

The Cross *and* Sanctification



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Rom. 6:1-16, 1 Cor. 6:11, Gal. 5:16-25, Col. 3:1-4.*

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

A few years ago, a young man read these famous words by Ellen White, “Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25. Imagine if gratitude and happiness for the wonderful news of this glorious and costly provision prompted one man to say, “Because I am accepted through His righteousness alone, now I can go out and do whatever I want. Wow! the good news is better than I thought!”

Instead, this is what the young man really said: “Wow! Because of what Jesus did for me, because I am accepted through His righteousness alone, I so hate the sin that is in me. O, Lord, I love You so much; please change me, purify me, make me more like You!”

This week we'll take a look at another aspect of the Cross: what it does to the life of the one who accepts it as his or her own.

The Week at a Glance: What is *cheap* grace? What does sanctification mean in the Bible? In what ways is sanctification complete at conversion? In what ways is it an ongoing process? How are we sanctified? What role does the law play in the Christian life?

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

Cheap Grace and the Cross

Last week we studied justification by faith, the good news that the perfect life of Jesus, His perfect righteousness, is credited to us as though it were our own, as though we ourselves have lived His sinless life even though we haven't even come close. We saw, too, that this declaration of righteousness in our behalf is by faith, not by works. We believe—and Christ's righteousness becomes our own in the sight of God. Aware of our own utter need, we come to the foot of the Cross and claim something that's not ours; and we get it, not because we're worthy but because God is a God of grace and, through Christ's death, gives us what we never could earn ourselves, no matter how faithfully and diligently we sought to obey the law, or even the spirit of the law.

Yet, the good news of salvation doesn't end with the declaration of righteousness. God doesn't just declare a sinner righteous and then is done with that person. On the contrary, this declaration of righteousness is only the beginning. Something else happens to a person who has been justified. It's what's known as sanctification, and it's an inseparable part of the gospel.

Read the following texts and then summarize the essence of what they are saying: **Romans 6:1-16, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Galatians 5:16-25.**

There's no question that those who are justified by faith will have a new life in Christ, a life of obedience and sanctification. Justification by faith, without sanctification (which is by faith, as well), is a false justification, a false gospel. It's cheap grace, which is not God justifying the sinner but the sinner justifying sin. It's a gospel that, in the end, saves no one.

Imagine two people. The first person believes that she has to strive with all her God-given might to achieve the righteousness she needs to be saved, because she's not quite sure she has that salvation to begin with. Thus, she strives for a life of obedience. The second works from the premise that she is already saved in Christ, that His righteousness covers her, and now out of love and gratitude she strives with all her God-given might for a life of obedience. Who's more likely to succeed in the Christian life, and why?

Set Apart

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (*Heb. 10:10*).

In the Hebrew language, the word often translated “sanctify” (*kadosh*, or *hakodesh*) appears in various forms 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.” Thus, through the original meanings alone, we are given a powerful indicator that sanctification is tied to the idea of holiness.

But 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.” Thus, those who are sanctified belong to God and to His service.

With this understanding of the word in mind, read Leviticus 19:2; 20:7, 26. How do these texts help us understand the meaning of holiness?

It’s interesting that in the Bible, not just people are sanctified, or made holy. The place where God manifests His presence is on “holy ground” (*Exod. 3:5*); the Sabbath is holy because it was a day set apart by God (*Exod. 20:8-11*); the sanctuary is called the “holy place” because it, too, was set apart by God for His use (*Exod. 26:33*).

It’s important to note, however, that none of these things has holiness, or is sanctified, by anything internal to them. The seventh day, were it not deemed holy by the Lord, would be just any other day. Holiness, or sanctification, is something bestowed by a holy God; it’s something that God Himself does, either to a person or to a thing. In the case of ancient Israel, for instance, He set them apart, called them away from slavery and even from the influence of the pagan nations around them in order that they could be a people that He could use in His service, that of teaching the world about the true God (*Exod. 19:6*).

In what sense is the church today sanctified (see 1 Cor. 1:2)? Also, look at your own experience with the Lord. In what ways have you been set apart for holy use by God? How do you understand this idea in practical, everyday terms and experiences?

