

## Lesson 13: Christ Our Righteousness (Part 2)

### Intro

In our last lesson we discussed how God justifies us by not looking at *our* righteousness but by giving us the righteousness of Christ. When we accept this righteousness by faith, God sees and treats us as if we were living the sinless life of Christ.

We receive this righteousness because of two things: (1) by grace and (2) by faith. (See Romans 3:24,28). How do you explain the difference between grace and faith?

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Grace is a gift that God gives us. But even the best gift is worthless if we do not accept it. Through faith we accept the gift of justification.

### Something new begins

But justification is not all that God wants to give us. Once we are justified God begins to change us. It is true that He accepts us just as we are. But His love for us is so strong that He can't leave us as we are. In short, God's grace combined with faith change who we are and how choose to live.



Read the following texts and write down what kind of work grace and faith do in us!

Galatians 2:20: \_\_\_\_\_

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Titus 2:11-14: \_\_\_\_\_

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Titus 3:4-8: \_\_\_\_\_

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1 Peter 1:5: \_\_\_\_\_

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1 Peter 1:13-15: \_\_\_\_\_

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Paul makes it very clear that we cannot be saved by our own works. It is solely through grace and faith. We can accept this gift of salvation, but we have nothing to boast about from our good works.

**Quote #1** “There are two errors against which the children of God—particularly those who have just come to trust in His grace—especially need to guard. The first, already dwelt upon, is that of looking to their own works, trusting to anything they can do, to bring themselves into harmony with God. He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us holy. The opposite and no less dangerous error is that belief in Christ releases men from keeping the law of God; that since by faith alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 60*)

**Quote #2** “Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, ‘This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.’ ‘He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.’ 1 John 5:3; 2:4. Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience.

We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith. ‘Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.’ 1 John 3:5,6. Here is the true test. If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the precepts of His holy law. ‘Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.’ 1 John 3:7. Righteousness is defined by the standard of God’s holy law, as expressed in the ten precepts given on Sinai.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 60-61*)

**Quote #3** “More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, ‘The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.’ Galatians 2:20. So Jesus said to His disciples, ‘It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.’ Matthew 10:20. Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works—works of righteousness, obedience. So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in us and through us.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 62-63.*)

**Justification and Sanctification** The Bible calls our acceptance by God *justification*. When we by faith accept salvation through Jesus Christ, we are *in Christ* and God imputes the righteousness of Jesus onto us. This is why justification is also called *imputed righteousness*. God treats and sees us as if we have lived the righteous life of Jesus. But this is just the beginning of God’s work in us. When we are *in Christ*, God molds our character until it is like the character of Jesus. The Bible calls this experience, *Christ in us*,

*sanctification*. This process of character transformation is often described as *imparted righteousness*. Paul calls this experience: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). In summary, we can say that justification happens when God sees in us the righteousness of Christ, even though we are sinners. Whereas sanctification is the process of God transforming our characters step by step into the likeness of Christ’s. Here’s an example: An artist projects a picture of Jesus onto a white canvass and, according to the pattern, paints the picture of Jesus using pencils and color paints. Through justification, God projects the picture of Jesus (His righteousness and sinless life) onto us. Through sanctification, He paints the picture of Jesus in us. The following table summarizes again the different aspects of justification and sanctification.

Justification	We are in Christ	Imputed righteousness	God’s work <i>for</i> me	<b>By grace through faith</b>
Sanctification	Christ in us	Imparted righteousness	God’s work <i>in</i> me	<b>By grace through faith</b>

These two phases of our salvation are distinct and yet inseparable and intertwined with one another. Justification is the prerequisite for sanctification just like birth is the prerequisite for life. There is no sanctification without justification and justification always leads to sanctification. Just like justification is a gift from God so is sanctification. God gives them through grace and we accept them by faith.

**Quote #4**

“The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven.” (*Review and Herald, June 4, 1895*)



Read the following Bible passages and write down what it says about sanctification!

