

Freedom From Sin Part 5

Repentance, justification and sanctification

Being justified means that we are right with God, that is, we are righteous in His eyes. It means that our sins are totally forgiven. A good definition of justified is “Just-as-if-I’d-never-done-it.” A person is justified the moment they repent of their sins and put their trust in Jesus and they remain justified by continuing in repentance.

Personal sanctification is the process of growing in the Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit. Even though we may be justified in God's eyes we are not necessarily Christlike in all our ways. Sanctification is the process of being cleansed of our sinful ways and becoming more Christlike. If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that we are in need of sanctification in one area or another: areas such as love, humility, patience, kindness and self-control etc.

Rom. 15:16 tells us that we are “... *sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*” The goal of the Spirit's work within us is to continually guide us to perfection in Christ. In Matt. 5:48 Jesus said, “*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*” In this verse, “*perfect*” means mature and the context is maturity in love. As we seek to be made perfect in love, we become more like Jesus - more humble, patient, kind and self-controlled etc.

Sanctification is a simple process to understand but it can be very hard to endure. The steps are -

1. The Spirit convicts (John 16:8).
2. We confess our sins (1 John 1:9).
3. God forgives us and cleanses us of our unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

#1 and #3 are guarantees because they are God's work but #2 often brings the process to a stop because confession naturally includes turning away from the sin (repentance) and this doesn't always come easily. Real repentance requires genuine, godly sorrow and this can be difficult with issues that our sinful nature wants to hold on to. For example -

- How can we be genuinely repentant over a sin that we don't really want to give up?
- How can we be repentant over our lack of humility when we want to be first?
- How can we be repentant for being unloving towards those we don't really want to love?

We all know the areas we need to repent of, even though we may not like to talk about them.

We will only be truly repentant, and cleansed, when we come to hate our sin as much as God hates it and have a wholehearted desire to be obedient to His Word. We must humble ourselves and seek God's grace to grant us repentance and cleanse us from our ungodly ways. God's method of sanctification is outlined in the following two passages -

James 4:6-10 say, “... *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*”

1 Pet. 5:5-10 also talk about being lifted up after resisting the Devil and humbling ourselves. This passage says, “... *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*”

Both of these passages speak of the spiritual war and suffering we go through as we struggle against our sinful nature and seek to become more Christlike. The Devil will give us many reasons why we should not be repentant and the fact is we are often more inclined to listen to him than to the Spirit's conviction. However, these passages tell us that if we exercise self-control, resist the devil and submit to God then, in His time, He will lift us up and make us strong, firm and steadfast. Through this sanctifying process we are cleansed of our unrighteousness and become dead to sin; Jesus sets us free.

The road of sanctification is not easy. Heb. 12 tells about our struggle with sin and the hardship of discipline but v.11 encourages us in saying, *"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."* The road may be hard but the goal is priceless.

Finally, The Calvary Road, by Roy Hession, is a great little book on sanctification. It is free to download from my site at - <http://www.christianissues.biz/pdf-bin/sanctification/thecalvaryroad.pdf>

This article can be downloaded as a PDF or an MP3 from - <http://www.christianissues.biz/downloads.html>

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