

**Sanctification: Transformed into
The Image of Christ
Lesson 10**

What difference does it make if we say that justification is infused to the believer rather than imputed at regeneration?

I. Introduction

- a. Last week we discussed the **heresy** of the “carnal Christian” in which we refuted the existence of such a thing as a “carnal Christian” on seven Biblical grounds.
- b. The essence of that refutation lies in the fact that no one can be a Christian who does not characteristically **yield** his will to the will of God. Holiness and obedience are both commanded and possible because believers are indwelt by His Spirit.
- c. On a continuum the “carnal Christian” heresy might be viewed as the extreme left limit in that it is entirely permissive. Today we will engage the opposite extreme which we will call the “**Holiness error**”.
- d. While there are several **variations** of this position, the basic premise is that all those whose lives are characterized by anything less than absolute, personal holiness deserve the antinomian label and are not truly saved.
- e. For this reason, an antinomian can have no **assurance** of salvation nor can they have confidence in the perseverance of their faith.
- f. **Various** Christian denominations hold this position including Roman Catholics, Holiness Pentecostals and Baptists, certain branches of the Methodist denomination as well as the Salvation Army.
- g. As shall be shown in this lesson the error of this position lays not so much on their insistence upon practical holiness but upon their **confusion** of the terms justification and sanctification as they relate to the believer.

II. The Holiness Perspective

- a. According to the most extreme of this position, the Post-modern Church is **full** of antinomians. Christ warned of this future condition of the Church when He asked whether or not He would find a people in which dwells True Faith, when He returns. Luke 18:8 *"When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the Earth?"*
- b. Those who hold this position believe that the **majority** of professing Evangelical Christianity falls into the antinomian trap because they “unrightly” divide the Word of Truth. For example, they (orthodox Christians) mishandle Romans 6:14. *"Ye are not under the Law, but under Grace"*
- c. In their view, this apparent mishandling of what it means to be under grace has led masses of Christians to stumble and to live **disobedient** lives. 1Peter 2:8 *"stumble at the Word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed"*

III. The Logic and Reasoning of the Holiness Perspective

- a. The Holiness perspective is that the Antinomians error starts with **Romans 6:14**: "Ye are not under the Law, but under grace" This verse simply means that men are not justified and saved by their own works-- which are the "deeds of the Law"-- but by God's grace.
- b. They reason that the guilty, but penitent sinner cannot be accepted and treated as if he were just, i.e., justified, **without** the merciful pardon of God. Titus 3:5 *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" .*
- c. Additionally, they acknowledge that if God had not voluntarily, freely, and **graciously** conceived and promoted this program of pardon and redemption, no man would ever be saved. Romans 3:24 *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"*
- d. They assert that the antinomian problem emerges when antinomians **pervert** the grace of God through their lascivious behavior, where lasciviousness is unbridled lust or licentiousness. This view is reinforced by Jude. Jude 4 *"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only LORD God, and our LORD Jesus Christ". "*
- e. Licentiousness is the lack of moral **restraint** that accompanies antinomianism. Paul also addressed this problem Ro 6:1-2;12,14 *"1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof... 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the Law, but under grace*
- f. The Holiness view points out that Paul was very clear in pronouncing damnation upon those who used faith in God and the grace of God as an **excuse** for their sin. Rom 3:8 *"And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just"*.
- g. Therefore, they conclude, Gospel Salvation is not freedom from the Moral Law, but freedom **to obey** the Moral Law. Romans 2:13 *"For not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified"*
- h. The Moral Law is not the Civil Law of Old Testament Israel, nor is it the Ceremonial Law of worship for the ancient Jew, but it is the unchanging requirement of supreme love for God. This love for God is a **condition of justification**. Matthew 22:37 *"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind..."*

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- i. Where this condition of justification is **not fulfilled** by complete and entire obedience to the Moral Law, there cannot be Gospel Salvation. 1John 4:8,20 "8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love... 20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"
- j. This position, they maintain, is so because the Spirit of Grace is given to the saints to **effect** that obedience to the Moral Law, thus making obedience possible for one who is justified. Philippians 2:13 "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"
- k. In their view, the absence of perfect holiness indicates a **loss** of justification for the Holiness believer and is the grounds for the necessity of purgatory under Roman Catholicism.
- l. The Holiness viewpoint says that Antinomianism ignores Scripture concerning the true nature of our justification by faith because the orthodox stress grace and faith **apart** from obedience to the Moral Law. Romans 7:7 "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the Law: for I had not known lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet"
- m. Finally, in their view, Antinomianism in effect puts God in a position of having to save the unrepentant. Antinomianism has therefore, succeeded in convincing professing Evangelical Christianity to **depart** from the true faith.

IV. Discerning the Proper Issue

- a. While the Holiness position is largely congruent with that of orthodox Christianity, it diverges at the precise point that led to the **Reformation**. I.E. The understanding of the theological implications of the terms *justification* and *sanctification*.
- b. Broadly speaking, this problem is also the **common** thread linking those who deny the eternal security of the believer, with those who believe in sinless perfection and with the concept of justification in Roman Catholicism.
- c. The key question under debate is: "How is a person saved? Roman Catholicism does not strictly believe in justification by works or **human effort**, although at first sight it might look like it and many Catholics think that's what it is.
- d. Those who err at this point in their theology may speak of justification by both grace and by faith but their reasoning must be carefully followed to discern exactly what is **meant** and where it leads.
- e. Orthodox Christianity says justification requires both the meritorious atonement of Christ on behalf of the sinner plus the imputation of Christ's righteousness to his **account**. This renders a person supernaturally pleasing or justified in the sight of God. Rom 4:23-25 *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. KJV*
- f. However, those who err at this point do so as they define justification as "the infusion (or imparting) of sanctifying grace in the believer". I.E. Justification is something which happens **IN the believer** which alters his conduct.
- g. This is fundamentally at variance with orthodox Protestant theology in which justification means the **declaration** of acquittal by God based solely on the merit of Christ without any reference to any 'infusion in the believer'.
- h. A further distinction will help clarify this point. Whatever happens within the believer is that which properly belongs under the heading of **sanctification**. Those who err on this point end up confusing justification with sanctification.
- i. So, for those who err, justification is the work of God **WITHIN** the believer whereby he is gradually transformed into a person pleasing enough to be acceptable to God.
- j. According to this erroneous theology, a person's salvation is not **settled** as a result of God's justifying declaration but rather depends on the outworking of God's grace **IN** the believer. I.E. consistent personal holiness as a condition of justification.
- k. Under this erroneous scheme justification may be gained and **lost** any number of times. No one who believes in this way can ever have lasting assurance of salvation or security of it for fear that their justification may be lost by some moral lapse in the future.
- l. In the final analysis both positions (orthodox and Holiness & RC) require works. The difference is that in the Holiness position works secure justification whereas the orthodox position views works as something that the justified person will do **because** he is justified.

V. Application

1. The question of one's assurance of salvation is determined by the Biblical facts of the completeness of the salvation secured by Christ coupled with the confirming testimony of one's Christian experience.
2. The eternal security of salvation ultimately hangs on the Biblical fact concerning the question of: Who does the work of salvation?
3. To what extent do you believe that the atonement of Christ satisfied your sin debt? Why?
4. To what extent does your experience of your inner life bear testimony to your love of God?