

Homework for Preparation: Week 7

Justification, Sanctification, Good Works and the Law of God

Day 1:

The Law of God, and in particular the Ten Commandments, is an expression of the perfect will of God and in one sense a representation of His character.

- A. Read through Matthew 5:17 – 19 and make notes of what we learn about the law of God.
  
- B. Read Matthew 15:7 – 9. What does this tell you about God's attitude toward obedience that is only outward. Would you say that God requires outward obedience?

When we are brought to faith in Christ, we are eternally saved from the wrath of God by the perfect obedience and by the sacrifice of our Savior. From that point forward, we are progressively having the image of Christ formed in us until we are glorified.

- C. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23 & 24. What is the source of this change being worked in us?

Day 2:

Read through these passages and make notes of what you see of the changes in the believer and how they reflect the character of Christ:

- D. Galatians 5:22 – 26
  
- E. Romans 8:13

Day 3:

- F. Gratitude to God fuels our sanctification. Unbelievers often do things that appear very noble, very good in the eyes of the world. Examine Hebrews 11:4, 6 & 7 What do you see as the difference in the eyes of God? How do you think God views the

establishment, funding and maintenance of an orphanage by anyone who scoffs at belief in God?

### **The Major Themes of the Bible Applied to Everyday Life : Lesson 7**

#### **Justification, Sanctification, Good Works and the Law of God**

When we talk about the law, we are talking primarily about the moral law in the 10 commandments. The moral law is also in other sermons (both Old Testament and New), the teachings of Christ and the letters of the New Testament. The WCF in 19.1 tells us that Adam and all his descendants are obligated to "...personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience."

Let's look at a couple of our homework questions:

- A. Read through Matthew 5:17 – 19 (below) and note what we learn about the law of God.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not even an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

- B. Read Matthew 15:7 – 9 (below). What does this tell you about God's attitude toward obedience that is only outward. Would you say that God requires outward obedience? What else does God require of us?

"You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

After the fall, the law remains God's eternal perfect will and yet our fallen natures make us unable to even desire to keep God's law. In God's grace, that problem is taken away by the redemption that is accomplished for us by Christ and applied to us by the Holy Spirit. We're going to look at a theological statement – the *Ordo Salutis* - that has been used historically in the church to show how this process works in the lives of God's elect. Romans 8:28 – 30 gives us much of this order, a further and more detailed discussion of this can be found in John Murray's excellent book Redemption Accomplished and Applied. In one basic form, it looks like this:

## The Ordo Salutis (Order of Salvation)

Effectual Calling – the inward call

Regeneration – new life

Conversion – made up of faith and repentance combined

\*Justification – removes the guilt and penalty of sin + imputes righteousness of Christ – we are declared righteous

Adoption – judicial act bestowing the status of sonship (John 1:12)

\*Sanctification – progressive removal of the pollution/corruption of sin

Glorification - new heavens and new earth

We are looking particularly at Justification and Sanctification today, so let's start with the Shorter Catechism definitions of each:

Q 33 What is Justification?

A Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone. (Justification handout) Luther called this the article on which the church stands or falls.

In our failure to completely, perfectly, inwardly and outwardly obey the law of God, we have then brought on ourselves both the guilt (and penalty) of sin and the pollution or actual personal corruption of sin. Justification takes away the guilt and penalty of sin. This is a judicial act – a change of status or position alone - involving no actual change in the believer: Romans 4:5 – 8. It is immediately followed by the beginning of progressive sanctification.

The pollution of sin, the actual sinful actions and motivations of the individual are progressively removed through the lifelong process of sanctification:

Q35 What is Sanctification?

A Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

Homework Q C: Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23 & 24. What is the source of this change being worked in the believer?

Justification and sanctification are two different things. Combining the two as one unit is very dangerous thinking and leads to serious problems: Two primary problems are these –

1. If I believe that I am not justified before God and saved from the wrath of God unless my actions and motivations are perfect, then when I see my actual sins in this lifelong battle I can become discouraged and believe that I am not saved.
2. If I believe that justification before God simply means inclusion in a covenant community, or membership in a church then I am likely to have false assurance.

While not one thing, justification and sanctification are certainly linked. Our hearts and actions truly are progressively changed through the work of the Holy Spirit after we are justified by faith. Let's look at our homework questions D and E and notice the changes in the believer – what are they, and how do they reflect the character of Christ, and the restoration of the image of God in the believer?

Galatians 5:22 – 26 and Romans 8:13

WCF 16.3 says this:“(believers') ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. And that they may be enabled thereunto, besides the graces they have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them to will and to do of His good pleasure: yet they are not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty, unless upon a special motion of the Spirit; but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.”

How do you think we are supposed to be doing this? (the Word, fellowship, prayer, sacraments)

What about the good works of unbelievers? Look at our homework question F - Gratitude to God fuels our sanctification. Unbelievers often do things that appear very noble, very good in the eyes of the world. Examine Hebrews 11:4, 6 & 7 What do you see as the difference in the eyes of God? How do you think God views the establishment, funding and maintenance of an orphanage by anyone who scoffs at belief in God?

Gratitude to God for our salvation is the fuel for our obedience to continue in this work. The law of God has 3 primary purposes noted by Augustine, Calvin and others –

1. It serves as a mirror to reflect to us both the righteousness of God and our own sinfulness and shortcomings, therefore driving us to Christ

2. The restraint of some forms of evil – particularly when backed by civil laws, therefore bringing some civil order.
3. In those who are justified, it guides us into the good works planned for us.

Ephesians 2:10, Matthew 5:18 – 20

Romans 3:20 tells us that no one is justified by the works of the law, but our good works as believers are evidence of faith – evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in our progressive sanctification. (John 3:8) John 14:15 tells us “If you love Me you will keep My commandments.” It is by faith alone that we are justified - freed from the guilt and penalty of sin, and by the Holy Spirit’s work in us that we are sanctified, and we are to be active in “stirring up the grace of God” in our sanctification. God’s law is our guide in this process.

Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

Justification is \_\_\_\_\_

Wherein He (does what?)

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

And (2) \_\_\_\_\_

(for what reason?)

Only for –

The \_\_\_\_\_

(which is)

(a.) \_\_\_\_\_ to us

and (b.) received by \_\_\_\_\_

This is a legal declaration by God which takes away the guilt and penalty of sin by faith alone, in Christ alone. It is a finished work of Christ, applied to us by God after the Holy Spirit regenerates us and brings us to faith. It is not accomplished by joining or being baptized into any church.

#### Homework for reflection Week 7

#### Justification, Sanctification, Good Works and the Law of God

1. (Romans 4:5 – 8) How do we stand justified before God?
2. If we are believers and justified by God, does it follow that we are without sin or that we should take sin lightly? Romans 6:1
3. (Hebrews 12:8 & 11, Psalm 32) In what ways will the Lord drive us back to repentance if we take that attitude?
4. What are the means of grace that the Holy Spirit uses to strengthen us in our battle against sin? Why is it important to be diligent in the exercise of these things?
5. What do the following verses tell us about the ways the Law is helpful to believers?

Romans 7:12, Psalm 19:4, Galatians 3:24, Psalm 110:104, James 1:23 - 25