

## Gospel Sanctification

### Review: What is 'Reformational' or 'Reformed' Theology?

- Definition: All of life lived according to the Word of God, by the grace of God, through faith in the Son of God, united by the Spirit of God, to magnify and enjoy God.
- Big Ideas: God rules and controls all things in creation, salvation, and history (*the sovereignty of God*)  
The Bible is a single, unfolding story of God's saving promises to man (*covenant theology*)  
The church is always striving to bring all of life in line with God's Word (*always reforming*)

### Review: Justification vs. Sanctification

- The moment we believe in Jesus Christ, we are *justified* – God declares us forgiven and righteous in his sight, once and for all, on the basis of what Christ did *for* us. Justification is instantaneous and finished.
- After we are justified, God *adopts* us – giving us a new identity and status as his children.
- As God's adopted children, we are then *sanctified* – God makes us righteous, bit by bit, through the work of Christ's Spirit *in* us. Sanctification is ongoing and never finished in this life.
- The distinction between justification and sanctification is crucial for keeping the gospel clear in our lives:
  - We are not accepted *because* we obey (legalism, moralism, pietism);
  - We are not accepted *regardless of whether* we obey (antinomianism);
  - Rather, we obey because we are accepted (gospel sanctification).

### Today: Gospel Sanctification

- Gospel sanctification has two pieces:       1) turning *from* sin (repentance), *and*  
  2) turning *to* God (good works).
- What is the role of the laws written in the Old Testament in this process?
- What practical approach can we follow to make progress in this process?

### God's Law in the Old Testament: Three Categories

- Sometimes the NT uses the word 'law' is used to refer to *all the laws* that God revealed to Moses. Yet the NT also shows us that not all laws of the OT remain binding on Christians. How do we explain this?
- Some OT laws are *ceremonial*: like wedding decorations, they pointed forward to the work of Jesus (Heb. 9:1-10:18). Because he obeyed them for us, these laws no longer bind Christians (Col. 2:16-17).
- Other laws were given as *judicial* regulations for the OT nation of Israel. For example, the Israelite government was to punish sexual sins (adultery, incest, homosexuality, etc.) with the death penalty (Lev. 20:10-13). Yet under the NT, those guilty of these sins can be forgiven and received into the church (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Christians who fall into such sins and refuse to repent are not to be put to death; they are to be put out of the church in hopes that they might see their danger and repent (1 Cor. 5:1-5).
- The most prominent of all OT laws, however, are the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17). Three times the OT calls these out with special distinction (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13, 10:4). These summarize what we call the *moral* law, revealing how we are to love God and others (Matt. 22:37-40).

#### Summary:

The *ceremonial* laws of the OT were fulfilled in Jesus, and so no longer bind Christians.

The *judicial* laws of the OT were only for the nation of Israel, and so also no longer bind the church.

The *moral* law, however, continues to be the rule of life for Christian believers. Both Paul (Rom. 13:8-10, Eph. 6:1-3) and James (Jas. 2:10-11) cite the Ten Commandments.

### Allegiance to Jesus

- However, we must remember that our moral obedience is not a way of earning points with God.
- Jesus already paid everything we owe to God's law. He obeyed the Ten Commandments perfectly for us.
- It's like *debt consolidation*: by paying all our debt to God's law, Jesus bought us for himself. Therefore:

We don't follow the moral law to *earn* life in heaven;

We follow the moral law to *enjoy* the life of heaven.

"Allegiance to a person has displaced devotion to a code."<sup>1</sup>

### Allegiance vs. Idolatry<sup>2</sup>

- Because all obedience to God's moral law expresses allegiance to Jesus, all sin becomes a form of *idolatry*.
- Idolatry – serving created things rather than our Creator (Rom. 1:25) – can be very sophisticated.
- Almost anything can be an idol – not just golden statues, but love, money, success, power, culture, etc.
- Idolatry works at multiple levels:

#### Deep Idols

A deep idol is a *desire of our heart* that has become more important than God.

*Beauty* – the love and/or respect of others

*Comfort* – emotional and/or physical

*Control* – power to order things my way

#### Surface Idols

A surface idol is a *person or thing in our life* through which our deep idols seek fulfillment.

*Resources* – "I'll buy what I want!"

*Relationships* – "They'll give me what I want!"

*Performance* – "I'll earn what I want."

- Jesus told us that the heart is central (Lk. 6:45). When we violate any of the Ten Commandments, therefore, we must look deeper than our behavior. We find and expel the idols of our hearts! How?

### Gospel Sanctification: Jesus is Better!

- "Love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness... The only way to dispossess [the heart] of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one."<sup>3</sup>
- Step 1: Identify and confess your idols:
  - What do you daydream about? What does your mind effortlessly flow toward in your spare time?
  - What is your greatest nightmare? What are the things you could not cope without?
  - Where do you spend your resources? Are there things on which you spend too much money?
  - What triggers you, emotionally? What evokes your most painful or unreasonable emotions?
- Step 2: Identify the legitimate, deeper desire(s) that the idol has hijacked:
  - Examine your inner spiritual dialogue: what is your heart saying when the idol has control?
  - Hint: most idols gain power by hijacking our desire to be *valuable* and/or *safe*.
- Step 3: Preach the gospel to the deep desire at the point of hijack:
  - The desire for value and safety are already ours in Christ – this is what justification means!
  - "I don't need to fill a bank account to be safe; I'm already safe because he emptied himself at the cross."
  - "Jesus must become more beautiful to your imagination, more attractive to your heart, than your idol. That is what will replace your counterfeit gods. If you uproot the idol and fail to 'plant' the love of Christ in its place, the idol will grow back." (Keller, 172) See also: Gal. 5:16-17!

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<sup>1</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 189.

<sup>2</sup> This and the following sections use insights from Tim Keller, *Counterfeit Gods* (New York: Dutton, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Chalmers, *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection* (Minneapolis: Curiosmith, 2012), 17-19.