

Sanctification

The Doctrines of Grace

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Grab your Bibles and please open them to the second chapter of the book of Ephesians. Ephesians 2 as we continue our series looking at the doctrine of salvation. We have started all of the way in eternity past with the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son and the Spirit, whereby the Father out of his love for the Son bequeathed to him a people, and the Son out of his love for the Father died to redeem the people whom the Father had given to him, and the Spirit who is the very personification of the love between the Father and the Son actually applies that redemption to the lives of those whom the Father gave and for whom the Son died. And so from all the way eternity past we see God the Father, Son, Holy Spirit saving a people for his own glory and as an expression of the love within the Godhead. We have moved now through this process and we've come to what is known as the *ordo salutis*, or the order of salvation, and specifically when we talk about the order of salvation, we usually talk about three parts of the order of salvation and talk about justification, sanctification and glorification, but the last time we were together, we looked at the forgotten piece of the *ordo salutis* which is the doctrine of adoption. ["Adoption."] Thank you. Anybody else? Let's try it again. Last time we were together we looked at the, and I'm doing this again because we don't want it to stay forgotten, amen? We looked at what I referred to as the forgotten step in the *ordo salutis* which is the doctrine of...["adoption"] adoption, yes. So it is justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification which means that this week we come to the doctrine of sanctification. If adoption is the forgotten step in the *ordo salutis*, sanctification is often the misunderstood step in the *ordo salutis*, and so today we look at that important piece.

If you remember when we introduced this topic, we talked about framing it within the context of two important and relevant questions, two questions that we ask people both which are necessary in order to get to a right understanding. Question 1: are you a Christian? And we said that for the most part when you ask that of people around here, the answer that you're going to get is a resounding, "Yes!" right, and a curious look, like, "Why would you ask?" Okay?

So then we have to ask the second question and the second question is: why or how do you know? And that's where we get to the nitty-gritty, right? That's where people will

either answer, you know, one of a few ways. 1. They'll answer with a relational or historical answer, "Of course I'm a Christian. I was born in a Christian family." Right? Or there's the whole process of elimination, "Yes, I'm not a Muslim, I'm not a Jew, I'm not a Buddhist. Yeah, I'm a Christian." Right? Again, that's the wrong answer. It's an insufficient answer. The second way they base their answer is on ritual. Are you a Christian? "Of course I'm a Christian, I was baptized. Of course I'm a Christian, I go to church." They'll point to some ritual that was either performed on them or that they chose to participate in, and they'll point to that as the answer. The last part of this, the answer that people will give, the wrong answer that people will give is they will point to things that they no longer do and things that they now do, right? Are you a Christian? "Yes, I'm a Christian." Well, how do you know? "Well, because I stopped drinking and cussing and lying and fornicating and I started going to church and giving money and..." Right? So you point to things that you no longer do and things that you now do and you say, "Yes, I'm a Christian because of these things."

Well, here's where we get to the misunderstood aspects of sanctification, but because it is true that there are some fruits, that there are some things that change in terms of what we may have done and in terms of what we now do, but it is not true that that is the answer to the question, "Why are you a Christian? Or how do you know what you're a Christian?" Because the answer assumes that we have earned our Christianity because of the list of things that we no longer participate in or the list of things that we now participate in. This is a misunderstanding and misapplication of the doctrine of sanctification.

Listen to this from Louis Berkhof. "Sanctification may be defined as that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit by which," now again, this is a work of the Holy Spirit since it's not a work of me, it's a work of the Holy Spirit. When we answer the question are you a Christian? "Yes." Why? "Well, because I used to do this and I don't and I didn't used to do that but now I do." We've missed not some thing but we've missed someone, we've missed the Holy Spirit "by which he purifies the sinner, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works. It differs from justification in that it takes place in the inner life of man, is not a legal but a recreative act, is usually a lengthy process, and never reaches perfection in this life. While it is very decidedly a supernatural work of God, the believer can and should cooperate in it by a diligent use of the means which God has placed at his disposal."

