

Topic: New Life, Sanctification, and Justice

Scriptural References

Acts 26:14-18; Rom 15:5, 2:4, 5:6-8; Hebrews 9:14; Rom 15:5, 2:4; 2 Cor 9:6-8; Luke 4:18-19; Isaiah 61:1-2, 58, 10:2, 41:17-19; Pro 21:5' Ps 37:27-28; Gen 1, 2

Biblical Explanation

For most people, drinking a caffeinated beverage like coffee brings forth an alertness and increased energy level that can be expressed in a variety of ways. Jesus does something in the life of the believer that is to be expressed—He sanctifies us. Being sanctified means being set apart for God's purposes, being made holy, pure, and sin free. In the 26th chapter of Acts, Paul gives his testimony and in it he shares Jesus' aim, "18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

Jesus opened our eyes while we were in darkness, replaces our blindness with sight, and thus makes us able to follow Him. Satan's aims and desires have no power over us, we are in Jesus Christ who is the Light and all our past sins—past ways in which we hurt God, hurt others, and hurt ourselves—are forgiven by Jesus Christ. Hallelujah! Not our power, not our strength, not our smarts, but Jesus' love for us makes us clean, makes us pure as if we have never sinned. Jesus sanctifies us which means He makes us holy and sets us apart from unbelievers for His kingdom purposes. Sanctification is immediate in that we are fully made new but also progressive in that aspects of who we are grow to look more like Jesus. For instance God is kind (Rom 2:4), an encourager (Rom 15:5), and joyous and generous (2 Cor 9:6-8). While we immediately have the capacity for all of these attributes, we may find ourselves over the course of years growing in our ability to be kind like Christ is kind. So internally we may experience changes in our thoughts, emotions, feelings, triggers, impulses, etc. (Hebrews 9:14) as He is making us clean like Him, making our character more like His character. The extent of being sanctified or made holy is not limited to the internal or conscious of the believer but is to be lived out by faith and expressed externally (Hebrews 9:14) so that our sanctification extends to us caring about what God cares about.

God communicates what He cares about in Luke chapter 4 verses 18 and 19. Jesus says "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim

good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." This is a theologically rich text, but we will focus on Jesus caring about "proclaiming good news to the poor" and "proclaiming liberty to the captives." Proclaiming "the good news" is announcing the plan of salvation the Father has created through belief in Jesus Christ and the new creation one becomes as a result of being empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is this good news that provides freedom or what Jesus calls liberty. Liberty is both spiritual and physical. God desires that no person would experience spiritual bondage and slavery to Satan or physical bondage or slavery due to unjust practices. Jesus' words are a quotation from the book of Isaiah (61:1-2). The book of Isaiah is primarily about man's salvation being found in God (12:2) but laced throughout the entire book is God's heart for justice and the physical needs of the oppressed being eliminated (10:2, 58:7, 41:17-19). God cares for the spiritual and physical well being of humanity and when He sanctifies you and makes you like Him, He expects an internal character change and an external behavioral change that reflects that you care about what He cares about.

Matters of physical justice are spiritual matters because they tarnish the image of God that all people were created in. Poverty, racism, classism, gender inequalities create a value judgement or ascribe greater or lesser worth to people which is not how God created us. These injustices are an assault on God's creation story of making us all equal as image bearers and God seeing that as good (Gen 1, 2). The result of injustice is a distorted view of how we see one another and burdens being cared by both the oppressed and oppressor. But Jesus Christ came to set the captives free and extend justice and expects those who believe in Him to advance this justice as well (Pro 21:5, Ps 37:27-28). The people of God being willing to advance just causes models to oppressed people that they are worth fighting for, that the image of God and their value and worth in Him is far greater than the oppressor or oppression they have experienced. Being sanctified for Jesus Christ's just purposes and caring about what God cares about is a re-telling of the gospel story. Jesus Himself died for humanity while we were all sinners (Rom 5:6-8), oppressed by the weight of bondage to a corrupt way of life, but He saw our value and set us free from our bondage and then sanctifies us to be justice advocates for those who are still hurting.

Main Points

- We are taken from dark to light, death to new life.
- Our sins are forgiven.
- We are sanctified which means set apart and made holy for God's purposes.
- Sanctification is immediate in some areas and a process in other areas of our life.

- God changes us internally, making our personal character align with His.
- God changes our hearts to care about things in the world that He cares about like matters of justice.
- As sanctified people we are extensions of Jesus Christ's character and justice in a broken world.

Suggested Questions

- Can you describe personally or share from someone you know the transformation of a person going from dark to light?
- What does the term sanctification mean?
- In what ways has God made aspects of your character holy? How has your character been changed or is in the process of changing to look more like Jesus?
- Were you a person that cared about justice before you became a Christian? If not, has God made you aware of injustice? If so, has God had an impact on your view of justice?
- Don't allow the many injustices in our world to overwhelm you. In what way could God use you to respond to injustice?

Additional Resources

Books

- Wright, Christopher J. H. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*.

Web Articles

- "What Does Sanctification Mean?" christianity.com