

Sanctified by Faith – Acts 26:13-18

I. Introduction:

- A. When Paul stood before Festus and Agrippa, he shared with them his testimony of salvation and his commission to minister the gospel of Christ.
1. Keeping in mind a message Austin preached recently, while you notice that Jesus said he was calling Paul,
 - a. *"To open people's eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light,*
 - b. *and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins,*
 - c. *and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith which is in me (Christ)."*
 2. Isn't that our commission: to lead blind souls to the only Physician capable of giving them spiritual sight?
 3. Jesus added, that those people would be forgiven of their sins and included in His inheritance.
 4. They newly saved would join in that inheritance-sharing with other sinners who have **already** been sanctified by **faith** which is in Christ.
- B. The word "**faith**" refers trusting the Saviour for every aspect of salvation, including such things as justification, forgiveness, propitiation, adoption and, among other things, sanctification.
1. *"For by grace are ye (entirely and thoroughly) saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works."*
 2. While the Lord may have been pointing to our complete salvation, He specifically mentioned "**sanctification**," without making reference to any of its other aspects.
 3. And it is that sanctification, I'd like to consider this evening.
 4. Our sanctification is entirely dependent upon the Lord Jesus, and we receive it by imputation through faith.
- C. So to describe Paul's commission just a little differently, he was to lead dead, blind souls to the Saviour.
1. And in the process those souls would join others who have already been sanctified by faith in Christ.
 2. Those who **will be** regenerated and saved tomorrow **will join** you who were saved yesterday.
- D. I hope you are aware that to be "**sanctified**" means "**to be made holy**."
1. I hope you also understand that the Greek word "**holy**" is also translated "**saint**."
 2. A "**sanctified**" person is a "**saint**" of God.
 3. **Acts 26:18** could be understood to say that people spiritually blind may be healed by Christ, forgiven of their sins and made to share in the inheritance Christ gives to His "**saints**" – His holy ones.
- E. And here is the point of this lesson: You are one of God's saints, aren't you?
1. Well then, there is a corollary question: Are you a holy person?
 2. Furthermore, assuming that you **are** a saint, **how** did that take place?
 3. What made you a saint and what now makes you holy?
 4. The answer is in the last few words of **verse 18**: "**sanctified by faith that is in Christ**."

II. What does the Bible say about holiness?

- A. One of the things it says is that without holiness (sanctification) none of us will ever stand before the holy God.
1. **Hebrews 12:14** – *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"*
 2. Peter quotes God in the Old Testament when he says to the Christian, *"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy"* – **1 Peter 1:15-16**.
 3. "**All manner of conversation**" essentially means: in every aspect of life – in living your life – be holy.
 4. Later Peter asks, *"What manner of persons ought ye to be in all **holy conversation and godliness**?"*
 5. The answer is essentially: professing Christians should live like true saints of the Lord, holy in every possible way.

B. **Zacharias**, John's father, while filled with the Holy Spirit, preached that God would *"grant unto us, that we... might serve (the Lord) without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life"* – **Luke 1:74-75**.

1. It is expected of Christians that they live in holiness and righteousness every day of their earthly lives.
2. **Paul** wrote to the **Corinthians**, *"Having therefore these (many divine) promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"* – **I Corinthians 7:1**.
3. Don't these verses imply that we have a choice; we part to play in the perfecting of holiness in our lives?
4. As Bro. Austin reminded us last week, God has not saved us, giving us the option whether or not to continuing in our sins.
5. Just as God has turned us from idols to serve the living and true God (**I Thessalonians 1:9**), he saved us in order to turn us from our former sinful lives to lives of holiness and righteousness.

III. But how is this possible? How can I live a life of sanctification and holiness?

A. I have found that the harder I try to live without sin, the more I recognize sin in my life.

1. The closer I try to come to the holiness of the Lord, the more wretched I realize myself to be.
2. With Paul I find that *"the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do"* – **Rom. 7:19**.

B. I believe there are **two aspects** to **sanctification**; the first of which is often called *"positional sanctification."*

1. When God saves the sinner, you might say that He does it *"lock, stock and barrel."*
2. God saves by grace through faith and that not of ourselves, and not of works, lest any man should boast.
3. And just as the dead cannot give themselves life, and therefore they must to be regenerated...
 - a. Just as the sinner cannot unilaterally claim to be righteous, and so he needs to be justified...
 - b. Just as adoption into the family of God, is the Father's choice and not ours...
 - c. Sanctification, or sainthood, is a blessing from God and not something we can create.
4. Every aspect of salvation is by God's grace and is carried out entirely by the triune God.
5. We are left with only to believe it and to rejoice in what God has done.

C. To put it another way, we are **sanctified by faith**.

1. We are set apart unto God... we are made saints by our gracious Saviour.
2. Sainthood is not earned through our devotions, our labors among the needy, our preaching or praying.
3. And how do we access or receive salvation?
4. It is by grace **through faith** – God's grace and the faith which God has given to us to believe and receive it.

