

Kirkwall Presbyterian Church
'Sanctification – becoming more like Christ'
Proverbs 3:1-6; John 15:1-17
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By Keith Marcy

The word in Christian circles called '**justification**' has often been explained that having received Christ as our Savior, God sees us '*just as if we never sinned.*' That is true, but it leaves out an important element. A better way to rephrase it is to say:

'Justification' means that 'justice has been satisfied.'

How has it been satisfied?

In answering that question, I have simplified volumes of theology to make it understandable for us working class people:

1. Problem: Our sin has created a deep chasm between us and God.
2. The solution: We need a bridge across the chasm so that we can have fellowship with our Maker.
3. The provision: God knew what we needed. He sent His Son, Jesus, to become the bridge.
4. How did He become the bridge? He took our sins as though He had committed them, and He died for them. He satisfied God's justice so that we are free to cross the bridge to God's side because God sees us without sin.
5. Who was responsible for the bridge over the chasm? God the Father, through God the Son.

2nd reality: We covered this last week.

The moment we believe Jesus bridged the chasm for us, our sin was taken away. Our dirty, sin-stained garments were made clean, and God **adopted** us into His family with other believers. We received the status of sons and daughters; we became joint heirs with God's natural Son, Jesus. This is called the doctrine of '*adoption.*' Therefore:

1. We have a new eternal home.
2. We have a God who is now our Father.
3. We have a Brother who made the universe – we are now joint heirs with Him.
4. We have the protection of an all-powerful Father who holds us in the palm of His hand.

Now what?

God the Holy Spirit comes to help us live like we are citizens (members) of a heavenly family. He comes to **sanctify** us.

Say what?

He comes to empower us to live like we belong to God. I use an example to illustrate this – another true story related to me by my friend who was an advertising agent with the Hamilton spectator.

One of his clients lived somewhere in the Niagara Peninsula. They owned a sawmill and specialty lumber store. Their business thrived. They were crooked. They had craftily cheated customers out of much money. As a result, they had a very lavish home and luxury cars. They entertained extravagantly. But then the father had a monumental life-changing experience. He became a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through his witness, his wife came to faith and one by one, his sons. The Holy spirit woke up their calloused consciences. They began to deal fairly with customers and suppliers. They sold possessions to make things right for those they had swindled. And in case they missed someone, they put a new roof on the local community center – covering all costs for materials and labor.

They were living a sanctified life. They were obeying the teachings of Jesus. They were becoming worthy of their name – **Christian**. When the old man died, it was estimated that 800 people had become believers through his witness. One was my friend, who went on to become an evangelical pastor. He said of his conversion: *“I heard the old man’s forceful proclamation of the gospel. What spoke to me louder and would not leave my mind was seeing his changed lifestyle – he left a life of corruption behind and marched victoriously forward living in obedience to his Savior!”* That is sanctification!

Our justification cost God the life of His Son; sanctification costs us our selfish ways and our pride– but the reward is priceless!

When we became believers, God provided the way. He constructed the bridge to cross the great ravine between us and Him. He sent Jesus to die, paying the price of our sin. God did it all. Having provided the way, He grasped our hand and led us across. It all happened in a point of time – but the effect of that moment lasts for eternity.

Living for Him is a different story. The Holy Spirit awakens us to see that we do not live as obedient children. He makes us feel uncomfortable; we know that we are missing the mark – the principles taught by Jesus. But we must exercise our

wills; we must change our minds and our actions to live worthy of being a child of God. This does not happen in a moment; it is an everyday ongoing exercise for as long as we are in this body of flesh.

It is called '**sanctification.**' How can we remember what that big word means? There used to be a product called SANI-FLUSH. It was used to clean the rust, lime and other corruption out of toilets. We used it to make the toilet pleasant for the use of polite company. Sanctification means to clean up one's life. Sani-flush is used to clean up our toilet! An odd comparison? Yes, it is. But the Biblical description of the human heart is not much different than the inside of a dirty toilet. Both need to be cleansed – almost daily!

Believers are to clean up their lives – thoughts, actions, speech and attitudes – in order to become God's ambassadors to those all around them.

Why is it a continuous exercise?

Because of Satan. He is the tempter. Just as he led Adam and Eve away from God, so he tries to do that daily with us. We must be determined to fight him. We must pray for help. We must use the wisdom, and the strength God will give us.

The children's hymn today summed it up:

*Fight manfully onward,
Dark passions subdue.
Shun evil companions,
Bad language disdain.
God's name hold in reverence,
Don't take it in vain;
Be thoughtful and earnest,
Kindhearted and true,
Look ever to Jesus,
He will carry you through.*

From 'Yield not to temptation' by Horatia R. Palmer

At my request, Ralph closed the sermon with an appropriate prayer he had written and prayed at Bible Study. It was a prayer requesting God to help him live a life pleasing to God!