

7. From Justification To What?

If one is justified and his record in heaven reads “just as if I’d never sinned,” it would seem strange to desire anything added to that kind of a record. To express this kind of thinking is to reveal the fact that one is still thinking legally. There is still a desire to do something to make ourselves feel that it is real. The highest goal for the justified person is to, by faith, maintain that undeserved position that God, by His love, has given to us as a free gift. However, the moment we are justified, that moment we are also sanctified. Both of these conditions are attained solely by faith.

Justification deals with your record in heaven. It changes this record from that of a condemned criminal to that of a free man with a perfect record, including your past life.

Sanctification is heaven’s ordained plan whereby the freed criminal (now a member of God’s family) can continuously say thank you to God for this unspeakable gift of justification to an undeserving wretch. How does he do this? By every day allowing God to work in him according to His good will and pleasure. Philippians 2:13.

Our part is to allow God to work in our lives, rehabilitating us to continuously say yes every time Jesus says, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” Heaven’s requirement for those who enter heaven is a complete trust in Jesus without doubting, delaying or even questioning why or how. Our response to His leading must be as natural as the flower’s turning to the sun.

Obviously, there must be no doubting along the way for our justification (imputed righteousness) or our sanctification (imparted righteousness). It is through justification that obedience is credited to us, now and for the future.

“Through His imputed righteousness, they are accepted of God as those who are manifesting to the world that they acknowledge allegiance to God, keeping all His commandments.”¹

“We should study the life of our Redeemer, for He is the only perfect example for men. We should contemplate the infinite sacrifice of Calvary, and behold the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the righteousness of the law. You will come from a concentrated study of the theme of redemption strengthened and ennobled. Your comprehension of the character of God will be deepened; and with the whole plan of salvation clearly defined in your mind, you will be better able to fulfill your divine commission. From a sense of thorough conviction, you can then testify to men of the immutable character of the law manifested by the death of Christ on the cross, the malignant nature of sin, and the righteousness of God in justifying the believer in Jesus on condition of his future obedience to the statutes of God’s government in heaven and earth.”²

“Personal religion among us as a people is at a low ebb. There is much form, much machinery, much tongue religion; but something deeper and more solid must be brought into our religious experience . . . What we need is to know God and the power of His love, as revealed in Christ, by an experimental knowledge . . . Through the merits of Christ, through His righteousness, which by faith is imputed unto us, we are to attain to the perfection of Christian character.”³

Perfection also comes through justification. It is through sanctification that this position is retained. This will be our position not only until Jesus comes but throughout eternity. It will be our happy lot to express our appreciation to the entire universe for Christ’s unspeakable gift in our behalf.

Salvation is dependent upon justification as a free gift from God. Our attitude toward that gift is expressed by our relationship to sanctification and our willingness to

allow Jesus to remold our characters so that they will reflect His own. This is His work no matter what methods He uses to accomplish His goal. Our work is to submit to Him.

Is sanctification the evidence of justification? Jesus, in John 15:5 says, “. . . He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit . . .” The fruit of the Spirit is to be seen in all who are truly justified. Galatians 5:22, 23. The believer has only to abide in this relationship (position) in Christ and He will produce the fruit. Christ is the Vine; the believer is the branch. Our *position* as members of the family of God is the cause of our rejoicing. We must refuse to indulge ourselves in *conditional* thinking. When we are grafted into the Vine, we become a part of Him. Justification will always be needed. Christ’s character is the only covering that could completely meet all of the demands of God’s perfect law, therefore, it must always be retained.

“The enemy of man and God is not willing that this truth (justification by faith) should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken. If he can control minds so that doubt and unbelief and darkness shall compose the experience of those who claim to be the children of God, he can overcome them with temptation.”⁴

“Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy . . .” Luke 10:19.

Obviously, Christians in general have not experientially been aware that they can live free from Satan’s power. This does not imply freedom from his temptations. The temptations will, along with sin, have lost their *power*. This is good news for all of us.

Sin has a powerful influence in the human family. It is attractive to the sinful nature. It offers pleasure for a season. Being forbidden, it is exciting. It builds the spirit of independence. It is an abuse of the power of choice or use of the will. All these are

taken care of in the truly born-again Christian as he walks with his Lord in righteousness.

There is another much more subtle aspect of the power of sin which we must consider: “. . . the strength of sin is the law.” 1 Corinthians 15:56. *Dunamis* (ability) in the Greek is here translated strength. It is more often rendered power. We get our word “dynamite” from the same root. The ability of dynamite is in its explosive power. If the “strength of sin” is the law, we should know how this is true. God did not reveal His law as a transcript of His character and also the “strength of sin.” God’s law of love did cause Him to create man with the ability to sin. He gave him the power of choice. Could this be where the power of sin rests? “Temptation is resisted when man is powerfully influenced to do a wrong action and, knowing that he can do it, resists, by faith, with a firm hold upon divine power.”⁵

It is interesting to know that the power Jesus gave His disciples recorded in Luke 10:19 was *exousia* (authority), not ability. But the power of the enemy in the same verse is *dunamis* (ability). We can say, then, that God gives men the authority over all Satan’s ability, but He retains the ability and authority over Satan in His own control. Though Christ all the power of Satan is broken for he is a defeated foe.

Colossians 1:13 says, “Who hath delivered us from the power (authority) of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Deliverance from Satan’s authority and being members of the kingdom of God are one and the same thing. “When you give up your own will, your own wisdom, and learn of Christ, you will find admittance into the kingdom of God.”⁶

Since God’s law is a transcript of His character, and Satan is trying constantly to misrepresent His character, we should find here a clue as to the law being the “strength of sin.”

