

January 2021 Blog

Conformed to His Image: *Justification is not an end in itself*

Romans 8:29-30 “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become **conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

The Scriptures are clear. God’s plan for all those whom He justifies is that they would become conformed to the image of His Son. Not some, but all believers. How are you doing?

Throughout the New Testament we see that God’s desire for us is that we not only be **Justified** but that we grow in **Sanctification**.

- **Romans 5:1-2** “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”

Justification first in the new life. **Justification** is a divine event in which the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to the believer and the sin of the believer, received by imputation from Adam, is imputed to Jesus Christ. There are 3 imputations here. Adam to the human race, the believer to Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ to the believer. At the third imputation, Justification takes place. The believer is now Justified before a Holy God through the merits of Jesus Christ. This is truly the **Miracle or Miracles!** That sinful man would be righteous in the eyes of a Holy God. And all through no effort on our part. Hallelujah!

- **2 Corinthians 5:21** “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
- **Titus 3:5** “He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy....”

But Justification, as important as it is, is not the end. If it were why would God leave the believer on earth. To what end. According to Romans 8:29-30 it is so that we can participate with God in the **Sanctification** process that He desires for us. It is so that we can become prepared for heaven, it is so that we become “conformed to the image of His Son”.

Unlike **Justification**, which is a divine event, **Sanctification** is a divine process.

A divine process that is “triggered” by being Justified before God. Without being Justified a person cannot begin the Sanctification process. But having been Justified a person **must** is to begin the Sanctification process. A process that looks differently for each person and one that spans our entire earthly life from the point of our Justification all the way to our **Glorification**. Our salvation is not limited to our Justification but involves all three aspects and one precedes the next: **Justification precedes Sanctification** and Sanctification precedes **Glorification**.

Walt Henrichsen shared this outline several years ago which I found to be very helpful:

- The **ground or basis of our salvation** is the finished work of Jesus Christ.
- The **condition of our salvation** is faith or believe (same Greek word, faith being the noun and believe being the verb).
- The **evidence of our salvation** is that the sanctification process has begun.

By its very nature, the Sanctification process involves change in the life of the believer. A process of change into the image of Christ.

Sanctification is the goal for which God saved us. A review of the High Priestly Prayer in John 17 will be a very encouraging exercise as it relates how Jesus prayed for our Sanctification.

John 17:17, 20 “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ²⁰ “I am not asking on behalf of these alone, but also for those who believe in Me through their word,

Question to Ponder: Why is it important to understand that Justification is not an end in itself?

- We can run the risk of embracing a *false assurance* of salvation.
 - “I prayed the prayer and my ticket it punched. Everything else is secondary.”
- We lose out on God’s big plan for us as His adopted children.
 - That we would become more like His Son, with whom we are joint heirs (Romans 8:17)
- We can fail to recognize the truth that the Spirit of God lives in us and wants to work in us and through us to will and to do of His good pleasure. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Galatians 2:20).

Personal Application: So, what does this mean to me and what am I going to do about it?

- As enormous of an issue as this is, I believe the very heart of our walk with God, do I give it the time and focus that I should? The answer for me is no. The temporal demands of life press in and I fall prey. But I know better and so do most of you. I do **want** to give it the time and focus that it deserves, and I will strive to do better in the days ahead. I am not lacking the resources or even the accountability. I know and I have no excuse.
- I do not know another person's heart. I cannot judge another person in terms of their Justification or Sanctification. I understand that our Mission is E2 but what a believer's Sanctification process looks like I do not judge. This is between each person and God.
- To me, understanding this teaching is a key part of finishing well.
- I must be more **tractable**. We have all probably used the word **intractable** at times but maybe have not thought that much of its opposite. **Tractable**. Which Webster's defines as: malleable, manageable, amenable, pliable, governable, yielding, compliant, obedient, submissive, etc. I know for sure that I need much improvement in this area. With my wife, my family, other people and with God. How about you? I am going to pay more attention to this and by God's grace, allowing Him to live through me, do better in the future and be more tractable with the people that God has entrusted into my life.