



A study of the doctrine
of Sanctification

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Lesson 1: God is the Author of Sanctification

“Indeed, this is God’s will: that you be sanctified, namely, that you keep yourselves away from sexual immorality...For God did not call us for uncleanness, but in sanctification.”

(1 Thessalonians 4:3,7)

“Only God can tell us what kind of life is worthy of the calling he has given us. No person, no church body, no theologian, no church official can tell us what constitutes the Christian life. Only God can tell us this. In his Word, the Lord tells us what makes up the sanctified Christian life. Through the gospel the Lord supplies the power for living a sanctified life.”

(Lange,10)

Perhaps the greatest error of our modern Christian era is a misunderstanding of this truth. Christian bookstore shelves are filled with how-to guides to live the Christian life. Sermon series’ abound with specific things we must accomplish to be good Christians. The goal of our study is to see not what Pastor Berg says, but what God says about sanctification. The goal of everything we do is to grow in Jesus, to see what Jesus has done for us. Then and only then, do we look at what he does through us.

Sanctification: The Wide and Narrow Sense

“But we are always obligated to thank God for you, brothers, loved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning for salvation by the sanctifying work of the Spirit and faith in the truth.

(2 Thessalonians 2:13)

What we have above is Paul using “sanctification” in the wide sense. What does he mean when he writes that God “chose you from the beginning for salvation by the sanctifying work of the Spirit?”

“Indeed, this is God’s will: that you be sanctified, namely, that you keep yourselves away from sexual immorality...For God did not call us for uncleanness, but in sanctification.”

(1 Thessalonians 4:3,7)

What we have above is Paul using “sanctification” in the narrow sense. What does he mean when he says that God will is that you be sanctified?

Definitions:

Sanctification in the wide sense refers to all God does to bring sinners to salvation. It includes bringing us to faith and preserving us in the faith.

Sanctification in the narrow sense refers to the new life God enables believers to live through Christ. The word *sanctification* is most often used in this sense.

God gets the credit for our salvation

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill thy law’s demands.
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save and thou alone.

“In fact, whoever keeps the whole law but stumbles in one point has become guilty of breaking all of it.”
(James 2:10)

“Just as it is written: There is no one who is righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands. There is no one who searches for God. They all turned away; together they became useless. There is no one who does what is good; there is not even one.

(Romans 3:10-12)

According to the hymn verse and the passages above, to what standard does God hold us in regard to keeping his commandments?

God gets the credit for our ability to live new lives in Christ

“For the mind-set of the sinful flesh is hostile to God, since it does not submit to God’s law, and in fact, it cannot.”
(Romans 8:7)

“As fellow workers we also urge you not receive God’s grace in vain.”

(2 Corinthians 6:1)

How do the above passages give God the credit for our sanctification?

How does God enable sinners to live sanctified lives?

It follows from this, as has been said, that as soon as the Holy Spirit has begun his work of rebirth and renewal in us through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that on the basis of his power we can and should be cooperating with him, though still in great weakness. This occurs not on the basis of our fleshly, natural powers but on the basis of the new powers and gifts which the Holy Spirit initiated in us in conversion, as St. Paul specifically and earnestly admonished, that “as we work together with” the Holy Spirit “we urge you not to accept the grace of God in vain” [2 Cor. 6:1*]. This should be understood in no other way than that the converted do good to the extent that God rules, leads, and guides them with his Holy Spirit. If God would withdraw his gracious hand from such people, they could not for one moment remain obedient to God. If this passage were to be understood as if the converted person cooperates alongside the Holy Spirit, in the way two horses draw a wagon together, this interpretation could not be tolerated without damaging the divine truth.

(Formula of Concord: SD:II:65,66)

Based on the quote, explain the following: A person cannot cooperate with God before or during conversion. A Christian can cooperate with God after conversion.