So a few things there in that definition. First, the nature. He gives us these three things: the Holy Spirit purifies the sinner, renews his whole nature, and enables him to perform good works. This is a work of the Spirit, the Spirit of God himself who sanctifies us, meaning that he purifies us wholly and completely, that he renews our whole nature, and that he enables us to perform good works. In other words, before this we are not able to perform good works. This is extremely important in understanding this doctrine. You are not able to perform good works prior to this act of the Holy Spirit. And I know you say, "Well, wait a minute, you know, I know, I know, I understand what you're saying but I know people who are not Christians and they do more good works than some people I know who are Christians. So how can we then say that before this work of the Holy Spirit you cannot do good works?" Well, quite simply because in order for a work to be deemed

good, it has to be the right thing, done the right way, for the right reason, and there is only one right reason in terms of righteousness in sanctification and that reason is the glory of God. If you are an unbeliever, you can do the right thing, you can even do it the right way, but you are absolutely incapable of doing it for the right reason because the only right reason is the glory of God himself, and if you have not been justified and adopted, you can't even understand or comprehend the glory of God, let alone act toward the glory of God. So your actions, then, are not righteous apart from sanctification.

So in order to understand this doctrine, there are a number of places that we could go but there is one place that we are going to look, we're going to look here in Ephesians 2. We're going to look at a passage that doesn't even use the word. There are many passages to which we could turn that use the word "sanctification," but none of those passages that actually use the word "sanctification," I would argue, could outdo this passage in terms of explaining to us this doctrine.

So let's look, we're going to look at one verse, Ephesians 2:10. We'll read the whole paragraph in order to put this into context but we're looking at one verse and that verse is,

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

That's it. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." That is it, and there are several things that I absolutely adore about Ephesians 2:10. One of the things that I love about this verse is that even though it is clearly the end of a paragraph, it is often overlooked. Even when we memorize parts of Ephesians 2, people will memorize Ephesians 2:1-9 and not even include verse 10. We treat verse 10 as though it is a separate thought, as though it is another idea that follows upon the idea that we find in Ephesians 2:1-9, when in fact when you look at the structure, it is all the same idea, the same sentence, the same phrase, the same paragraph.

Ephesians 2:1-10. The idea of sanctification is not foreign to the idea of justification. The idea of our sanctification is not an add-on, an addendum, if you will, to the idea of being saved. It's not, yes, God saves us. Full stop. And then at some point God sanctifies us. Absolutely not. It is part of the same whole and Ephesians 2:10 makes this clear, first, in that it is connected to, you know, Paul's sort of magnum opus, if you will, in the doctrine of salvation. If the greatest book that Paul has ever written in terms of explaining the doctrine of salvation is the book of Romans, and I believe that it's just an undisputed fact, it is his greatest treatise on the doctrine of salvation and really on the doctrine of sanctification. The book of Romans is the book of righteousness, amen? And that is true and we can't argue it, but if we had to argue for one paragraph, for one sentence that best displays the magnificence of this doctrine, I would argue that it is Ephesians 2, specifically verses 1 through 10. And so the beauty of verse 10 is that it is absolutely a succinct presentation of this idea of sanctification but it comes within the context of and as the final punch, if you will, of the paragraph that is the most magnificent, as Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones would call it, the most sublime presentation of what this doctrine

looks like, and yet we want to disconnect it because we want to disconnect sanctification from justification. It belongs together.

There are friends of mine who belong to another tradition, a tradition that I don't borrow from too often, but even a broken clock is right twice a day, amen? And so our friends in the Pentecostal Holiness tradition, they have this phrase, right? You know, and sometimes if you ask them how they're doing, they'll say, "I'm saved, sanctified and full of the Holy Ghost." Amen? And there's some truth in that because that's who we are and what we are. We are saved. We are sanctified. And we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Those are not three separate things. Ironically, our friends in that tradition want to separate them, right? "At one time, you know, I was just saved but I wasn't sanctified and I wasn't filled with the Holy Spirit. Then something else happened and I added sanctification to my salvation. And then something else happened, right, and then I added the Holy Spirit to all..." No, no, no, we're arguing that this is a package deal and this becomes clear when you look at this paragraph.

So sanctification literally means, to be sanctified means to be set apart, means to be holy. The Greek word "hagios, holy," the Holy Spirit is the hagios Spirit, he is the Holy Spirit. The church, the people of God who are set apart, they are sanctified, they are God's holy people. So sanctification means being set apart. Sometimes you find both of these things together. Look, for example, in 1 Corinthians 1 beginning in verse 1, "Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified," hagiozo, "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," hagios, same word, same root, "called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours."