The Sanctified State

Read 1 Corinthians 1:2. Notice that Paul calls the church “sanctified in Christ Jesus.” The Greek word for “sanctified” appears in a tense that means a completed action in the past that has continuing results in the present. Yet, if you read about the Corinthian church, you discover that it struggled with many serious ethical and theological problems (see 1 Corinthians 5, 6). How, then, are we to understand that this church has been “sanctified”? How does the definition of *sanctification* we learned yesterday help answer this question?

In the Bible, there is no such thing as partial sanctification. We belong to Christ entirely from the moment we are born again, and we remain that way as long as we stay connected to Him by faith. Sanctification always signals a total experience of God’s ownership. This ownership is complete at conversion and should continue this way 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*, p. 560.

There are different facets to the idea of sanctification. In the relational sense, that of our being set apart by God, the work is complete. We belong to God. We have been sanctified by Him. Because of what Christ has done on the cross, the Lord has the right to claim us as His own.

But in a moral sense, in the sense of growing in grace, we are still in the process of being sanctified. In these two verses—“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (*John 17:17*) and “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly” (*1 Thess. 5:23*)—the verb for “sanctify” appears in the present tense, as in a continuous process by which we partake of Christ’s holiness in a distinct moral and practical sense. Through faith, and in total dependence upon God, we are changed by the power of God working in us, to cleanse us, to purge us of sin, so that the character of Christ is formed within us.

In the context of today’s study, read Galatians 4:19. What is that text saying to you?

“Your Life Is Hid With God in Christ”

Read Colossians 3:1-4 and summarize in your own words what is being said about the Christian life.

These are such beautiful verses, and they so clearly capture the relational aspect of our new life in Christ. We are risen with Jesus, because we first died with Him. That is, at the moment of conversion, we died to our old self and now live a new life in Jesus, a life in which we, by faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit, manifest, in our own flesh, our own heart, our own words and deeds, the character of Christ, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (*1 Cor. 1:30*).

Where do you see in these verses the hope of the Second Coming? How is that hope tied in with the basic theme of these verses? Why would it be mentioned there in this specific context?

Last week we looked at the concept of *imputed righteousness*, that is, a righteousness that is credited to us. But these texts are talking more about the experience of *imparted righteousness*; when the righteousness of Jesus is revealed in us. We’re not talking here about a slavish obedience to rules or laws but the experience of having died to the old man in order that God can impart to us His own character. It’s crucial to remember that we are fallen beings, and our fall included more than condemnation by God because of sin. Our fall included the degeneration of the race—morally, physically, and spiritually. Christ died and rose and is ministering in heaven in order to restore us to what we were before the Fall. Sanctification, which begins the moral restoration of the image of God in humans, is part of the process.

Read again Colossians 3:1-4. What does it mean that we should seek those things that are “above”? In what practical ways can we do this? How do what we read, watch, dwell upon, and talk about influence how well we will succeed in following this biblical admonition?

The Law and the Gospel

We love God because of the salvation that is ours through the Cross. And, as a result, we want to follow the Lord in faith and obedience. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can do this, resulting in a new life in Christ (*2 Cor. 5:17*).

Yet, the questions remain: How do we know if we really are obeying God? How do we know if the Spirit is leading us in a particular way or if we are being prompted by some other power? If we love God because we have been justified by faith and we want to obey Him (*Matt. 7:24, Rom. 1:5, 16:26, Gal. 3:1, Heb. 5:9, 1 Pet. 4:17*), we should know what God expects from us.

Read the following texts. What's the one clear message they have for us as Christians? *John 8:11, 34; Gal. 2:17; John 8:34; Rom. 6:13; 1 John 2:1; 3:8; Heb. 3:13; 12:4.*

How could there be all these admonitions against sin for the Christian, unless there was a law to define sin (*Rom. 7:7, 1 John 3:4*)? The existence of sin automatically means the existence of the law. You can't have sin without law, any more than you can have a crime without law. For the New Testament to demand that we refrain from sin, and yet to weaken or nullify the law, makes about as much sense as a nation demanding that citizens not steal cars while, at the same time, annulling or weakening laws against auto theft.