*1 How can I thank you, Lord, For all your loving-kindness,
That you have patiently Borne with me in my blindness!
When dead in many sins And trespasses I lay,
I kindled, holy God, Your anger ev'ry day.*

*2 It is your work alone That I am now converted;
O'er Satan's work in me You have your pow'r asserted.
Your mercy and your grace That rise afresh each morn
Have turned my stony heart Into a heart new-born.*

*3 Lord, you have raised me up To joy and exultation
And clearly shown the way That leads me to salvation.
My sins are washed away; For this I thank you, Lord.
Now with my heart and soul All evil I abhor.*

*4 Grant that your Spirit's help To me be always given
Lest I should fall again And lose the way to heaven.
Grant that he give me strength In my infirmity;
May he renew my heart To serve you willingly.*

*5 O Father, God of love, Now hear my supplication;
O Savior, Son of God, Accept my adoration;
O Holy Spirit, be My ever faithful guide
That I may serve you here And there with you abide.*

Read CW Hymn 460. Consider the ways in which the truths of our lesson are stated in this hymn. Circle or underline the different truths that you find and label them.

Lesson 2: Sanctification Flows from Justification

“The life I am now living in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”

(Galatians 2:20)

This article on justification by faith (as the Apology says) is the “most important of all Christian teachings,” “without which no poor conscience can have lasting comfort or recognize properly the riches of Christ’s grace.” As Dr. Luther wrote, “If this one teaching stands in its purity, then Christendom will also remain pure and good, undivided and unseparated; ... but where it does not remain pure, it is impossible to ward off any error or sectarian spirit.”

(Formula of Concord: SD:III:6)

Why do we call the doctrine of justification the “most important of all Christian teachings?”

“For I had no intention of knowing anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

(1 Corinthians 2:2)

“For we conclude that a person is justified by faith without the works of the law.”

(Romans 3:28)

Why is it important to note that human works do not belong in the teaching of justification?

Why do we call the doctrine of justification the “heart” doctrine of the Bible?

What is it important to teach the God’s love for us, not our love for God, is what empowers our sanctified lives?

The differences between justification and sanctification

What differences between justification and sanctification do we note in the following pairs of passages?

“But to the person who does not work but believes in the God who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited to him as righteousness.”
(Romans 4:5)

“So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. The new has come!”
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

“Indeed, it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”
(Ephesians 2:8,9)

“But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”
(Galatians 5:22)

“By this will, we have been sanctified once and for all, through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ.”
(Hebrews 10:10)

“Indeed, I know that good does not live in me, that is, in my sinful flesh. The desire to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out. So I fail to do the good I want to do. Instead, the evil I do not want to do, that is what I keep doing.”
(Romans 7:18,19)

“From now on, there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will give it to me on that day, and not only to me but also to everyone who loved his appearing.”
(2 Timothy 4:8)

“We know that we have crossed over from death to life, because we love our brothers.”
(1 John 3:14)

Faith justifies and faith sanctifies

“But now, completely apart from the law, a righteousness from God has been made known. The Law and the Prophets testify to it. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”

(Romans 3:21,22)

According to this passage, what is the role of faith?

“Because we constantly remember before God our Father your work produced by faith, your labor produced by love, and your patient endurance produced by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(1 Thessalonians 1:3)

According to this passage, what is the role of faith?

Justification is the cause of sanctification

“For we conclude that a person is justified by faith without the works of the law.”

(Romans 3:28)

“Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy and pleasing to God—which is your appropriate worship.” *(Romans 12:1)*

What is the relationship of justification to sanctification?

In what churches do we find the teaching that sanctification is the cause of justification?

Where do we find the error of teaching sanctification apart from justification?

**Though we are justified by grace alone through faith,
faith is never alone.**

“For just as the body without breath is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”

(James 2:26)

Why does James tell us that faith without deeds is dead?

Why might we call good works the “vital signs” of Christian faith?

Why will we be concerned about those who neglect hearing God’s Word and receiving the Lord’s Supper?

Can a person live in willful, repeated sin and still remain a believer? Explain.

*1 All mankind fell in Adam's fall;
One common sin infects us all.
From one to all the curse descends,
And over all God's wrath impends.*

*2 Through all our pow'rs corruption creeps
And us in dreadful bondage keeps;
In guilt we draw our infant breath
And reap its fruits of woe and death.*

*3 From hearts depraved, to evil prone,
Flow thoughts and deeds of sin alone;
God's image lost, the darkened soul
Nor seeks nor finds its heav'nly goal.*

*4 But Christ, the second Adam, came
To bear our sin and woe and shame,
To be our life, our light, our way,
Our only hope, our only stay.*

*5 As by one man all mankind fell
And, born in sin, was doomed to hell,
So by one Man, who took our place,
We all were justified by grace.*

*6 We thank you, Christ; new life is ours,
New light, new hope, new strength, new pow'rs;
This grace our ev'ry way attend
Until we reach our journey's end.*

Read CW Hymn 378. Consider the ways in which the truths of our lesson are stated in this hymn. Circle or underline the different truths that you find and label them.