So this word "sanctified" literally means "to be set apart; to be holy; to be other." And this is something that God does and as Christians, our sanctification is a multilayered reality. Here Paul in 1 Corinthians 1 alludes to the fact that as Christians we are, we have been sanctified. We are sanctified. It's done. We are sanctified. We have been sanctified. That's why we are the saints. We disagree with our Roman Catholic friends who argue that there are only certain people who are saints, who have been elevated to that status only after their death. This is absolutely incorrect according to the Scriptures. Paul obviously in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 is referring to people who are alive right here, right now, and every one who belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ as saints. We are saints, we are holy, we are sanctified if we are in Christ. There is no such thing as someone who is in Christ who is not sanctified. Amen, somebody. ["Amen."] You are sanctified if you belong to Christ. You are holy if you belong to Christ. You are set apart if you belong to Christ. Period. Full stop. That is the truth.

Here's another truth: you are being sanctified if you belong to Christ. "Wait, what? I thought you said I was already sanctified?" Yes. "Well, if I'm already sanctified, how am I being sanctified?" The answer: yes. "Well, no, you didn't answer my question because I said if I'm already sanctified, how can it also be true that I'm in the process of being sanctified, and you said the answer is yes?" That's because the answer is yes, you are sanctified and you are being sanctified. But watch this, you are saved and you are being

saved. Amen? Christ is already Lord of all, over all, above all, and he is actually expanding his Lordship. Already, not yet. We are redeemed and yet we are awaiting our full redemption. Already, not yet. This is the great paradox of the Christian life, it is already and it is not yet. Our sanctification is the same. We are sanctified, we have been sanctified, and yet we are not yet fully sanctified.

Already, not yet. This is an important distinction and it's an important distinction because if we don't get this distinction, then often here's what we do, we believe that sanctification is something that we achieve, that we finish, sort of like taking a course, right, or getting a degree, right? You've got a degree, "I'm finished. I'm done." Now I move on to something else. And if you think about sanctification like this, it becomes hugely problematic because you say, "Okay, here I am, I'm done," and then all of a sudden you do something that indicates that your sanctification is incomplete and now you're all broken up on the inside. What's the matter? "Oh, I just thought, I just thought I was there and then this happened again, and why would this happen again if I was already....?" Because it's already and not yet. That's why.

Don't fall into this trap. This is one of the great traps of marriage. We're married and we love each other and then we sin against each other, and it's like we leave our brain on the outside of the marriage relationship and we say ridiculously dumb things like, "If you really loved me, you wouldn't keep sinning against me the same way. You keep doing this over and over and over again. If you really loved me, then you wouldn't keep doing this over and over again." Really? Have you met yourself? Because what do you do to God? The same sins over and over and over again. If you can't say amen, you ought to say ouch.

So again, sanctification already, not yet, and there are some areas of our life where we see this and it's just, it's certain things that are just [finger snap], that are gone and praise God for that, amen? Certain things that are just gone, they were there and then they're gone. Celebrate those things. Celebrate those things but be careful, be careful because that's not most things. Most things in the Christian life follow that chronic disease pattern and you may not die from it but you're gonna die with it, and you will fight it for the balance of your days. So it is incredibly important that we understand the nature of this doctrine.

First, we are sanctified because of the one who made us. We are sanctified because of the one who made us. Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship." We are his workmanship. Remember, being holy and sanctified means being set apart. Being set apart. How does this manifest itself? It manifests itself in righteousness and oftentimes, you know, we sort of juxtapose those terms holy and righteous, and they do belong together because our righteousness and our holiness are inseparable. We are declared righteous in justification, amen? We are righteous but we are also being made righteous in sanctification.

So these two things belong together but they both flow from the same truth and that is that we are his, and the "him" here is God. We are his workmanship. God is holy and it is

God who made us holy. He is the holy one. That is his very nature. When we talk about God, one of the first things that we say about God is God is holy. He is other. He is set apart. He is not like us, and one of the great mistakes that we make when we try to comprehend and apprehend who God is, is that we sort of leave holiness aside, but he is not like us, and then we go on to define him using, what? Anthropomorphic terms or human terms and we say, "Well, you know, how can God be Father and be Son and be Spirit? How can he...?" And it boggles the mind and we decide to let go of the doctrine. Why? Because we leave this first principle: God is holy. He is not like us. He describes himself to us in terms that we can understand but yet as we understand those terms, we must not make the mistake of thinking that because we understand what the term is that he uses to illustrate, that somehow we fully understand who he is because we must never lose sight of the fact that whatever else God is, God is holy. He is set apart. He is other. He is not like we are.

