BC 24; II Cor. 7:1; John 17:13-19; Sanctified Sinner; I. The Grounds of our Sanctification II. The Call to Sanctification III. The Means of Sanctification

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, holiness is a necessary aspect of every Christian’s life. As I Peter puts it, since our God who has called us is holy, we must be holy. But sometimes we do not feel or act very holy. How can it be that we are at the same time a saint and a sinner? Today we move on in the BC to consider sanctification. Specifically, those who are justified will be sanctified. Now sanctification is means to be made holy. Sanctification is the process by which we are freed from sin or when we are purified. If justification deals with guilt, sanctification deals with corruption. These two aspects must and will come together. It is impossible for one who is justified not to be sanctified. The fact is, there are moral and ethical implications to our justification. But how does this process of holiness begin? Let me ask it this way- is justification the part that God does and sanctification the part that we do? Is there a cooperation- were we do half of the work and God does the other half? Or is it the other extreme- since God is the one who sanctifies can we just let go and let God? Can we just sit back and watch God make us holy with no effort? How does this work? Well, today we are going to see that our holy God both calls and enables His people to be holy. With this theme: Jesus Christ consecrated Himself so that we might be sanctified.

**I. The Grounds of our Sanctification**

The sanctification of God’s people is a doctrine that is built upon specific events and facts. People do not get holy just because they think it is good idea- nor does holiness happen by people trying really hard. Rather, the holiness of God’s people is rooted in the holiness of the God who calls them. Specifically, as we read in John 17:19, Jesus consecrated himself so that we might be sanctified in the truth. Jesus was set apart for our sake- to not only be the example of holiness but to secure that necessary holiness for us. In other words, we can and will be holy because our God is a holy God! Jesus Christ has been set apart for this task! To make us holy! Although sanctification is a life long process, it has a very specific beginning. It is when we are joined to Christ that we are snatched from a life of slavery to sin and set free on the path of holy obedience to God. We can link this holiness to various aspects of the Christian life. Having been justified by God, we are now sanctified in him. We can also say that living faith produces good fruit- faith that saves is a faith that sanctifies. There is a relational component to this aspect of the Christian’s life- we are no longer part of the kingdom of rebellion but rather we are part of the family of God. As God’s children, we will begin to look an act as a child of God. Adopted children pick up the traits of the family if you will. We are consecrated- set apart by God and called out of darkness of this world. There is also a moral aspect to this sanctification- our attitudes, actions and desire reflect a change of allegiance. We want to live as people of the light because the light has shown in our hearts! God’s commandments are no longer a burden but our joy and delight- they become precious to us because of our new identity. All of this is true, but one of the most instrumental aspects of our sanctification is our union with Christ. As I Cor. 1:2 puts it, the church is the gathering of those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. So the church is made up of those who are sanctified in Jesus. John 15 illustrates this with the vine and branches. Anyone who is in Christ Jesus is united to him- being in Him means that His life flows in and through us. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. But in Him, we are made to be fruitful branches that bring the fruit of good works forth. Bearing fruit is how we are shown to be His disciples. So if good works are a sign of life- our obedience to God is proof that we are alive- then it stands that the only way in which we can live is if we are in Christ Jesus. It is by faith that we are joined to Christ- faith sets us free to live and to obey. Now that we are living in Him, we are able to bear fruit. So in our first point, I have tried to show how sanctification is connected to other aspects of salvation. Unless you are first justified, you cannot be sanctified. Unless you are first joined to Christ, you cannot produce good fruit. It also follows, if you are justified you will be sanctified. If you are joined to Christ by faith, you will produce good fruit! As our BC art states, it is impossible for this holy faith to be unfruitful!