Lesson 3: Christians are Saints and Sinners

“The desire to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out.”

(Romans 7:18)

“...no one is free from trials. However, we can defend ourselves against them and check them by entreating God’s help in prayer. Thus we read in the book of hermits how a young brother longed to rid himself of his thoughts. The aged hermit said to him, “Dear brother, you cannot prevent the birds from flying over your head, but you can certainly keep them from building a nest in your hair.”

(Martin Luther, LWAE:42:6)

“To the saints who are in Ephesus, who are believers in Christ Jesus.”

(Ephesians 1:1)

“What a miserable wretch I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

(Romans 7:24)

Who is a saint in God’s sight?

What must be said even of the saints who believe in Jesus?

On the basis of the two previous questions, describe a Christian.

God created Adam and Eve in his own image

“God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness,”...God created the man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them.”

(Genesis 1:26,27)

“Do not lie to each other since you have put off the old self with its practices, and put on the new self, which is continually being renewed in knowledge, according to the image of its Creator.”

(Colossians 3:9,10)

“As far as your former way of life is concerned, you were taught to take off the old self, which is corrupted by its deceitful desires, and to be renewed continually in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new self, which has been created to be like God in righteousness and true holiness.”

(Ephesians 4:22-24)

What special blessing did God give to Adam and Eve when he created them?

Use these passages to give a definition of the image of God.

Adam and Eve lost the image of God through the fall

“They heard the voice of the LORD God, who was walking around in the garden during the cooler part of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. The LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” The man said, “I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself.” God said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman you gave to be with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” The LORD God said to the woman, “What have you done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

(Genesis 3:8-15)

When Adam and Eve disobeyed the Lord, they lost the image of God. How does this become apparent in the verses above?

“When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God...When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image.”

(Genesis 5:1,3)

“Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh. Whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

(John 3:6)

What we different between Adam when God created him and Adam’s son when he was born?

Since the fall into sin, what is the condition of all people as they come into the world?

“However, and unspiritual person does not accept the truths taught by God’s Spirit, because they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually evaluated.

(1 Corinthians 2:14)

“You were dead in your trespasses and sins.”

(Ephesians 2:1)

“For the mind-set of the sinful flesh is hostile to God, since it does not submit to God’s law, and in fact, it cannot. Those who are in the sinful flesh cannot please God.”

(Romans 8:7,8)

What effect has sin had on man’s will?

The Christian is a new person

“And put on the new self, which is continually being renewed in knowledge, according to the image of its Creator.”

(Colossians 3:10)

“I certainly delight in God’s law according to my inner self.”

(Romans 7:22)

“I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him is the one who bears much fruit.”

(John 15:5)

“For the love of Christ compels us, because we came to this conclusion: One died for all; therefore, all died. And he died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for him, who died in their place and was raised again.”

(2 Corinthians 5:14,15)

How does the Bible describe the Christian according to the new man?

The Christian still has the old Adam

“Indeed, I know that good does not live in me, that is, in my sinful flesh. The desire to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out. So I fail to do the good I want to do. Instead, the evil I do not want to do, that is what I keep doing.”

(Romans 7:18,19)

“For the sinful flesh desires what is contrary to the spirit, and the spirit what is contrary to the sinful flesh. In fact, these two continually oppose one another, so that you do not continue to do these things you want to do...Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful flesh with its passions and desires.”

(Galatians 5:17,24)

Besides having a new man, the Christian also has a sinful nature. What are the results of this in the Christian’s life?

What does baptizing with water mean? Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also mean that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

(Baptism Fourth, Small Catechism)

What is necessary to keep the old Adam in check so that faith is not destroyed?

The Christian is saint and a sinner

“The desire to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out.”

(Romans 7:18)

What must be said of the Christian as a person?

What are some reasons why it is important to remember the dual nature of the Christian?

Jesus is our assurance of victory

“What a miserable wretch I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

(Romans 7:24,25)

What gives Christians assurance that they will be victorious in their struggle against their sinful flesh?

