

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?

Key Text: *Colossians 3:1-4.*

Teachers Aims:

1. To declare that the good news of salvation does not end with justification.
2. To present sanctification's two facets.
3. To underscore the relationship between the law and the gospel.

Lesson Outline:

I. The Cross Changes Our Life Journey (*Gal. 5:16-25*).

- A. Justification is the beginning of a new life of sanctification and obedience.
- B. Cheap grace is the sinner's way of justifying sin.
- C. Sanctification is by faith; it is God-given power to live a life of obedience.

II. Sanctified—Set Apart and Growing (*Rom. 6:1-16*).

- A. The idea of sanctification contains two facets:
 1. The relational sense concerns our being set apart and belonging to God for a holy use.
 2. The moral sense embodies the idea of growing in grace.
- B. Sanctification is the process of a lifetime.

III. The Law and the Gospel (*2 Cor. 5:17*).

- A. The Cross inspires us to follow the Lord in faith and obedience.
- B. The law illuminates our minds with a knowledge of how our lives are to reveal love for God.
- C. All our good works are dependent on God's power—a power outside ourselves.

Summary: God's gift of righteousness does not end with justification. Salvation includes a total life transformation, a turning toward heaven. Sanctification includes two aspects: being set apart by God for His holy purposes and growing in grace. Both aspects preclude cheap grace.

COMMENTARY

The Cross and Sanctification.

Introduction. Christ's death on Calvary fully satisfies the claims of divine justice and mercy and sets both those qualities on a majestic footing that ensures the moral health and stability of the universe without tension or stagnancy.

I. Cheap Grace and the Cross.

God's gift of salvation, though established at infinite cost to Himself, is free to us. This glorious truth is susceptible to abuse by a nominal, easy-going acceptance with little regard to the cost of

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, *hagizo* 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?

salvation to God or the cost of discipleship to the believer. The riches of Christ's grace are unsearchable (*see Eph. 3:8*). By studying the source of grace (Christ's atoning sacrifice), the purpose of grace (our redemption and sanctification), and the fruits of grace (godly living in this present world and capacity to bear fruit to God's glory), we will be spared from turning the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ into frivolousness and lasciviousness. Grace is not something to waste but to invest "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (*1 Pet. 4:10*). Grace, most commonly defined as unmerited favor, has multiple qualities that merit study and exercise in every believer's life. Grace is characterized by the following descriptors: great (*Acts 4:33*); regnant (*Rom. 5:21*); rich (*Eph. 1:7, 2:7*); exceeding (*2 Cor. 9:14*); all-sufficient (*2 Cor. 12:9*); instructive and empowering (*Titus 2:9-12*); all-abundant (*Rom. 5:5, 17, 20*); true (*1 Pet. 5:12*); glorious (*Eph. 1:6*). Grace is the dual power by which our sins may be pardoned and we may be transformed to overcome sin through earnest cooperation with God.

II. Set Apart.

By His sacrifice on the cross Jesus staked a legitimate claim on the whole human race. God has set us apart from the humanly unassailable authority of Satan and has posted notice through the gospel that all who will may be free in Christ. He has "called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (*2 Tim. 1:9*). "Everyone who will humble himself as a little child, who will receive and obey the word of God with a child's simplicity, will be among the elect of God."—Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 77. He wishes to indelibly record our emancipation by writing every truth of the gospel on our hearts with the same finger that cast out demons in Judea and wrote the law at Sinai.

III. The Sanctified State.

Paul states the comprehensiveness of God's plan for our sanctification in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and in the next verse he points out that God will provide the power for His sanctifying will to be fulfilled in us.

"True sanctification is an entire conformity to the will of God. Rebellious thoughts and feelings are overcome, and the voice of Jesus awakens a new life, which pervades the entire being. Those who are truly sanctified will not set up their own opinion as a standard of right and wrong. They are not bigoted or self-righteous; but they are jealous of self, ever fearing, lest a promise being left them, they should come short of complying with the conditions upon which the promises are based."—Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 248; *see also Heb. 4:1, 10, 11*.

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?

True sanctification is accomplished by the Spirit's making the Word of God effective in our lives (*see John 17:17; Eph. 5:26; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14*).

IV. Your Life Is Hid With Christ in God.

For Paul, the gospel was a vivid, operative reality, not an academic theory. As one whose heart dwells in the realm of heaven, he exhorts us to turn our affection away from the distractions and

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *John 8:11, Romans 6:1-16, Galatians 5:16-25, Colossians 3:1-4.*