**II. The Call to Sanctification**

So what remains of our responsibility? We call this progressive sanctification, right? Well then, who has to do work? Is there anything that remains for us to do or not? Since we have been set apart for holy service, do we actually have to serve? Consider again what our article said- this truth faith causes him to live the new life and frees him from the slavery of sin. So to be clear, sanctification is a continuing work of God whereby he applies the principle of new life to our entire being. But it is also true that we are called to grow to become what we already are in principle. Our actions are called to reflect the truth of who we are- and we are holy! Perhaps Phil. 2 will help us get clarity, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. So we are to work out our salvation- not to earn but in light of what we have received. Working on our progressive sanctification by putting to death the sins that remain and coming alive in the image of Christ! In this work we must be active- committed to it! Not just sitting back and waiting- but running the race and fighting the good fight! Yes- and Amen. But it is also stated in Phil 2- that it is God’s work in you- and that He gives you the will and the way. So the desire and ability that you have to grow in your life of holiness is both provided and worked within you. In other words, unless God gives you the desire, you will not even want to be holy! And unless God gives you the way, you will not have the ability to do these works of obedience. Perhaps I can illustrate this- if you are learning how to play an instrument, how do you get better? Well, you get better by practicing- by putting in the time. But as you are honing your skills, you are using gifts that God has given you. He has given you the ability- the talent. But what happens if you do not practice? Well, you backslide and you do not progress. So sanctification is a Christian practicing- using their gifts. It takes dedication- putting in the hours- to draw out what God has put within. Listen to these words from II Cor. 7- since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. So we have the promises of God- specifically that He will be our God and we will be His people- therefore we are to be separate and touch no unclean thing. The promise is sure- we will be a holy people. And then we have the command- let us cleanse ourselves. And finally the goal- bringing holiness to completion. The end result is clear and will be attained by all God’s people- perfect holiness! When our race is run and we see Jesus face to face, we will be like Him! Perfectly holy in body and soul! So the promise does not lead to apathy or lethargy- rather the promise of belonging and the hope of victory is what motivates us in our action! The Bible uses language like renewal, transformation, and growth in grace and knowledge of the truth. Godliness, purity and holiness are to be our longing and pursuit because God has given us this desire and ability! Our calling is that of a child- not a slave. A child is content in their identity- which leads to loving submission. It is not compulsion that is contrary to desire- but obedience that is motivated by love! We want to obey God because of what He has already done- and because of what He has promised to us. This does not make us cold and apathetic- but rather lovingly devoted to pursuing the holiness without which no one will see God!

**III. The Means of Sanctification**

So the pursuit of holiness is a work of God that He calls and equips us to engage in. What remains in our last point is to look at the means by which we are sanctified. In other words, what are the tools that God has given us to engage in this work of becoming holy? The first tool in the toolbox of holiness is that of prayer. As Paul prayed for in I Thes. 5:23, may the God of grace sanctify you completely! As Paul prayed- so we are to pray for holiness. God has promised to give His grace and Spirit to those who ask- so we must ask for the grace and strength to resist sin and follow in His ways. The second thing we need in order to be sanctified is the indwelling Spirit. In Rom. 15:16, we find that Paul’s greatest desire was that the church be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. So the Spirit of God must be present and active is any progress in holiness will be seen. He is rightly called the Holy Spirit- because His presence is what makes us holy! Not only holy by way of consecration- our identity as temples of God; but holy by way of action- we do begin to live holy lives as the Spirit dwells within us. And the third thing that we need in order to be sanctified is the Word. As Jesus prayed in John 17, sanctify them in your truth. Your Word is truth. The Bible and the preaching of the Word is the means that the Spirit uses to mold us- to form us- to change us into who we are becoming. By way of reminder, the means of grace- which is the Word and the Sacraments- along with prayer- are the God given means by which God grants His grace to us. So if we are truly dedicated to growing in holiness, we will be people of prayer and the Word- people who pray for the Spirit to open and apply the Word to us- that we might be transformed into the image of Christ! I think most of us just expect holiness to happen- or we give little to no thought about it. But sanctification is to be our goal- our desire and pursuit! So may we all long and strive to be holy as God is holy!

As we close, being holy is both our identity and our calling. It is who we are in Christ as we are filled with the Spirit- and it is who we are becoming as the Spirit has His way within us. Any progress in this journey is only possible by the indwelling Spirit. It is not that God does His part and we do the rest- rather God does it all- even what we do is only possible as He works within us! Our holy God both calls and enables His people to be holy. As our theme states: Jesus Christ consecrated Himself so that we might be sanctified. Just as living branches must produce fruit, so those joined to Christ by faith will be fruitful Christians! So may we all dedicate ourselves to living as we ought- to be holy people as we already are holy in Him!