

Lost – The Cross centered life

Three main tendencies that can draw our hearts away from a Cross centered life.

1. *Legalism*, which means basing our relationship with God on our own performance.
2. *Condemnation*, which means being more focused on our sin than on God's Grace.
3. *Subjectivism*, which means basing our view of God on our changing feelings and emotions.

I. Legalism:

Defining Legalism: *Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God and acceptance by God through obedience (personal performance) to God.*

A. Thomas Schreiner writes that “legalism has its origin in self-worship. If people are justified through their obedience to the law, then they merit praise, honor, and glory.

Legalism, in other words, means the glory goes to people rather than God.”

B. A legalist is anyone who behaves as if they can earn God's approval and forgiveness through their personal performance of what they perceive to be required for salvation. While believing in what Christ did on the cross, but also believing that they must also play a part to complete the work of the Cross!

C. Not fully understanding Romans 3:26 in that in that moment, you were justified, or declared righteous before God!

1. Not understanding the work of faith in Jesus Christ. That at that moment the righteous Judge, God, hands down the verdict that you are *righteous*.

2. God, the Judge, transfers the perfect, sinless record of Jesus to YOU! Your past sin did not cease to exist, but rather, God completely and totally forgave you!
3. In doing that God, the Judge, wiped the record of your sin away, and credited the righteousness of His Son to you. Now you are Justified!

D. But, now begins Sanctification.

1. Justification is a one time act of the Grace of God.
2. It does not come in degrees. I cannot become more or less justified.
3. I am simply justified by the Grace of God.
 - i. Sanctification is now the *process* of building on the life now justified.
 - ii. Sanctification does indeed come in degrees.
 - iii. It is the process of becoming more like Christ.
 - iv. It is the peeling away of our desire for sin, renewing minds, and brings our emotions in line with the Word, thus changing our lives.
 - v. It is the process of growing in holiness.
 - vi. This process begins the instant you are converted and will not end until you meet Jesus face-to-face.

E. Sanctification is more about our own choices and behavior concerning the Cross.

1. It is the process of allowing the power of the Holy Spirit to begin to align our emotions with the Word of God.
2. We make one of two conscience decisions.
 - a. Either our emotions are true and God's Word is a lie,
 - b. *OR* our emotions are a lie and God's Word is truth!
 - c. If I am living my life on "how I feel" then I am not putting faith in the Word of God.
 - d. God knows our being and has remade us in his image. We need to pit our emotion against the Word and decide which one is to govern our lives.
 - e. We either follow our emotions or we follow the Word of God.
Not both!

F. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we strive, yes even fight against sin. The growth is to become more and more sanctified as the power of the gospel which conforms us more and more closely to the image of Jesus Christ.

Many confuse Justification and Sanctification. Here is an explanation given by C. J. Mahaney in his book "*The Cross Centered Life*":

- Justification is being *declared* righteous.

Sanctification is being *made* righteous—being conformed to the image of Christ.

- Justification is our *position* before God.

Sanctification is our *practice*. You don't practice justification! It happens once for all, upon conversion.

- Justification is *objective*—Christ's work for us.

Sanctification is *subjective*—Christ's work within us.

- Justification is *immediate* and *complete* upon conversion. You will never be more justified than you are the first moment you trust in the Person and finished work of Christ.

Sanctification is a *process*. You will be more sanctified as you continue in grace-motivated obedience.

SIX BY'S OF JUSTIFICATION

1. Justified by GRACE – Romans 3:24: We do not deserve to be justified; in fact, we deserve the very opposite
2. Justified by FAITH – Romans 5:1: Faith is the human response to God's grace. By faith, we accept the free gift. Faith is that which appropriates what God has done for us.
3. Justified by BLOOD – Romans 5:9: Here sin was met by the precious blood of Christ, and now God can justify ungodly sinners because of righteous satisfaction has been made. I.e. "By his stripes we are healed. Isa. 53:5
4. Justified by GOD – Romans 8:33: The truth here is that God is the Person who justifies.

5. Justified by POWER – Romans 4:24-25: Our justification is linked to the power that raised Christ from the dead. His resurrection proves that God is satisfied.
6. Justified by WORKS – James 2:24: Works are the outward proof of the reality of our faith. They give outward expression to what would otherwise be invisible. Phil. 2:12.

From all this we see that the person is justified by grace, by faith, by blood, by God, by power and by works. Yet there is no contradiction at all. These statements simply present different aspects of the same truth.

- A. *Grace* is the principle upon which God justifies
- B. *Faith* is the means by which man receives it
- C. *Blood* is the price which the Savior had to pay
- D. *God* is the active Agent in justification
- E. *Power* is the proof
- F. *Works* are the result.

William Plumer sums it up well when he writes, “Justification is an act.

1. It is not a work, or a series of acts.
2. It is not progressive. The weakest believer and the strongest saint are alike equally justified.
3. Justification admits no degrees. A man is either wholly justified or wholly condemned in the sight of God.”