*1 All mankind fell in Adam's fall;
One common sin infects us all.
From one to all the curse descends,
And over all God's wrath impends.*

*2 Through all our pow'rs corruption creeps
And us in dreadful bondage keeps;
In guilt we draw our infant breath
And reap its fruits of woe and death.*

*3 From hearts depraved, to evil prone,
Flow thoughts and deeds of sin alone;
God's image lost, the darkened soul
Nor seeks nor finds its heav'nly goal.*

*4 But Christ, the second Adam, came
To bear our sin and woe and shame,
To be our life, our light, our way,
Our only hope, our only stay.*

*5 As by one man all mankind fell
And, born in sin, was doomed to hell,
So by one Man, who took our place,
We all were justified by grace.*

*6 We thank you, Christ; new life is ours,
New light, new hope, new strength, new pow'rs;
This grace our ev'ry way attend
Until we reach our journey's end.*

Read CW Hymn 378. Consider the ways in which the truths of our lesson are stated in this hymn. Circle or underline the different truths that you find and label them.

Lesson 4: God works Sanctification through the Means of Grace

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him by this baptism into his death, so that just as he was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too would also walk in a new life.”

(Romans 6:3,4)

Therefore we should and must insist that God does not want to deal with us human beings, except by means of his external Word and sacrament. Everything that boasts of being from the Spirit apart from such a Word and sacrament is of the devil.

(Smalcald Articles:VIII:10)

Through what means does God give people the ability to lead active physical lives?

How does God give Christians strength to live sanctified lives?

The nature and purpose of the law

“Indeed, this is God’s will: that you be sanctified...”

(1 Thessalonians 4:3)

“Do not owe anyone anything except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments—do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not cover (and if there is any other commandment)—are summed up in this statement: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor, so love is the fulfillment of the law.”

(Romans 13:8-10)

“Because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

(Romans 3:23)

“In fact, those who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law.”

(Galatians 3:10)

Why did God give us his divine law?

“This commandment that was intended to result in life actually resulted in death for me.”

(Romans 7:10)

What was the original intent of God’s law?

What is the purpose of the law since the fall into sin?

Why did the purpose of the law change in this way?

“For this reason, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by works of the law, for through the law we become aware of sin.”

(Romans 3:20)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ but I tell you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

(Matthew 5:27,28)

“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.”

(Genesis 9:6)

What purpose does the law serve in this sinful world?

The Christian is free from the law

“Keeping in mind that the law is not laid down for a righteous person, but for lawless and rebellious people, for godless people and sinners, for unholy and worldly people...”

(1 Timothy 1:9)

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. As it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.””

(Galatians 3:13)

“Therefore, do not let anyone judge you in regard to food or drink, or in regard to a festival or a New Moon or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were coming, but the body belongs to Christ.”

(Colossians 2:16,17)

“They worship me in vain with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”

(Matthew 15:9)

In what ways are Christians free from the law?

Christians still need the law

“Indeed, I know that good does not live in me, that is, in my sinful flesh. The desire to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out. So I fail to do the good I want to do. Instead, the evil I do not want to do, that is what I keep doing.”

(Romans 7:18,19)

“Instead I hit my body hard and make it my slave so that , after preaching to others, I myself will not be rejected.”

(1 Corinthians 9:27)

“How can a young man keep his path pure? By guarding it with your words.”

(Psalm 119:9)

Why do Christians still need the law?

According to the previous passages, in what ways do Christians still need the law?

God supplies the power for sanctified living through the gospel and sacraments

“I just want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the message that creates faith?”

(Galatians 3:2)

“He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.”

(Titus 3:5)

“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after the meal, he also took the cup saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

(1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

How does God empower sanctified living?

What is the benefit of Baptism for Christians' sanctified living?

What is the benefit of the Lord's Supper for Christians' sanctified living?

Errors to be rejected

Antinomianism. This is the error that says we do not need to preach the law to Christians. The Formula of Concord of 1577 rejected this error, which has continued to appear in the church to the present day.

Legalism. This is the attempt to produce sanctification through the law. It treats sanctification as something people can attain through their own obedience to the laws of God. This error neglects the gospel and sacraments, which alone can empower sanctified living.