2 Corinthians 7:1: \_\_\_\_\_  
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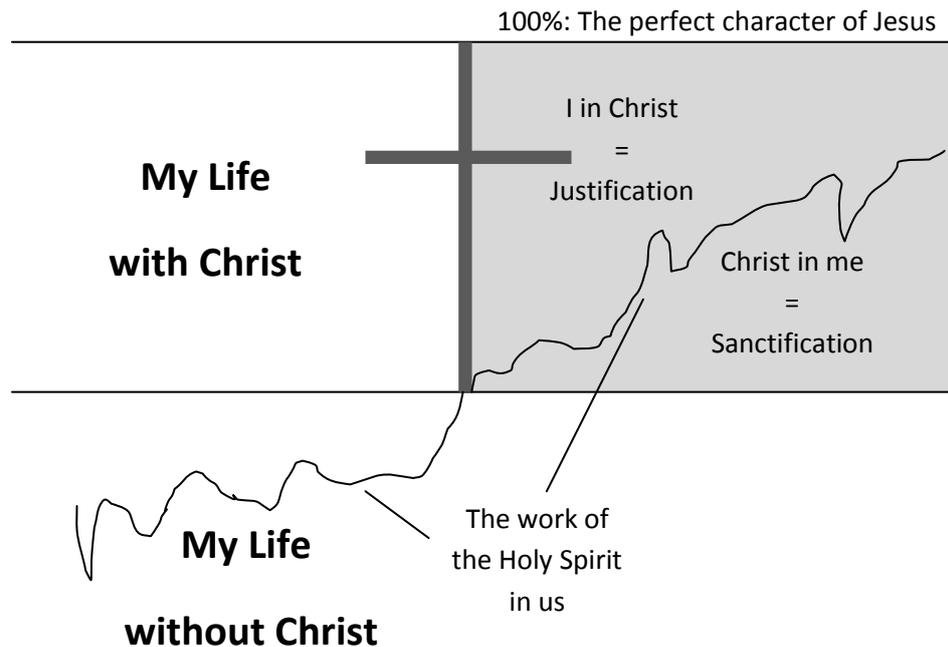
1 Thessalonians 4:3: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
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1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Hebrews 12:14: \_\_\_\_\_  
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The Bible does not consistently use the word “sanctification” or “sanctify”. In many places it is used as a synonym for “justification” or “justify”. This underscores the truth that justification and sanctification are not two fully separated activities but rather inseparable parts in the *one* plan of salvation.

The following illustration should show more clearly the roles of justification and sanctification in our salvation experience.



### Explanation

When a person lives separated from Jesus, they live under condemnation. When they, through the work of the Holy Spirit, come to know Jesus and accept Him by faith, they are justified. God no longer sees their sinfulness; He sees in them the righteousness of Christ. He treats them as if they had not sinned and gives them the gift of eternal life. This is the essence of justification. In every point in the timeline it is only through this imputed righteousness that they are saved. Justification is not just a point in time; rather it is a continuous state, represented by the grey area in the background.

Justification always leads to change that Jesus works in the life. Step by step He transforms our characters so that they will be more like His. It does not happen in an instant. It is a life-long process. Sanctification does not mean that a person can no longer fall. But when he falls, he stands up again and keeps going with Jesus.

At any time, justification alone is the foundation for our salvation. Sanctification is a result of our salvation, but not the prerequisite for our salvation. Salvation does not depend on how sanctified we are. Our salvation is the result of our justification. We need this assurance of salvation in order to grow at all in our faith. In the next lesson we will look more closely at the assurance of salvation.



In the parable of the vine and the branches, where do we find the concept that justification and sanctification belong together?

**John 15:3-5**

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In verse 3, Jesus talks about justification: “You are already clean.” He says, “Abide in Me (justification), and I in you (sanctification).” Whoever remains connected will bear much fruit! Bearing fruit is a natural consequence of surrendering our lives to Jesus. Without a connection to Jesus we can do nothing. The experience of “We in Christ” and “Christ in us” comes as a package. You cannot have one without the other. Justification as well as sanctification happens only by God’s grace and through faith.

**Quote #5**

“You are just as dependent upon Christ, in order to live a holy life, as is the branch upon the parent stock for growth and fruitfulness. Apart from him you have no life. You have no power to resist temptation or to grow in grace and holiness. Abiding in Him, you may flourish. Drawing your life from Him, you will not wither nor be fruitless. You will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. Jesus says, ‘Without Me ye can do nothing.’ Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness,—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly,—by abiding in Him, —that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says, ‘I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.’ Psalm 16:8.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 69*)

**Quote #6**

“Sanctification means habitual communion with God.” (*SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 908*)

