

# Lesson 2: Gospel and Heart (Lovelace & Whitfield Projects)

## Key concept Justification/ Sanctification

### Objectives:

- \*Distinguish justification from sanctification and see how they relate to one another
- \*Challenge religious and irreligious people to come to the gospel

### LOVELACE PROJECT

Richard Lovelace, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (IVP, 1979)

#### 1. Justification and Sanctification

In the New Testament...justification (the acceptance of believers as righteous in the sight of God through the righteousness of Jesus Christ accounted to them) and sanctification (progress in actual holiness expressed in their lives) are often closely intertwined. However, they are quite distinct: justification is the perfect righteousness of Christ reckoned to us, covering the remaining imperfections in our lives like a robe of stainless holiness; sanctification is the process of removing those imperfections as we are enabled more and more to put off the bondages of sin and put on new life in Christ.

#### 2. Justification reversed with sanctification

- Only a fraction of the present body of professing Christians are solidly appropriating the justifying work of Christ in their lives. Many have so light an apprehension of God's holiness and of the extent and guilt of their sin that consciously they see little need for justification, although below the surface of their lives, they are deeply guilt-ridden and insecure. On the other hand, many others have a theoretical commitment to this doctrine, but in their day-to-day existence, they rely on their sanctification for their justification...drawing their assurance of acceptance with God from their sincerity, their past experience of conversion, their recent religious performance or the relative infrequency of their conscious, willful disobedience. Few know enough to start each day with a systematic stand upon Luther's platform: you are accepted, looking outward in faith and claiming the wholly alien righteousness of Christ as the only ground for acceptance, relaxing in that quality of trust which will produce increasing sanctification as faith is active in love and gratitude.

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- b. A conscience which is not fully enlightened both to the seriousness of its condition before God and to the grandeur of God's merciful provision of redemption will inevitably fall prey to anxiety, pride, sensuality, and all the other expressions of that unconscious despair which Kierkegaard called "the sickness unto death... [So] we start each day with our personal security resting not on the sacrifice of Christ but on our present feelings or recent achievements." Since these arguments will not quiet the human conscience, we are inevitably moved either to discouragement and apathy or to a self-righteousness which falsifies the record to achieve a sense of peace.

**3. Justification as the basis for all sanctification**

- a. Much that we have interpreted as a defect of sanctification in church people is really an outgrowth of their loss of bearing with respect to justification. Christians who are no longer sure that God loves and accepts them in Jesus, apart from their present spiritual achievements, are subconsciously radically insecure persons, much less secure than non-Christians, because of the constant bulletins they receive from their Christian environment about the holiness of God and the righteousness they are supposed to have. Their insecurity shows itself in pride, a fierce defensive assertion of their own righteousness and defensive criticism of others. They come naturally to hate other cultural styles and other races in order to bolster their own security and discharge their suppressed anger. They cling desperately to legal, pharisaical righteousness, but envy, jealousy and other branches on the tree of sin grow out of their fundamental insecurity.
- b. It is often said today, in circles which blend popular psychology with Christianity, that we must love ourselves before we can be set free to love others. But, no realistic human beings find it easy to love or forgive themselves, and hence their self acceptance must be grounded in their awareness that God accepts them in Christ. There is much evidence in our experience against the idea that we are children of God, but the faith that surmounts the evidence and is able to warm itself at the fire of God's love, instead of having to steal love and self-acceptance from other sources, is actually the root of holiness.
- c. Presented in this context, even the demand for sanctification becomes part of the good news. It offers understanding of the bondage which has distorted our lives and the promise of release into a life of Spirit-empowered freedom and beauty. Ministries that attack only the surface of sin and fail to ground spiritual growth in the believer's union with Christ produce either self-righteousness or despair.

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**WHITEFIELD PROJECT**

**"THE METHOD OF GRACE": A Sermon by George Whitefield** (Abridgment by T.Keller)

**Introduction:** George Whitefield was a powerful open-air Anglican preacher in Britain and America during the first "Great Awakening" in the early 1700's. Literally tens of thousands of people came to hear him preach each time he spoke on streets and commons of the cities. An enormous number of people were converted. In light of the study of Galatians, his "gospel" message to unconverted people is extremely interesting. His message is designed not only to challenge irreligious people to change their ways, but also to challenge religious people to change their ways in coming to the gospel. In other words, he seeks to prevent the legalistic counterfeit of true Christianity that the false teachers were trying to promote in Galatia.

"They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, 'Peace, Peace' when there is no peace" Jeremiah 6:14.