Moralizing. This is an attempt to change people's behavior by appealing to what is in the best interest of the person or society. Attempts to cut down on drug and alcohol abuse by appealing to the best interest of the person or society are examples of moralizing. While government may have to operate in this way, moralizing cannot produce sanctified living.

We also note that prayer is not a means of grace. We will pray to God, asking him to enable us to grow in sanctification. Yet God will supply the power for this growth through the means of grace. If we neglect the means of grace, we neglect the means through which God will answer our prayer.

*1 O Lord, we praise you, bless you, and adore you,
In thanksgiving bow before you.
Here with your body and your blood you nourish
Our weak souls that they may flourish. O Lord, have mercy!
May your body, Lord, born of Mary,
That our sins and sorrows did carry,
And your blood for us plead
In all trial, fear, and need: O Lord, have mercy!*

Read CW Hymn 317. Consider the ways in which the truths of our lesson are stated in this hymn. Circle or underline the different truths that you find and label them.

*2 Your holy body into death was given,
Life to win for us in heaven.
No greater love than this to you could bind us;
May this feast of that remind us! O Lord, have mercy!
Lord, your love and kindness did move you;
Let your supper move us to love you.
All our debt you have paid;
Peace with God once more is made. O Lord, have mercy!*

*3 May God bestow on us his grace and favor
To please him with our behavior
And live together here in love and union,
Cherishing our blest communion. O Lord, have mercy!
Let not your good Spirit forsake us;
Grant that heav'nly-minded he make us.
Give your Church, Lord, to see
Days of peace and unity. O Lord, have mercy!*

Lesson 5: Sanctification is Not Necessary...

Sanctification is Necessary

“Indeed, it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance so that we would walk in them.”

(Ephesians 2:8-10)

When it is taught that good works are necessary, it must be explained why and for what reasons they are necessary. Here we must take great care not to draw works into the article of justification and salvation and mix them in with it. Therefore, it is proper to reject the propositions that good works are necessary for the salvation of believers or that it is impossible to be saved without good works. For these [propositions] are totally contradictory to the teaching on the exclusive clauses in the article of justification and salvation, that is, they oppose St. Paul’s expressions that completely exclude our works and merit from the article on justification and salvation and ascribe everything to God’s grace and the merit of Christ alone. Likewise, these [propositions] regarding the necessity of good works for salvation deprive troubled, distressed consciences of the comfort of the gospel, give them reason to doubt, and are in many ways dangerous. On the other hand, they strengthen the presumptuousness of one’s own righteousness and the trust in one’s own works.

(Smalcald Articles:VIII:10)

How would you answer the question: Is sanctification necessary?

Sanctification is not necessary for salvation

“Because all of sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...For we conclude that a person is justified by faith without the works of the law.”

(Romans 3:23,24,28)

“You who are trying to be declared righteous by the law are completely separated from Christ. You have fallen away from grace.”

(Galatians 5:4)

Why are statements such as “No one has been saved without good works” and “Good works are necessary for salvation” contrary to Scripture?

Why must people’s works be excluded from a discussion of salvation?

If faith without works is dead, can’t we say that good works are necessary for salvation?

Why are we happy that our works do not in some way contribute to our salvation?

Good works do not preserve faith. God preserves faith through the means of grace.

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”
(Ephesians 4:30)

“Now the works of the sinful flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, complete lack of restraint, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, discord, jealousy, outburst of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and things similar to these. I warn you, just as I also warned you before, that those who continue to do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

(Galatians 5:19-21)

How does a person grieve the Holy Spirit?

What effect does grieving the Holy Spirit have?

“My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.”

(John 10:27,28)

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”

(Romans 1:16)

Do good works preserve faith? If not, how is faith preserved?

Why is it so dangerous to neglect the means of grace?

Good works are necessary because God wills them

“Indeed, this is God’s will: that you be sanctified, namely, that you keep yourselves away from sexual immorality. For God did not call us for uncleanness, but in sanctification.”

(1 Thessalonians 4:3,7)

“Let us also consider carefully how to spur each other on to love and good works.”

(Hebrews 10:24)

“But as for you, speak what is appropriate for sound doctrine.”

(Titus 2:1)

Can Christians be indifferent toward doing good works? Explain.

Should we skip teaching about good works since we are saved by grace alone?

Good works are necessary because they are natural fruits of faith

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

(Acts 1:8)

“I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him is the one who bears much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.”