So in terms of righteousness, oftentimes we look at something that God does and we say, "Well, that's not righteous." Why? "Because if I did that, it wouldn't be considered righteous." God is holy. He's holy. Classic example of this is God's jealousy and I've mentioned this a number of times before. God is a jealous God. "Well, how is it that God can be holy and righteous and jealous all at the same time when if I'm jealous, it's unholy? Huh? How can God tell me that it's sinful for me to be jealous and then say in the very next breath that he's a jealous God? That would mean that he's not righteous because jealousy is unrighteous." I've explained it before, let me explain it again: God is God. God is the supreme being. There is none beside him. There is none like him. Which means that God, as Isaiah says, will share his glory with no one. "I am God. I will not share my glory with another." Which means that if God gives his glory or shares his glory with another, he would be guilty of blasphemy, which means that God by nature of being God has to be jealous for his own glory so that he's not unrighteous by being a blasphemer, and you by nature must not be jealous because you're not God. And there is one beside you who deserves glory, but there's none beside God who deserves glory.

This is just one example of how understanding who God is requires that we never lose sight of the fact that God is holy, but how does he show us that holiness? By displaying it through a holy people. He's referred to often as the holy one of Israel. Not just the holy one but the holy one of Israel. Exodus 19:5-6, "'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." Israel is a holy nation, a set apart nation. Here's what's interesting: Israel is a holy nation and yet God continuously has to judge Israel for their sin. "Why, because they're not holy?" No, because they are. Because they are holy, he expects righteousness.

But they're not the only ones. 1 Peter 2:9 gives us a broader biblical understanding of this reality, "But you," he's speaking about the church, speaking about Christians, "are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." So now we see that God's people in the New Testament and under the new

covenant are just like his people in the Old Testament and under the old covenant. We are the Israel of God. We are a holy nation, set apart for God.

So first and foremost, our righteousness, our sanctification is born out of the fact that God has made us. This, of course, requires that the people of God be set apart in their behavior and we are. Not only the nature of God as the holy one, but the work of salvation itself. Man is dead, verses 1 through 3,

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

That's where we were. That's who we were. And that is why if we were ever going to be holy, we needed someone, something outside of ourselves to execute the holiness because we were in the grips and the power of the world, the flesh and the devil. So nothing that we did or could have done would have ever been holy. We had to be made holy. We had to be sanctified. We had to be set apart which is exactly what God does.

Look at the rest of the passage, verse 4 through 9.

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

God did this. We are set apart. We are sanctified, first and foremost, because we are God's workmanship. All of it is by grace.

Workmanship versus works. There's two different words here. Paul says in the first part of the paragraph that we are saved by faith and not as a result of works, and the word he uses here is the word "ergon." You've heard of ergonomics, maybe, right? That's for works, for things that you do. The word used for "workmanship, we are God's workmanship," is a different word. The word that he uses there is "poiema." Does that sound familiar? Like a poem. Like a poem. This is not the effort of man, this is the poetry of God. This is not you trying to do good and be good, this is God displaying his handiwork by creating you as something that is holy and righteous and set apart just like he is. We are God's workmanship. We are God's poetry.

So we are sanctified, we are set apart because we are his workmanship. Secondly, we are set apart, sanctified, righteous because of the means by which he made us. So we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus. We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus. So, first of all, I am now sanctified, set apart, because God is the one who made me. Secondly, I'm sanctified, set apart, because he made me in Christ. Now this is very important because now we've been remade. I was made the first time but I was made in whom? I was made in Adam, and when Adam fell, I fell in Adam. And before you get angry with Adam, remember, he was the best of us all. The only difference would have been if you had been there, it would have happened sooner. Amen, somebody. ["Amen."] And so we are fallen and none of our acts are righteous because we have been created, born in the first Adam. Now our acts become righteous because we are recreated, reborn in the last Adam. So just as in the first Adam all fell, amen, in the last Adam, Paul says, all are made righteous and it is because we are in Christ. That's why.

We are God's workmanship. God made us. We're holy, we're righteous, we're set apart, we're sanctified because God made us but, secondly, he made us in Christ who is, what? The holy one himself, the righteous one himself. Even in our justification we've talked about the fact that our justification comes about because of this double imputation, because of Christ's active and passive obedience. In his active obedience, he obeys the whole law and is actually righteous thereby able to impute to us, to credit to us his actual righteousness. But there is a second imputation. Because of his holiness and the fact that he has not sinned, God is able to impute to him our sinfulness so that on the cross this great exchange takes place, Christ dies for our sinfulness and because he's not sinful, he imputes to us his righteousness, and because of our union with Christ, we are in Christ on the tree and Christ is in us to sanctify us.