**Quote #7**

“Do you ask, ‘How am I to abide in Christ?’ In the same way as you received Him at first. ‘As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.’ ‘The just shall live by faith.’ Colossians 2:6; Hebrews 10:38. You gave yourself to God, to be His wholly, to serve and obey Him, and you took Christ as your Saviour. You could not yourself atone for your sins or change your heart; having given yourself to God, you believe that He for Christ’s sake did all this for you. By faith you became Christ’s, and by faith you are to grow up in Him—by giving and taking. You are to *give* all,—your heart, your will, your service,—give yourself to Him to obey all His requirements; and you must *take* all,—Christ, the fullness of all blessing, to abide in your heart, to be your strength, your righteousness, your everlasting helper,—to give you power to obey.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 69-70*)

**Sanctification and God’s Law**

God’s Law is not just a set of rules, but rather the expression of His character that He desires to restore in us. When a person gives his life to Him, God implants in him new thoughts, attitudes, and aspirations. He writes His law in his heart. (Hebrews 8:10) This is just another picture that the Bible uses to describe sanctification. Thus biblical sanctification always leads us to obey God’s Law.



By what means does God make us holy?

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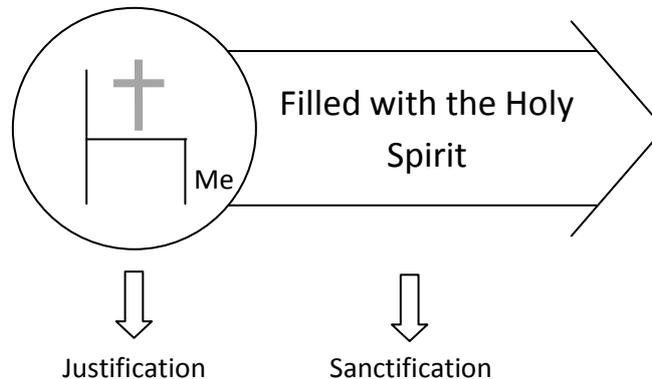
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**John 16:13;  
17:17-19**

In this passage Jesus explains that sanctification occurs through truth and that His word is truth. God sanctifies us as we spend time in His word, submit ourselves to it, and allow the Spirit of truth to lead us into all truth (John 16:13). Next to the word of God, Jesus himself (John 14:6) and the Law of God (Psalm 119:142) are identified as Truth. Just like a doctor prescribes fresh air and sunshine for his patients to help them get better, God places us under the influence of truth in order to transform us.

The Holy Spirit leads us in our relationship with Jesus, brings us closer to God's Word, and enables us to keep the commandments of God. It is the Holy Spirit that grows the fruit of the Spirit, which describes the character of Jesus (Galatians 5:22,23) in us. Only those who are filled with the Holy Spirit can experience sanctification. We will explore what that exactly means in another lesson.



**Quote #8**

“Our sanctification is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the fulfillment of the covenant God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, His Son, and His Spirit in holy fellowship. Have you been born again? Have you become a new being in Christ Jesus? Then cooperate with the three great powers of heaven who are working in your behalf.” (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 908)

**Quote #9**

“True sanctification is a Bible doctrine. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonian church, declares: ‘This is the will of God, even your sanctification.’ And he prays: ‘The very God of peace sanctify you wholly.’ 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:23. The Bible clearly teaches what sanctification is and how it is to be attained. The Saviour prayed for His disciples: ‘Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.’ John 17:17. And Paul teaches that believers are to be ‘sanctified by the Holy Ghost.’ Romans 15:16. What is the work of the Holy Spirit? Jesus told His disciples: ‘When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.’ John 16:13. And the

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psalmist says: 'Thy law is the truth.' By the word and the Spirit of God are opened to men the great principles of righteousness embodied in His law. And since the law of God is 'holy, and just, and good,' a transcript of the divine perfection, it follows that a character formed by obedience to that law will be holy. Christ is a perfect example of such a character. He says: 'I have kept My Father's commandments.' 'I do always those things that please Him.' John 15:10; 8:29. The followers of Christ are to become like Him—by the grace of God to form characters in harmony with the principles of His holy law. This is Bible sanctification. This work can be accomplished only through faith in Christ, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 469)

**What now?**

Now you understand more clearly what sanctification means. But perhaps you ask yourself: How can I experience this transformation in a practical way? How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? How can my relationship with Jesus be so deep that He can do all these things through me? We will answer these questions in module 2 (With Jesus Ahead).