God's law is spiritual (*Rom. 7:14*), and it is made for spiritual beings, beings who are moved by the Holy Spirit to obey the Lord. The law was made not to save anyone but to frame, as it were, safe borders for us, to help us understand how we are to reveal in our lives the love for God that we profess. Anyone can profess that he or she loves God, and people through the years, claiming to be "led by the Spirit," have sought to express this "love" in some very strange and even hurtful ways. The Bible, however, without ambiguity, tells us how we are to reveal that love: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (*1 John 5:3*). The Spirit is going to lead us, not contrary to the law but in a way that "the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (*Rom. 8:4*).

Why do you think, based on your own walk with the Lord, that God wants us to keep His law? How is God's love revealed to us through His law?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 309–322; *Faith and Works*, pp. 29–32.

“In order to receive help from Christ, we must realize our need. We must have a true knowledge of ourselves. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. Only as we see our utter helplessness and renounce all self-trust, shall we lay hold on divine power.

“It is not only at the beginning of the Christian life that this renunciation of self is to be made. At every advance step heavenward it is to be renewed. All our good works are dependent on a power outside of ourselves; therefore there needs to be a continual reaching out of the heart after God, a constant, earnest confession of sin and humbling of the soul before Him. Perils surround us; and we are safe only as we feel our weakness and cling with the grasp of faith to our mighty Deliverer.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 455, 456.

“With many, sanctification is only self-righteousness. And yet these persons boldly claim Jesus as their Saviour and Sanctifier. What a delusion! Will the Son of God sanctify the transgressor of the Father’s law—that law which Christ came to exalt and make honorable?”—*Faith and Works*, p. 29.

Discussion Questions:

1 A man (let’s call him Stanley) said that a leader of a small religious group kept on trying to win him over to Jesus, but he refused to listen. Then the leader of the community gave Stanley his wife for the night. Stanley later gave his testimony, saying, “That night changed my life, for that was when I learned about God’s love for me.” Stanley and his pastor may have been sincere in their faith, but sincerity alone is no safeguard against error and presumption. The pastor’s so-called generosity in sharing his wife undermines the very principle it claims to uphold: the sacrificial love of Christ. A true understanding of the gospel leaves no room for condoning or engaging in such a practice. In particular, what would the law of God say here to Stanley? How could the law have helped him form a better judgment about his experience? What does this story tell us about the importance of the law for all Christians?

2 Most Christians understand that justification is by faith. Why must sanctification be by faith, as well? *See Acts 26:18.*

3 Ellen White wrote that all our good works are dependent upon a power “outside of ourselves” (see above). What is the key we need in order to have this outside power work in our lives?

Lesson From the Lettuce Garden

by Charlotte Ishkanian

Salomé is a faithful Christian steward. She has always believed in returning a faithful tithe and giving other offerings to God. Recently she learned that God is ever faithful to those who trust Him.

Last year she planted a garden of lettuce to sell in the marketplace. She planted 11 rows of lettuce and marked off one and a half rows on one side of the garden as God's lettuce. The rest would be hers to use or to sell. She watered and weeded and prayed over her garden, and the plants grew.

As harvest time neared, Salomé noticed that God's part of her garden was growing well, but her nine and a half rows were not doing as well. The plants in her part of the garden, which received the same care and the same water as God's portion, were far smaller than God's plants. She knew God had something to do with this, but she was not sure just what.

When the lettuce was ready to be picked, she harvested God's plants first and sold the crop for about \$56. She left her own lettuce plants in the ground several more days, hoping that they would grow a little more. But when she finally sold the lettuce she earned only \$14 for her efforts, one-third as much for seven times as much lettuce. She sensed that the devil was tempting her to refigure her tithe and keep some of the money she had received for selling God's portion of lettuce. But she determined to give every cent of God's lettuce money to Him.

The next growing season she again marked off the garden and planted 11 rows. She gave God the same row and a half, and she took the other nine and a half rows. She watered and weeded them all the same. And when harvest time came, God's portion produced small heads, while her portion grew very well. God's portion brought about \$7, while her portion grew round and fat and sold for \$120! Salomé realized that God was blessing her for her faithfulness to Him. She gave God His portion plus a Thank-you offering from her portion of the harvest.



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