- ① God's grace is not a license to abandon His desire for us to reflect His character. Paul in Romans 6:4 presents a death to the old, rebellious way of life and a resurrection to a life hid in Christ. How is your life in Jesus different from the one you lived before you met Him? How would you describe your joy at "no longer be[ing] slaves to sin" (*Rom. 6:6, NIV*)?
- ② Cheap usually means "worthless" or "easily broken." How do you react to the concept of "cheap grace"? How would you explain to a friend or neighbor that God's grace came at the cost of a priceless gift, the death of His Son on the cross? Why is this grace so valuable to you?
- ③ Sanctification includes two profound concepts. One is to belong to God for His holy purposes. The other is to grow in His grace. Ask one of your Sabbath School classmates to share how he or she sees the fruit of the Spirit (*see Gal. 5:22*) reflected in your life. Why does Paul say that "against such things there is no law" (*vs. 23, NIV*)?
- ④ When a sprinter runs a race, he or she focuses on the finish line. Why is the focus of our spiritual energies so important? Paul invites us to set our "minds on things above" (*Col. 3:2, NIV*). Why are we so inclined to direct our thoughts to earthly challenges and failures? In your class, share the ways God has helped you to focus *heavenward*.
- ⑤ Jesus pointed sinners to a new life with a new direction (*see John 8:11*). He invites us to accept the possibility of victory in our lives by faith in His power to bring it to pass. Why is it so easy for us to accept our acquittal, or justification, and then, in our own strength, work so hard on a new life of sanctification? Why must sanctification be by faith, as well? (*See Acts 26:18.*)

“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 spir-itu-ally. 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?

allurements of the world and, instead, fix our interest on the glorious realities of heaven. By single-mindedly seeking what's above, we are enabled, through the Spirit's blessing, to perceive more and more of divine truth. We are enabled to die to the sinfulness of our nature and come increasingly alive to the grace and goodness of Christ. This is a quiet work, done without fanfare or boasting, but the work is deep, real, and enduring.

All who are making true spiritual progress have no boast to make about their own character perfection or superior holiness. It is their aim to glorify God in all their activities and relationships. They wish to love as Jesus loves and serve as He serves. It is their joy to

Witnessing

Owned by God + Loved by God + Set apart by God + Made holy by God + Growing with God = Sanctified by God!

How is that for a compact equation that defines sanctification? Sound too simple? It is simple! Believers and nonbelievers must hear and understand the simple truths of God's plan of salvation. They need to become intimate with the God who "loved the world so much that He freely gave His only Son to come here and die, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but will be given eternal life" (*John 3:16, The Clear Word*).

God bought humanity with the spilled blood of His precious Son, blood that was willingly shed in order to save humanity from certain death. As you witness, ask others if they can imagine the following: agreeing to a plan whose success depends solely on sacrificing the life of your only child; allowing that child to be placed in harm's way time and time again; watching from a great distance as that child is ridiculed, mocked, tortured, and finally put to death in the most horrible manner possible. Imagine that the whole reason for the entire plan is to save a group of sinful human beings. Ask those to whom you are witnessing whether they would have done it for that reason. Help them understand this demonstrates the depth of God's love for them.

Our relationship with God is like one with our parents. Once children have become truly His, once they have given their hearts fully to Him, the Father-child relationship begins its maturing process. Trust grows. The Father guides. He listens. Sometimes He says No; other times His answer is Yes. Always the answer is given with love and understanding. Rules are lovingly kept, because they are for the best. The child becomes changed as a result of the relationship. This is the process of a sanctified life.

The very best way to describe the sanctified life to others is to live our own lives, through Christ, in such a way our actions will illustrate the truth of sanctification incontrovertibly.

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?

hear the Master's voice and follow Him. (See *John 3:27-30, 10:27-29, Rev. 14:1-5*; Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 65.)

V. The Law and the Gospel.

God's law and the gospel are not at variance. It is by means of the gospel that our violation of God's law is pardoned, and it is by means of the gospel that our power to keep God's law is reinstated. (See *Matt. 5:17-19, Luke 16:17, Rom. 3:31, 8:1-4, 13:8-14.*) Jesus came not to take away God's law but to take away our sins and write His law in our hearts. (See *Heb. 8:10-12, 1 John 3:4-9, Rev. 14:12.*)

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: What is your favorite conversion story? It may be your own story or one from the Bible. It may be from someone you know or from a figure in history.

Verses for Group Focus: *Romans 6:1-18.*

Thought Questions:

- 1 Romans 6 is about the Christian experience. It describes our experience as intertwined with Christ, His death, and His resurrection. List the things Paul says are true of Christians in their present experience. Then list the things Paul tells Christians to do.
- 2 According to this passage, what are the essential elements of conversion? (Encourage class members to find some of these elements: (a) conviction of sin; (b) repentance [turning away from sin]; (c) union with Christ [trusting; belief]; (d) new life; (e) freedom from the rule of sin [not that one ceases to sin, but that one can now say No to sin]; (f) obedience.)
- 3 How important is each of these elements to a genuine conversion? Are they all important? Do they have to occur in some order? Are there other important elements?

Application Questions:

- 1 Where do you think Christians struggle in the process of being converted? (Let your class reflect on this question then share something from your own experience. That will encourage them to share their experiences also.)
- 2 What good things might God have in store for you as you grow in your Christian experience?

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?