D. What does Paul say about **the salvation of Abraham**?

1. He *"believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness"* – **Romans 4:3**.
2. Abraham's faith was **counted** or *"imputed unto him"* for righteousness.
3. Going on, Paul said, *"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,*
 - a. *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin are covered.*
 - b. *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."*

E. How are sinners made righteous; justified; saved? By the **imputation** of Christ's sacrifice and righteousness.

1. How are sinners made saints – made holy and righteous in the Father's sight?
2. Again, it is by the imputation of Christ's righteousness.
3. *"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him (or imputed unto him) for righteousness."*

IV. And moving forward, how is it possible to live a holy life?

A. The answer is the same: through faith – through a dependence upon Christ and His Holy Spirit.

1. If we progress at all, we continue to progress in holiness *"sanctified by faith which is in Christ."*
2. **There** is the opportunity for victory over sin – only with the righteousness of Christ in us.

- B. I have been a child of God by grace, for nearly sixty years, & I have met a great many Christians along the way
1. I have to confess that those whom I have gotten to know, have proved themselves to be less than perfect.
 2. There has not been a perfectly holy, or thoroughly sanctified person, among them.
 3. I don't say that with any degree of joy or pride, because I know my own wicked heart.
 4. And **for me** when *I* have really tried hard to live up to the Biblical ideal, despite my resolve, my prayers, my self-recriminations, I have failed – sometimes more and sometimes less – but have failed.
 5. Because the flesh is not **just prone** to **fall** below God's standards of holiness, the flesh is **guaranteed** to fall short, because it is still under the curse of sin.
- C. There is, and has been, only one perfect man.
1. There is only one way to even approach those Biblical exhortations about holiness.
 2. By seeking, and then trusting, the Lord to accomplish His holy will in us.
 3. Faith in Christ Jesus – dependence upon His Holy Spirit – is the key to living a holy life.
 4. Faith and communion with the Lord Jesus are essential to living the way we are meant to live.
 5. Only in the Lord's omnipotence, and in His holiness, we have access to holiness in our day-to-day lives.
- D. What is your particular besetting sin? A bad attitude? Grumpiness? Lip? Back talk?
1. Is it something that only pops up when you are among the brethren? Is it jealousy or animosity?
 2. Maybe you are prone to anger or pride. Maybe its some sort of addiction.
 3. An unwillingness to surrender any part of our lives to the Lord is sin.
 4. So sin comes in a thousand different forms, but it boils down to a disconnection with the Lord.
 5. And if there is any victory against those sins, it comes with connection with Christ, through real, practical faith.
- E. In **Hebrews 12:1** Paul says, *“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”*
1. How are we going to lay aside those sins and hindrances?
 2. Haven't you learned that your self-discipline, your will-power, your resolutions usually fail?
 3. Yes, there has been periodic success, but it was short-lived and sporadic.
 4. But Paul goes on, saying, *“looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith... Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”*
 5. *“Looking unto Jesus”* is the key to the holiness that the Lord expects to see in us.
 6. And how can we look toward Him? Not with the eyes of our heads.
 7. The with eye of the soul – by faith.
- F. Paul deals with the false doctrine of works-based salvation in his epistle to the **Galatians**.
1. He had lead many of his readers to the Saviour, teaching them to trust by faith the finished work of Christ.
 - a. But then false teachers came along.
 - b. Groups of Jews tried to lead the Gentile believers into their Pharisaic religion, insisting that the new believers had to add the rites and ceremonies of Israel to their faith.
 - c. Paul was adamant: such teaching was heresy.
 2. He laid down a principle in **Galatians 3** which struck at the heart of the issue, but which also extends into our subject.
 3. *“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

 - a. This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?
 - b. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”*
 4. Just as we cannot be **justified** by the **works** of the **flesh**, neither can we be truly **sanctified** through the works of the flesh or by cleaning up our fleshly lives.

- G. At the beginning of his first letter to the **Corinthians**, Paul teaches the same sort of thing.
1. *"We preach Christ crucified,"* because He is the only way of salvation.
 2. And *"ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty (men after the flesh), not many noble (men after the flesh) are called."*
 3. Why doesn't God call such people? *"That no flesh should glory in his presence."*
 4. *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."*
- H. Christ is our sanctification when it comes to salvation, but He is the key to our ongoing sanctification as well.
1. And just as we are saved by grace **through faith in Christ**, we are purified and made victorious over our sins, temptations and the weakness of the flesh **through faith in Christ**.
 2. *"That no flesh should glory in his presence."*
- I. *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith... Consider him..."*
1. This is one of the facts of the Christian life: the more we look and see of Christ, the more holy we will become.
 2. The more we see what Christ sees, the more we will understand our need of Him.
 3. If we don't meditate on the Lord, if we don't pray to the Lord, if we don't live with a surrendered heart to the Lord, we will not become holy in our lives or sanctified in the Lord's sight.
- J. Faith in Christ is the opposite to faith in ourselves.
1. In ourselves is weakness, sinfulness and shame.
 2. But in Christ there is victory.
 3. Faith is a form of surrender to the Lord.
 4. And so surrendered through faith we become connected us with the infinite power of the Almighty.
- K. We have been exhorted and even commanded to live holy lives.
1. But just as we couldn't be saved or sanctified without the Saviour, we can't live sanctified lives without Him.
 2. It needs to be our prayer, *"Oh, blessed Holy Spirit grant to us the victory and holiness we need to bring glory to our Saviour."*