G. We need not make the mistake the legalist make.

1. They confuse their own ongoing participation in the process of sanctification with God's finished work in justification,
2. forgetting Romans 3:20 "*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law...*"
3. What Paul is saying is that we cannot earn God's approval and love by our good works!
4. Our participation in the process of sanctification comes only after we have been totally accepted and made right before God through faith in Jesus Christ.

II. CONDEMNATION:

Condemnation could be called "baggage". We all seem to carry some extra baggage around.

A. Some of us carry big baggage and some a lot of small baggage.

1. Guilt over something we think we failed to do for someone we love...i.e. Kids we weren't home for as they are growing up.
2. The wife we promised we would be home for.
3. The husband we feel we let down.
4. Many of us carry what could be called a "Low Grade Guilt".

LOW GRADE GUILT – Small sins we seem to feel guilt or shame over, even though we have repented, both to God and to the responsible person. Are we allowing condemnation into our life? We need to ask ourselves some questions:

1. Do you relate to God as if you were on a kind of permanent probation, suspecting that at any moment He may haul you back into the jail cell of His disfavor?
2. When you come to worship do you maintain a “respectful distance” from God, as if He were a fascinating but ill-tempered celebrity known for lashing out at His fans?
3. When you read Scripture does it reveal the boundless love of the Savior or merely intensify your condemnation?
4. Are you more aware of your sin than you are of God’s grace, given to you through the cross?
5. We seem to have missed the promise of the Word that we are to be *completely* free of condemnation.
6. I am amazed at those who accept the lie that cultivating condemnation and wallowing in their shame is somehow pleasing to God, or that a constant, low-grade guilt will somehow promote holiness and spiritual maturity.
7. Do we not understand that *God is glorified when we believe with all our hearts that those who trust Christ can never be condemned?*

8. Only in his Grace and when we live in the good of total forgiveness that we're able to turn from old, sinful ways and walk in grace-motivated obedience.

9. Because we choose not to live in the reality of life, we carry extra baggage. The reality of life is that the seriousness of personal sin produces feelings of depravity.

This should be faced with the reality of the death and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sin, which is a greater reality of life than the sin in our lives.

10. We need to know how to beat this baggage of condemnation.

- a. Confess your sin to God
- b. and then believe in Him and his promises.
- c. Exercise the gift of faith that God has given you to believe that Jesus died for the very sins you're being condemned for.

YOU CAN NOT DO IT OF YOURSELF! That's why Christ did it for you.

- A. His resurrection is **proof** that God **accepted** Jesus' sacrifice for you!
- B. We cannot forget or deny the depth and depravity of our sins,
- C. but rather we need to take heart the depth of the sacrifice on the cross is deeper than all my sin added together.

III. SUBJECTIVISM

A. Subjectivism is basing your faith on the way you feel inside.

We believe that the way we feel is more real than God. We choose to listen to ourselves rather to talk to ourselves about the reality and truth of God.

I used to give the argument “but I know how I feel”. I was then challenged to pit my “feelings’ against the word of God. I had a real rejection problem. You could show me all day what the Bible said, but I would come back with, “but I know how I feel”!

B. I repeat a statement written earlier.

Either my emotions are truth and God’s Word is a lie,

OR my emotions are lies and God’s word is true!

After several weeks of wrestling over this fact, I finally confessed that my emotions were lying to me and that the Word of God had to be true.

I am not rejected!!!

I had to allow the Holy Spirit to bring my emotions in alignment with the Word of God.

Make a cross on a sheet of paper and on the left side, write the word

“ACQUIRE” and

on the right side write the word “AFFIRM” and at the top write the word

“APPLY”.

1. ACQUIRE – we are to acquire the word in our hearts. In Psm. 119:11 the psalmist states the “Thy word have I hid in my heart that I may not sin against God”

2. **AFFIRM** – we are to make the truth of the Word truth in our heart. This takes the work of the Holy Spirit. Once God’s truth is affirmed in our heart or emotions, our behavior will follow.
3. **APPLY** – once we have affirmed the Word acquired we can then apply that truth in our lives. Many a time have I heard a word, usually preached, and said to my self, I will put that in my life. But by the time I got to the car, I had already acted opposite and in total rebellion to the Word I had just heard. But as I read and prayed and yielded myself to the Holy Spirit a transformation took place and the word became part of my emotion and I began living the Word in my life.

B. Martin Luther wrote, “[The righteousness of Christ] is entirely outside and above us.”

1. That’s why we need to stop looking inward and look outward at the work of Christ on our behalf.
2. The gospel exists independently of us, and is active regardless of how we feel. Knox Chamblin has written that the purpose of the gospel is to “proclaim saving events.” And its events remain completely unaffected by whatever is agitating our emotions.
 1. The gospel is ***Objective***. That which is subjective changes regularly. But that which is objective is built on the solid rock of the gospel.

2. While we are looking inward, we are living by the subjective, the temporal, the ever-changing, the unreliable, and the likely-to-be-false concept of life.
3. When we look outward, to the gospel, we live by the objective, the never changing, that which is perfectly reliable and always completely true.

Our life in Christ is to be based on objective truth, and the chief truth among the innumerable glorious truths of Scripture is that Jesus died for your sins.

That's the heart of the gospel.