We are actually sanctified because God made us, the holy one made us his holy people, and we are actually sanctified because the holy one made us his holy people in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." We are the very righteousness of God because we are in Christ. Do you see it now? Because we are in Christ.

I have a dear friend of mine who is an astronaut. He's like a real live, flesh and blood astronaut. We went to NASA, we lived in Houston and we went to NASA and we got a behind-the-scenes tour at NASA, and in NASA there are some places that, you know, you can't really go into and one of them is Mission Control where they actually controlled the Apollo missions, right? Where it actually happened, "Houston, we have a problem." Do you remember that? We were in Houston where they had the problem and so we're there and we go and we look, and we didn't even realize the privilege that we had until another tour group came and they were behind the glass looking at us. That's when I realized and kind of grabbed all the children close to me, we were in the room, not a replica but the room. And so I'm looking and those people are behind the glass looking at us like, "Why are they in there?" And I'm standing right here and I went and grabbed all the kids and I'm like, "Listen, don't, don't touch nothin'." I would have said, "Don't touch anything," that would have been grammatically correct but not strong enough. "Don't touch nothin'." Here's the thing: during that Apollo mission, remember we didn't even

know if we were going to be able to get them back, what happened was other astronauts took everything that the astronauts on Apollo 13 had and tried to figure out a way to engineer a solution to the problem, and if they didn't engineer a solution to the problem on the ground in Houston, those astronauts in space were going to die and not make it back. So they actually got into a room and limited themselves to only the equipment that they had up in Apollo 13, and they finally engineered a solution that worked and everybody celebrated but not too much, because it was one thing to actually make the solution to the problem in Houston but it would not mean anything unless the solution was actually made in space on Apollo 13. It is only when the solution was made in space on Apollo 13 that it had any efficacy and saved the astronauts and brought them home.

You see, here what's you need to understand: before you come to Christ you can get into the simulator and you can do things that look like the righteous acts of the saints, but the works done in the simulator don't mean anything and they won't get you home. It's only the works that are done actually in Christ that count for any righteousness in you. And so many of us walk around in our lives looking at the actual astronauts who are in Christ and trying to replicate what they do, hoping that it will get us home. But it will not. We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus. In Christ.

There's a last step and let me hurry to this last one for the sake of time, and the last step is this. We're righteous, we're sanctified first because of who made us; second, because the means by which he made us; but finally because of the ends for which he made us. You see, this is where our actual righteousness turns into manifest righteousness. We're God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for what? "For good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." We're prepared for what? For good works. What are good works? They're the works that God prepared beforehand. So I don't to come over here and say, "Well, well, these are good works." No, they're not unless God says they are, amen? Good works are what God prepared beforehand and they're not just theoretical works but so that we should walk in them. So our righteousness means nothing unless and until it is actually applied. It's only theoretical until it's actually applied but that's when we know that we have this. How do you know that you have been set apart in Christ? You know it because you bear fruit.

So there's a man who loves fruit and because he loves fruit he wanted to plant a fruit tree, and so he went and he went to the place where they sell the fruit trees and he says, "I want a fruit tree in my yard." And he said, "What kind of fruit do you want?" He said, "Well, I really love mangoes and so if I could just have, you know, a mango tree. I just, mangoes, I love mangoes." And so he gets this, you know, sapling and goes and he plants it and he waters it and he waits and it grows up and all of a sudden fruit begins to come out on the tree, except it's avocados. And so he goes back to the man and he says, "Well, you know, we have a problem." He said, "What's the problem?" And he says, "Well, you cheated me." "Well, how did I cheat you? You gave me money, I gave you a tree." He said, "Yeah, but, you know, I was here to buy a mango tree. Okay, fine, yeah, see right here on the receipt, right, mango tree." He said, "Well, what's the problem?" And the man just shows him an avocado. He says, "That's what came from the tree." So the man takes

the receipt, scratches out mango and he writes avocado. All is well. No, it's not. No, it's not. You see, when you've purchased a mango tree, avocados won't do. Amen?