Preface: How many of us cry, "Peace, peace" to our souls, when there is no peace?! How many are there who now think they are Christians, who flatter themselves that they are in Jesus Christ? Whereas, if we come to examine their experience, we shall find that their peace is not of God's giving. It is a great matter, therefore, my dear hearers, to know whether we may speak peace to our heart. I shall endeavor to show you what you must undergo, and what must be wrought in you before you can speak peace to your hearts.

1. First, before you can speak peace to your hearts, you must be made to see, made to feel your actual transgressions against the law of God. We are not only to do some things, but we are to do all things, and we are to continue so to do; so, that the least deviation from the moral law, according to the covenant of works, whether in thought, word, or deed, deserves eternal death. Give me leave to ask you, in the presence of God - was ever the remembrance of your sins grievous to you? Did you ever see that God's wrath might justly fall upon you, on account of your actual transgressions against God? If not, for Jesus Christ's sake, do not call yourselves Christians; you may speak peace to your hearts, but there is no peace.
2. Further, you may be convinced of your actual sins, but before you can speak peace to your hearts, conviction must go deeper. You must be convinced of the original corruption each of us brings into the world with us. If we look inwardly, there is pride, malice, and revenge. When the sinner is first awakened, the Spirit of God shows that he has no good thing by nature. Did you ever feel and experience this? The indwelling of sin in the heart is the greatest burden of a true Christian. If you have never felt this inward corruption, indeed my dear friends, you may speak peace to your hearts, but I fear, nay, I know, there is no peace.

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- a. Further: Before you can speak peace to your hearts, you must not only be troubled for the sins of your life, and sin of your nature, but likewise for the sins of your best duties and performances. When a poor soul is somewhat awakened by the terrors of the Lord, then the poor creature, being born under a covenant of works, flies directly to a covenant of works again. And, as Adam and Eve hid themselves among the trees of the garden and sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness, so the poor sinner, when awakened, flies to his duties and to his performances to hide himself from God, and goes to patch up a righteousness of his own. Says he, "I will be mighty good now—I will reform—I will do all I can; and then certainly Jesus Christ will have mercy on me." But, before you can speak peace to your heart, you must be brought to see that all your duties, all your righteousness put all together are so far from recommending you to God, are so far from being any motive and inducement to God to have mercy on your poor soul, that he will see them to be filthy rags, and that God hates them and cannot but do away with them, if you bring them to him in order to recommend you to his favor.
  
- b. I do not know what you think, but I can say that I cannot pray, but I sin. I cannot preach to you or any others, but I sin. I can do nothing without sin. My repentance wants to be repented of and my tears to be washed in the precious blood of my dear Savior. Our best duties are as so many splendid sins. Before you can speak peace to your hearts, you must not only repent of your sin, but also of your righteousness. There must be a deep conviction before you can be brought out of your self-righteousness. It is the last idol taken out of the heart. Did you ever feel the need of the righteousness, not just the forgiveness of Jesus Christ? And, can you say, "Lord, thou mayst justly damn me for the best duties that I ever did perform?" If you are not thus brought out of self, you may speak peace to yourselves, but yet there is no peace. You must lay hold by faith of the all sufficient righteousness of Jesus Christ, and then you shall have peace.

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**Discussion Questions**

**LOOKING BACK (20 Min)**

1. Discuss how you did on your goals from last week.
2. Discuss any progress you made in loving your neighbors on your 3x5 card.

**LOOKING UP (40 Min)**

1. In 2a, Lovelace mentions two equal, but opposite ways that you can fail to draw on the benefits of justification. What are they? Note: They are mentioned also at the very end of 2b and 3c.
2. In what specific ways do you “reverse” justification and sanctification (i.e. reverse the gospel) in the practical ways that you live your life?
3. (Another form of the same question) From what sources do you try to “steal love and acceptance” rather than by “warming yourself at the fire of God’s love” (section 3b)? How do these things “distort our lives” and deny you “Spirit-empowered freedom” (section 3c)?
4. How does George Whitfield both challenge the irreligious and the religious? How does GW make it impossible for a legalistic Christianity to grow in the new believer?
5. In paragraph 3, GW says that when a person tries gets very religious, he is actually trying to “hide himself from God.” Do you think that is a fair assessment of the motives of religious people? Compare this statement with the following: “He knew that the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin.”
6. What does it really mean to “repent of your righteousness?” Discuss this statement: “Pharisees only repent of their sins, but Christians also repent of their righteousness.”

**LOOKING FORWARD (15 Min)**

1. List one goal that you have for next week related to applying Lesson 1.
2. List one goal that you have to love one or more of your neighbors on your 3x5 card.
3. How do you need prayer this week?