Jesus' righteousness as our own. We realize our great need to be righteous (holy). So we go to the Cross and claim Jesus' righteousness for ourselves. And we get it! We do not get Jesus' righteousness because we are worthy. We get Jesus' righteousness because God, through Jesus' death, gives it to us. It does not matter how faithfully and hard we tried to obey the law.

God does not just declare a sinner righteous. God also sanctifies⁴ that person.

What do the following verses teach us about sanctification? Romans 6:1-16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Galatians 5:16-25.

People who are justified by faith will have a new life in Jesus. This is a life of obedience and sanctifica-

tion. Justification by faith without sanctification is cheap grace. Cheap grace means that people say they believe Jesus died for their sins, but then they keep on sinning! Cheap grace cannot save anyone.

Imagine two people. The first person believes she has to work as hard as she can to earn the righteousness she needs to be saved. This is because she is not quite sure she has been saved. The second person works hard because she knows that she is already saved in Jesus. She knows His righteousness is her righteousness. So out of love and thankfulness she works as hard as she can for a life of obedience. Which person has a better chance of succeeding in the Christian life? Why?



Developing the fruits of the Holy Spirit is the work of sanctification.

⁴sanctifies—God helping us to have a character like Jesus' character; God helping us do good works.

MONDAY—MARCH 14

SET APART (Hebrews 10:10).

In the Hebrew language, the word often translated “sanctify” (*kadosh*, or *hakodesh*) appears in different ways more than eight hundred times in the Old Testament. In the Greek, *hagaizo* or *hagios* (often translated as “to sanctify,” and “holy,” and “saint”) appears about two hundred-forty times in the New Testament. In both cases, the words are translated not only as “sanctify” but also as “holiness,” “to make holy,” or “holy.” So these words give us a powerful example that sanctification and holiness are closely connected.

What is holiness? In Hebrew, the basic meaning is “to set apart for holy use,” or even “to be set apart from sin unto God.” People who are sanctified belong to God and to His work.

How do Leviticus 19:2 and Leviticus 20:7, 26 help us understand the meaning of holiness?

In the Bible, it is not just people who are sanctified or made holy. The place where God shows His presence is “holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). The Sabbath is holy because it was a day God set apart (Exodus 20:8-11). The sanctuary is called the “holy place” because it was set

apart by God for His use (Exodus 26:33).

But none of these things have holiness, or are sanctified, by anything inside them. If the Lord had not set the seventh day apart as holy, it would be just any other day. Holiness, or sanctification, is something done by a holy God. Holiness, or sanctification, is something God does to a person or to a thing. For example, God set ancient⁵ Israel apart. He called the people of Israel away from slavery and from the influence of the pagan⁶ nations around them. In this way, He could use Israel to teach the world about Him (Exodus 19:6).



God called Israel from slavery so they could teach the world about Him.

⁵ancient—very old.

⁶pagan—not worshipping God.

How is the church today “sanctified” (1 Corinthians 1:2)? Think about your own experience with God. How has God set you apart for His holy use?

TUESDAY—MARCH 15

**THE SANCTIFIED STATE
(CONDITION) (1 Corinthians 1:2).**

In 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul calls the church “sanctified in Christ Jesus.” The Greek word for “sanctified” is a verb⁷ that means a completed (finished) action, something that happened in the past. But it has continuing results in the present. If you read about the Corinthian church, you will discover that it struggled with many serious spiritual problems (1 Corinthians 5; 1 Corinthians 6). How does the meaning of sanctification we learned about in yesterday’s lesson help us to understand that the Corinthian church had been “sanctified”?

In the Bible, there is no such thing as partial⁸ sanctification. We belong to Jesus completely from the moment we accept Him. We stay completely His as long as we stay connected to Him by faith. Sanctification is a total experience of God’s

ownership. This ownership is complete when we accept Jesus. This ownership continues throughout the Christian life.

How, then, do we understand the idea that “sanctification is the work of a lifetime”?—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*,⁹ p. 560.

There are different sides to sanctification: (1) God sets us apart, and sanctification is complete. We belong to God. We have been sanctified by Him. Because of what Jesus has done on the cross, God has the right to claim us as His own. (2) But we continue to grow in grace. We are still being sanctified. “‘Sanctify them by your [God’s] truth: your word is truth’ ” (John 17:17, NIV). “May God Himself sanctify you through and through [completely]” (1 Thessalonians 5:23, NIV). In these two verses, the verb *sanctify* means that sanctification is happening now and that we continue to share in Jesus’ holiness. Through faith, we are changed (sanctified) by God’s Holy Spirit working in us. The Holy Spirit continues to cleanse us, to rid us of sin, so we can develop the character of Jesus within us. Jesus’ character is shown in 1 Corinthians 13 and Galatians 5:22, 23.

⁷verb—a word that shows action. The words *jog*, *drive*, and *look* are verbs, because they show action.

⁸partial—not complete.

⁹apostles—Jesus’ twelve disciples were called apostles after Jesus returned to heaven.

What is Galatians 4:19 saying to you about sanctification?

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 16

**“YOUR LIFE IS HIDDEN WITH CHRIST IN GOD”
(Colossians 3:3, NlrV).**

Write in your own words what Colossians 3:1-4 teaches us about the Christian life.