When Christ died to purchase a holy and righteous people who walked in the good works that the Father prepared beforehand that we should walk in them, we don't get to just do the works that we feel like doing and then come to him and scratch out the receipt and say, "Just accept what we're giving." And you don't get to say on the one hand, "Yes, I am sanctified, I am justified, I do belong to Jesus," and not have anything to which you can point that is evidence of that. A good tree will bear good fruit.

So there's a ditch on both sides of the road. On the one side, we misunderstand sanctification and we try to exercise good works apart from being in Christ. That's not sanctification. You can't get there from here. You must be in Christ. That great exchange has to happen, your sin imputed to him, his righteousness imputed to you by faith. By faith, trusting wholly in what Christ has done and what Christ has done alone. There is a ditch on the other side of the road and the ditch on the other side of the road is saying, "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, perfect righteousness, perfection sanctification theoretically, but nothing being manifested in my life that would be evidence of the fruit thereof." There's a ditch on both sides of the road.

You cannot be sanctified by doing good works apart from Christ, and you cannot be sanctified by being in Christ and not doing good works. We are sanctified because we are sanctified by God, the holy one. We are sanctified because we are sanctified in Christ, the holy one. And we are sanctified because we were set apart by God in Christ for good works. For good works. And here's the good news: because you are actually sanctified, you have both the desire and the ability to do these good works. And Jesus says, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am gentle and lowly of heart." Listen to me, ask yourself this questions, saints, as you are pursuing righteousness: is your burden easy and burdensome, or is it light? Because, you see, when you have not come to God through faith in Jesus Christ and you've come to church through your outward works, it is hard and burdensome for you to walk the narrow road because you do not have that which you need in order to achieve it. But when you belong to Christ, his yoke is easy and your burden is light and you begin to delight in righteousness like you used to delight in sin.

So the answer to the question, again, it's a subtle change. Are you a Christian? "Yes." Why? "Well, because I used to do these things and now I don't do them anymore." That's almost the right answer. Are you a Christian? "Yes, I am." Why? "Because I've placed my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his finished work alone and God has justified me and adopted me and has sanctified me, and there's stuff that I used to delight in that I don't delight in anymore, and things that I never would have pursued that I can't live without." Do you see the subtle difference in the answers?

And here's the other issue. When you understand that this is a process that is ongoing, this is the beauty of it, saints, and oftentimes we beat ourselves up because we don't understand sanctification, "I used to delight in these things and now I don't. I used to hate

these things and now I love them." Amen. But here's what the truth more accurately sounds like, "I used to delight in these things and now I don't delight in them as much." If you can't say amen, you ought to say ouch, because lying to ourselves on this doesn't help us. "I used to delight in these things but God is removing that delight. I used to despise these things and now my appetite for them is growing." That's a more accurate way to talk about sanctification and it's important that we get accurate because when we're not accurate, we end up in that ditch on either side of the road and you declare your deliverance from something that you are still in the process of being delivered from, and then all of a sudden it creeps back up on you and you start saying, "Well, I guess I wasn't really a Christian after all," as opposed to, "Praise God for diminishing my delight in this and causing me to see the folly of it. Oh, it came back strong this time. That's alright because I know that God is in the process of diminishing my delight in this." Do you see the difference, saints? That's the distinction when we understand the already, not yet reality of sanctification.

We're sanctified. We're set apart. We're holy. We're righteous. Why? Because God himself made us that way. We're his workmanship and because God made us that way in Christ and we are in Christ, clothed in his righteousness alone, amen? We are in Christ and because that's the end for which God made us that his righteousness might be displayed as we are conformed to the image of Christ. Not fully yet, but more today than yesterday, and more tomorrow than today.

Let's pray.

Gracious God, our heavenly Father, we thank you and we rejoice in you. We rejoice in you for our salvation, for our sanctification. We rejoice in our sanctification that is and the fact that we are sanctified, that we have been sanctified, that in Christ we are righteous, we have been made righteous, our nature has been changed, and we rejoice in the fact that that nature is actually manifesting itself in actual righteousness more and more each day from the inside out from our hearts to our hands. Grant by your grace that this might continue to be true of us more today than yesterday and more tomorrow than today. And for those who have come into this place striving for sanctification apart from Christ, open their eyes, bring them to an end of themselves, grant them repentance and faith that they might trust in his righteousness and in his righteousness alone. Grant this, we pray, in Christ's name and for his sake. Amen.