

BC art. 24; Eph. 2:8-10; II Cor. 3:12-18; Sanctified in Christ I. The Power of this Change II. The Order of this Change III. The Merit of this Change

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is true that sinner's sin; while saints do good. But the question is- which are you? Are you a sinner who sins- or are you a saint who does good? In our catechism class a few weeks back we considered Original sin- we commit actual and personal sins because we are born sinners and conceived in iniquity. The solution to imputed transgression is justification and imputed righteousness. But how does God deal with our personal and actual sins? Well, today we consider the doctrine of sanctification! Last week we saw that faith not only joins us to Christ but keeps us in communion with Him. This union with Christ- being in Him- has a dramatic change in how we both look and act! Sanctification is defined as the act of God where He transforms us into the image of Christ- so that we grow in holy obedience. To sanctify is to set apart as holy. As Christians we are saints- those who are dedicated to God in every part. This morning we consider this theme: Jesus Christ sanctifies those who are justified in order to mold us in His image.

I. The Power of this Change

In our first point, we consider the power of this change. How can we, as sinners, begin to see a new, holy way of life evident within? By what manner do we forsake the old way and pursue righteousness? The answer given in our article is this- true faith which is produced within by the Holy Spirit causes him to live a new life and frees him from slavery. It is by the work of the Spirit that we are made into a new man and set free from the old way of living. Again we see that at this point in our salvation, it remains a work of God within. The Spirit is the one who not only calls, but anoints and enables us to walk in this holy life. As we read from II Cor. 3:17- where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. It is an important reminder that this sanctification is also a Spirit's work- it is not God who justifies and man who sanctifies! The power to change resides not with man but with our God! It is this Spirit of God who gives us new desires and ability- so that we want to do things we never did before- and we no longer desire what we once did. The means of grace are the primary tools that the Spirit uses to mold us- to transform us. As we read the Word and pray- as we participate in the

sacraments and attend to the preaching- the Spirit is fashioning us- chipping away at the old man and bringing to life the new. But we can take even another step back- since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ- sent from Christ- we can say along with LD 32 that Christ redeems us by His blood and renews us by His Spirit. But coming back to this question- how is that we are sanctified? As we saw last week, true faith both unites us with Christ and keeps us in communion with Him. The Spirit sanctifies us by causing us to look at Christ! This communion with Christ has a profound change upon us. Being in Christ means that we are raised to new life- now to walk in that new life as Rom. 6:4 describes it. Look at the picture given to us in our text from II Cor. 3:18. The Spirit gives us the freedom to behold the face of Christ. Since we now by regeneration have eyes to see- we can look at- ponder- even stand in the glow of the glory of Jesus Christ. But basking in the glory of His grace has an effect on us! We- as v. 18 says- are being transformed into the same image! Do you see the glory of truth? As look at Christ- as we ponder Him in His word- we begin to look like Him! We start to reflect His person! We begin to be holy- because the one we are looking at is holy! Although we have fallen into sin, we start to look like the sinless One! To be clear, the power of our transformation comes from the Spirit who opens our eyes- who shows us Christ! And as we look at Christ, we start to look like Him. This obedience covers every aspect of our life- not only what we do but what we say, think, believe and desire! As we read from Eph. 2:10- we are created in Christ Jesus for good works! Before we leave this point, we must see how this truth is radically different from legalism. Legalism preaches the Law without the gospel. Demanding obedience without grace! We must avoid reading the 10 Commandments as something that we can do- or must do- in order to keep God from getting angry with us. The Law spoken outside of the context of God's grace and mercy will never change people! Saying "Do this"- without the why and how- will not produce lasting results. The Law without the good news of forgiveness in Christ leads only to bondage- slavery- and that is not the Christian way of salvation! To demand sanctification outside or apart from justification is futile! To think that we can keep ourselves right with God by our rule keeping is blaspheme! God's commandments are not a harsh burden if you know Him as your loving heavenly Father! We are sanctified by the Spirit of

Grace! Sanctification is the same thing as daily conversion. As II Thes. 5:23 states, now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! The Law alone does not change hearts- commandments cannot make us love! For example, a dead tree is not going to produce fruit! And the tree has no power in itself to change! No, the tree needs to be made alive and good before fruit will appear. So we need the Spirit of life to graft us into Christ- only then will the good fruit of obedience be evident. And that is why we need to understand how salvation is a process.