Through a misunderstanding and misuse of God’s law, Israel of old was held in Satan’s control for centuries of time. It was God’s plan that His law, as written and

revealed at Sinai, would be as a schoolmaster to bring His people to Christ. Galatians 3:24. Satan had other plans. That very law of liberty he would use to enslave. How? By focusing all of his efforts on one function of the law—its ability to convict. Paul writes, “Therefore as by the offence of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation. . .” Romans 5:18. Here is Satan’s focal point and his power over men. He seeks to blind our eyes to the rest of the same verse: “. . .even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

Satan has always magnified the condemnation and then presented strict obedience to the law as the only acceptable solution to the problem. Thus, man has gone down in defeat under miserable discouragement trying to keep that which he cannot keep in his own ability—*dunamis*, or authority, *exousia*. Condemnation and guilt are associated together and form the powerhouse of Satan’s work in deceiving Christians.

Conviction and guilt were intended to point man to his own nothingness, and in his extremity he would turn to God who sent His Son to solve the whole sin problem. The loving parent, when dealing with a wayward child, often reveals both authority and ability even though he be misunderstood. Sin made necessary the revealing of a law that had existed from eternity but was misunderstood and wrongly applied. By condemnation, the major function of the law as schoolmaster was hidden from human eyes.

Condemnation is a harsh, compelling force among heathen and Christian religions. Many of the reformers suffered under its power. Christianity, in general, has battled with this problem only to find human answers which fail to generate the love for God and produce a right attitude toward His law. David had his eyes opened and saw the law as the schoolmaster, or pathway, to Christ. His response was, “O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day.” Psalm 119:97.

From the beginning of Satan's apostasy he has hated God's law, continually working to have it changed or modified. Any attempt to use justification, the imputing of Christ's character to man's account, as a means of changing or doing away with God's law is to agree with Satan and to cooperate with him in his rebellion against God.

Antinomianism, the doing away with God's law, is a human answer to man's sin problem that agrees with Satan's original accusation against God.

Modern man may think the law is incapable of meeting his needs. However, he still needs the Saviour to whom the law brings him. The truth is that man needs to be changed completely, not the law. This change is brought about in two related, but distinctly different, processes. First, a legal process was accomplished for man by Christ on Calvary's cross when He took our rightful place and paid the debt we could not pay, and yet live. Thus, man's record is changed the moment he accepts Christ as his Saviour and surrenders his life to Christ's control. "When men see their own nothingness, they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ."⁷ Calvary stands as undeniable proof of the immutability of God's law. If it had been possible to change or do away with the law, Calvary would have been unnecessary. Thank God for His gift on Calvary where Jesus gained the right to rescue the captives from the grasp of the great deceiver.⁸

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1. Justification takes care of condemnation for the surrendered Christian. The Saviour said, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:17. The law still convicts, but only Satan is in the business of condemnation. The born-again (justified) Christian learns that, even though Satan works through his feelings to condemn, Christ is not in the condemning business. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." 1 John 3:20, 21.

Can we see that it is only as we understand God in His true relation to man—that of love and not condemnation—that we can have confidence in Him? This is also true of a parent-child relationship. Only in a true relationship is there true confidence. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:2. The law of the Spirit is to teach us about life in Christ Jesus which sets us free from the law of sin and death. This is what Paul was set free from in Romans 7.

That law of sin, which says “. . . the wages of sin is death . . .” Romans 6:23 has a terrible condemning force in our lives when pressed home by Satan. It is his plan to force us to repentance through these miserable feelings. Much of the repentance of Christians is a desire to be free from these strong feelings. If we are honest we can see that selfishness is the root of this repentance. God’s Word declares, “. . . the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.” Romans 2:4. It is not by condemnation but by looking at Jesus on Calvary’s cross that we are brought to true repentance. Knowing that He condemns sin but loves the sinner sets us free. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” John 8:36.

As we see that we are victims of a deadly disease called sin that has left many scars called habits in our flesh—which must be eradicated—we can understand how patiently, yet persistently, Christ must work to rid us of these habits. Only then can we see why sanctification—the second process—is God’s way of changing these habits of ours and is the work of a lifetime. It isn’t that a lifetime would make us sinless, but it must establish in us a pattern of total surrender and willingness which enables God to “. . . will and to do of his good pleasure” in us. Philippians 2:13.

Justification deals with our nature. As we die to self, surrender our will, and invite Him to take over our lives, a new nature is given to the newborn Christian. This nature is capable of being made subject to the law of God, whereas the old nature hated God’s law. Romans 8:7. Sanctification takes over the task of rehabilitating the character and

removing the habits that were developed through the old nature. These habits and hereditary tendencies are the remainder of the old self-life. They are the strongest hold that Satan has in the life of the newborn Christian. Thank God even that hold can be broken through this marvelous plan of redemption.

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Notes

- 1 Christ Our Righteousness, p. 99.
- 2 Christ Our Righteousness, p. 35.
- 3 Christ Our Righteousness, pp. 81, 82.
- 4 Christ Our Righteousness, p. 54.
- 5 The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1082, The Youth's Instructor, July 20, 1899.
- 6 Selected Messages, book 1, p. 110.
- 7 Christ Our Righteousness, p. 104.
- 8 The Desire of Ages, p. 744.