Colossians 3:1-4 describes the kind of relationship we should have in our new life with Jesus. We are risen with Him, because we died with Him. When we accepted Jesus, we died to our old self and began living a new life in Him. By faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we show Jesus' character in our own words and actions. Jesus “has become God's wisdom for us. He makes us right with God. He makes us holy [sanctified] and sets us free” (1 Corinthians 1:30, NlrV).

Where do you see in Colossians 3:1-4 the hope of the Second Coming? How is that hope connected with the theme of Colossians 3:1-4? Why would the Second Coming be mentioned in the verses about sanctification?

Last week, we studied about *imputed righteousness*. Imputed righteousness is Jesus' righteousness credited to us. But Colossians 3:1-4 is talking about *imparted righteousness*. Imparted righteousness is the righteousness of Jesus shown in us. We are not talking about *trying* to obey God's law. We are talking about the experience of having died to the old person so God can give us *His own character*. We need to remember that we are fallen sinners, and that our fall included more than condemnation¹⁰ because of sin. Our fall included our moral,¹¹ physical, and spiritual downslide because of sin. Jesus died and rose and is ministering (working) in heaven so He can restore¹² us to what humans were before Adam and Eve fell. God created Adam and Eve in His image (Genesis 1:26, 27). Sanctification is the beginning of God's effort to restore His image in us. So sanctification is an important part of God's process in bringing us back to Him.

Read again Colossians 3:1-4. What does it mean that we should “think about things that are in heaven” (Colossians 3:2, NlrV)? In what useful ways can we think about things in heaven? How does what we read, watch, think, and talk about influence how well we will succeed in thinking about heaven?

¹⁰condemnation—judgment of guilt.

¹¹moral—having to do with knowing what is right or wrong.

¹²restore—to make something as it was in the beginning before sin appeared.



Think about things in heaven.

THURSDAY—MARCH 17

GOD'S LAW AND THE GOSPEL (Romans 8:4).

We love God because of the salvation we receive from the Cross. Because we love Him, we want to follow Him in faith and obedience. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can have faith and obedience. Faith and obedience lead to a new life in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17).

But how do we know if we really are obeying God? How do we know if the Holy Spirit is leading us or if Satan is influencing us? We love God because we have been justified¹³ by faith. We want to obey God (Matthew 7:24; Romans 1:5; Romans 16:26; Galatians 3:1; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 4:17). Then how should we know what God expects from us?

How do the following verses help us to answer these questions? John 8:11, 34; Galatians 2:17; Romans 6:13; 1 John 2:1; 1 John 3:8; Hebrews 3:13; Hebrews 12:4.



“ ‘Leave your life of sin’ ”
(John 8:11, NlrV).

There is a law that describes sin (Romans 7:7; 1 John 3:4). That is why there are all these verses to warn us against sin. The presence of sin automatically means the law is with us. You cannot have sin without law. In the same way, you cannot have a crime without law. It does not make sense for the New Testament to require that we stay away from sin if there were no law describing sin.

God's law is spiritual (Romans 7:14). It is made for spiritual people who are inspired by the Holy Spirit to obey God. The law does not save anyone. The law offers safe borders

¹³justified—to have forgiven and made a person righteous; to have cleansed from sin.

for us and helps us understand how we are to show God's love in our lives. Many people say they love God, but then show that love in strange, hurtful ways. But the Bible tells us how we are to show God's love. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous [not too hard to obey]" (1 John 5:3). The Holy Spirit leads us to obey God's law in a way that "we can do everything the law requires. Our sinful nature no longer controls the way we live. The Holy Spirit now controls the way we live" (Romans 8:4, NIV).

Why do you think God wants us to keep His law? How is God's love shown to us through His law?

FRIDAY—MARCH 18

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 209–322; *Faith and Works*, pp. 29–32.

"To receive help from Jesus, we must understand and admit our need. We must have a true knowledge of ourselves. Jesus can save only people who know they are sinners. When we can see our helplessness and disclaim (reject) all self-trust, we shall lay hold on God's power.

"It is not only at the beginning of the Christian life that we disclaim self. As we grow in Jesus we need to constantly disclaim self. All our

good works depend on a power outside of ourselves. Our hearts need to reach out to God continually. We are to continually confess our sins and humble ourselves before Him. Danger is always around us. We are safe only as we feel our weakness and cling with the grasp of faith to our powerful Savior."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry [Work] of Healing*, pp. 445, 446.

"To many people, sanctification is self-righteousness. But these persons boldly claim Jesus as their Savior. What deception! The Son of God will not sanctify the person who breaks the Father's law, which Jesus came to glorify and honor."—Adapted from *Faith and Works*, p. 29.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A man named Stanley said that a leader of a small religious group kept trying to win him over to Jesus. But Stanley refused to listen. Then the leader of the group gave Stanley his wife for the night. Stanley later said, "That night changed my life. This was when I learned about God's love for me." Stanley and his pastor might have been sincere in their faith. But that is no safeguard against making a mistake like they did. A true understanding of God's love and law does not allow doing something like this. What does God's law really say to Stanley? How could the law help him have a better understanding about his experience? What does this story tell

- us about why the law is important for Christians?
2. Most Christians understand that justification is by faith. Why must sanctification be by faith, too? Read Acts 26:18.
 3. In the quote from *The Ministry of Healing*, we read that all our good works depend on a power “outside of ourselves.” What is the key to having this outside power work in our lives?