

SANCTIFICATION

What does it mean to be sanctified? Many continue to confuse sanctification with justification or with the works of man. True faith (justification) comes to man by the hearing of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit working within that person. This true faith working in a man sanctifies that man. This could also be called regeneration.

It is therefore impossible for a person who has been justified by faith in Christ not to also be sanctified as well as not live a life set apart to God filled with good works. Without faith no person would ever do anything out of love toward God alone. Perhaps some might do good things out of love for self or from the fear of God's condemnation but God would reject such works.

The Bible clearly teaches it is impossible for the person of true faith to be unfruitful in good works. This is spoken of in the Scriptures as faith working through love. Sanctification then is not of the works done by the justified man but of God alone who washes and regenerates man through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the person. As a person grows in faith they will become more and more productive and zealous in the living of a holy life. Whereas justification is a one-time event, sanctification is a continuing process of God the Holy Spirit working in and through the individual person by faith in Christ alone. This is why it is said the saint grows in grace and faith. As faith is exercised in obedience to God, God rewards that faith with an increase of faith, which will be made manifest as a stronger faith able to more fully and completely rest in Christ. It cannot be denied that God does reward good works. However this does not make works the instrument neither of sanctification nor of justification but the fruit of faith working in the believer.

Good works that thus proceed from true faith are only acceptable by God through God's grace. Man in the flesh is ever accompanied by sin and where one sin is present apart from grace there can be no good works. Therefore, good works are of no merit whatsoever in justification or sanctification. For this reason the Bible says you are saved by grace, through faith, for good works (see Eph. 2:8-10). The proof of this can be seen in the order of God's salvation in that man is justified before any good work by that man is possible. The Belgic Confession points this out with the analogy of a fruit tree by noting that the fruit of a tree cannot be good unless the tree itself is good.

This means that the person of true faith has nothing added to his account for good works. Instead the person of true faith is deeper in debt to God for the good works that he does. The Scripture points out this truth in the words that it is God who works in us to will and to work for His good pleasure. The Scriptures continue that when man has done all the things commanded of him, he is still an unprofitable servant having done no more than it is his duty to do. By grace alone then God rewards His good works that are performed by the faithful.

Therefore salvation in no respect is founded on good works. Works do not justify and works do not sanctify. All things in the life of a believer are by grace alone. Man remains

guilty and condemned in the sight of God. Without grace and the assurance of God that all is of His grace mankind would forever be tossed to and fro in doubt of his salvation. Only in resting upon the merits of Christ alone does the believer find rest for his soul and peace with God and self in the flesh.

In the same way works have no bearing on the final judgment of Christ of believers leaving any doubt in the mind of the saint as to the final outcome of the faith given to him from God. There is no future or continuing aspect of justification or sanctification to taint or change the sure outcome of the life of the elect. Paul in his epistle to the church at Corinth notes that all of the works of a believer may be burned up in the judgment as so much wood, hay, or stubble, but that nevertheless the soul will be saved. Some are confused because the Bible clearly teaches that our works will judge us. This truth has to do with the reward that is laid up in heaven and the works that will accompany the believer into eternal life and in no way represents any favor toward or demerit from the final judgment of God.

All of the various aspects of being saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ can be said to stand-alone in that all will ever be present in a true believer. This is why the Westminster Confession of Faith states that we are justified by faith alone yet it is ever accompanied by all other saving graces. The attempt is not to separate the parts of being a true believer but to show the necessity of all being present at all times. With God who has spoken the end from the beginning all things are ever present before Him. To man the division of things into smaller logical bites is a necessity to his understanding. Such division or ordering of events however does not change the truth of God that the election of a sovereign God stands at the head and those whom God has elected God will call and whom God calls God will justify. Those God justifies God also sanctifies and moves through this process outlined here until the day they stand in the New Jerusalem glorified with Christ. All things are of God and by God in grace. Comfort yourself then with the unfailing faithfulness of God toward the elect and not the faltering and doubtful faith of man toward God.

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