II. The Order of this Change

As we come to our second point, we find that there is an expected order and process by which we become holy- or in which we are sanctified. Here we find the connection between justification- as we considered last week- and sanctification. In justification, the Spirit unites us to Christ so that His righteousness becomes ours. We are declared by the Father to be free from guilt and stain- as our sins are pardoned. Having been justified, the Spirit continues His work by applying the blood of Christ to our daily living. Sanctification is a process by which we grow in holiness- as we reflect the holy God whom we serve. As Rom. 8 explains- those who are called are justified and sanctified. The gospel creates the freedom to obey- and sanctification happens after we are justified. As a plant can only grow after the seed has been planted and the plant is alive! So those who are made right with God and have a new heart- regenerated- will now grow from that point in this new life. So we are first made right with God by God- and then we are enabled to do the good works we are called to by the Spirit. As our article states, the Holy Spirit causes us to live a new life- and frees us from the slavery to sin. Did you catch the subtle difference- or the two parts mentioned? A new life and freedom from sin? The fact is, we have historically identified two aspects of this sanctification. First there is the dying away of the old man- mortification. The old man and his sin is put to death- crucified- we stop living after the flesh and following the cravings of this world. We no longer love sin- but we hate it and flee from it! This is followed by the second part- the coming to life of the new man. Vivification! Having come with Christ out of the grave, we

are resurrected as we start to live a new life- one of obedience and thanksgiving. Both aspects- putting to death and coming to life- are necessary in this new calling. Lets read Rom. 6: 1-11. If we have been united with Him in his death, we shall certainly be united with Him in resurrection. Dying with Christ means that we are no longer enslaved to sin- death is no longer our master. So we do not need to keep on sinning! Being raised with Christ means that we now have His life and Spirit within us- that means that we can now start to obey His commands and live a holy life! Here is a danger that we must beware of- being justified is no excuse for lack of sanctification! Being pardoned for your sin is not an excuse for further sin. Our article puts it this way- justifying faith does not make us cold towards a pious and holy life. As Rom. 6 opens- can we who have died to sin continue to live in it? Should we sin so that grace abounds? By no means! It is impossible for those who are justified to retain an appetite for sin- it is impossible for these to remain indifferent towards holy living! Our God sanctifies those whom He has justified! True faith is a living and active faith! Regeneration is always followed by works of obedience! As II Cor. 5:17 says- the old has passed away, the new has come! We are now a new creation in Christ! So those who are justified will not only seek- not only desire- but actually will be sanctified! This process continues throughout the remainder of their lives. Not perfect, but real growth in obedience. A heart that has been made good- as Jesus says in Mt. 12- will bring forth good things. Lets close this point with a question. If holiness is expected- if the Spirit has and will change us to look like Christ- why aren't we more holy? If God sanctifies those who are justified- why is there still sin evident in our lives? To answer this point, we have to remember the process. Sanctification takes time- growth is a slow and steady process. Although this is not an excuse for sin, it is true that in this life we will be both a sinner and a saint! We are a justified sinner- and a sanctified saint who will one day be glorified. This transformation is only partial in this life- and only complete when Jesus returns or we lay our lives down. So we see that God's people are saved unto good works- not by good works.

III. The Merit of this Change

As we come to our last point, we now consider the merit of this change. And here we can be brief because there are no surprises here. Just as our justification is a work of our God- so our sanctification is a work of God the Spirit performed on and within us. Although partial and imperfect in this life, this progressive growth in holiness is still evident. But it must also be said- that the best we do in this life is still tainted by sin. There is no perfect works that we can perform- so how could we merit anything from God! Although these works may be performed by our hands or uttered by our mouths- these remain a work of God in and through us! It is for that reason that God alone receives praise for any good that we may perform. As we read in Eph. 2:10- we are created in Christ Jesus for good works- which God prepared in advance for us- so that we might walk in them. So the fact that we are now holy and can do good- are all gifts of grace. And when we do in fact perform a good work- this work was prepared in advance for us! So the will and the way- the ability and opportunity to do good- are all set about by the sovereign will and pleasure of our God! And as we saw in our second point, we need to be justified before we can do good- it follows that any good we do cannot be the grounds of our justification- nor do these works add to our salvation. As Luke 17:10 describes it, after we have done all that is commanded of us we will say, we are but unworthy servants doing our duty! We deserve no commendation or praise- because good works are the works to which we have been raised and equipped! Yes- it is true that God delights to reward faithful labor- but that is a topic for another day! Our article even says we are indebted to God for the good we do! We owe God a greater praise because of the privilege we have to know and obey His word! So we see that no reward is merited- because the good we do is only our response to His work- as we perform what He enables us to perform!

To conclude, good works are defined in LD 33 as those actions which proceed from a heart of faith- being done in accordance with God's Law and done for God's glory. These good works are acceptable to God- pleasing to Him- but even these need to be sanctified by His grace. Jesus Christ sanctifies those who are justified in order to mold us in His image. The more we look at Christ- the more we look like Him! So may we all behold Christ as we dedicate ourselves to reflecting His glory in our being sanctified.