(John 15:5)

“So also, such “faith,” if it is alone and has no works, is dead.”

(James 2:17)

What is the evidence that a person has faith?

Why is a lack of good works an indicator that faith may be weak or absent?

*1 Today your mercy calls us To wash away our sin.
However great our trespass, Whatever we have been,
However long from mercy Our hearts have turned away,
Your precious blood can wash us And make us clean today.*

*2 Today your gate is open, And all who enter in
Shall find a Father's welcome And pardon for their sin.
The past shall be forgotten, A present joy be giv'n,
A future grace be promised: A glorious crown in heav'n.*

*3 Today our Father calls us; His Holy Spirit waits.
His blessed angels gather Around the heav'nly gates.
No question will be asked us How often we have come;
Although we oft have wandered, It is our Father's home.*

*4 O all-embracing Mercy, O ever-open Door,
What should we do without you When heart and eye run
o'er?
When all things seem against us, To drive us to despair,
We know one gate is open, One ear will hear our prayer.*

Read CW Hymn 339. Consider the ways in which the truths of our lesson are stated in this hymn. Circle or underline the different truths that you find and label them.

Lesson 6: Sanctification Remains Imperfect in this Life

“Not that I have already...have reached the goal, but I press on...”

(Philippians 3:12)

Is it possible for a Christian to achieve perfection in this life? Human experience will teach that it's not. More important, the Bible tells us it's not possible for Christians to achieve perfection in this life. Why is it, then, that we find so many Christians who believe they can achieve perfection in this life? The reason is that the devil and the old Adam are also active in this area. We like to feel good about ourselves; we like to think we're okay. The devil wants us to ignore our sins. The self-esteem movement tells us that we need to love ourselves before we love others, but we find it difficult to love ourselves when we are confronted with our sins.

(Lange, 111)

“Who can say, ‘I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin?’”

(Proverbs 20:9)

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his Word is not in us.”

(1 John 1:8-10)

Solomon's question in Proverbs implies that people are making a claim about themselves. What is that claim?

What must be said of anyone who claims to be without sin?

What is it folly to deny that we are sinners?

Why is the person blessed who confesses his sins to the Lord?

Christians' sanctified lives are hindered by their old Adam

“So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is present with me. I certainly delight in God’s law according to my inner self, but I see a different law at work in my members, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me captive to the law of sin, which is present in my members.”

(Romans 7:21-23)

What is the sincere desire of all Christians?

Despite their sincere desire, what do Christians still discover about their lives?

Why is it not possible for Christians attain perfect sanctification in this world?

The Bible speaks of sanctification as a process of growth rather than as a state of being

“So that you became a model for all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Indeed, the word of the Lord has resounded from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith as become known.”

(1 Thessalonians 1:7,8)

“And may the Lord increase you love and make it overflow for each other and for all people, just as ours does for you.”

(1 Thessalonians 3:12)

For what did Paul commend the Thessalonians?

Though the Thessalonians were models for others, what did Paul still pray for them?

Explain the following: Christians' lives are a process of becoming rather than a state of being.

Perfectionism is the error that says Christians can achieve perfectly sanctified lives. This error surfaces in various churches. For example:

Roman Catholics teach perfectionism. They believe that, with the assistance of God, people can achieve perfection in this life. Note their catalogue of saints.

Methodism teaches that people who have received the "second grace" are assured of the strength to progress toward a holy life. This "second grace" is some event in the Christian's life that assures the person God has given him or her this ability.

The Holiness Bodies (Pentecostals, Assemblies of God, etc.) teach "entire sanctification." They believe this occurs when the Holy Spirit removes from them, completely and instantaneously, the inclination to sin.

What are the dangers in the error of perfectionism?

Christians are enthusiastic about living their lives for Jesus

"I know you works, that you are neither cold nor hot. If only you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm and not hot or cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth."

(Romans 7:21-23)

Why is indifference toward Christian living a dangerous matter?

“Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus also took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it yet, but there is one thing I do: Forgetting the things that are behind and straining toward the things that are ahead, I press on toward the goal, for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

(Philippians 3:12-14)

Paul wanted to become perfect, but he was realistic about what he could and could not do. What is a realistic attitude toward growth in sanctification?

Will such a “realistic” attitude lead us to think, “Well no one is perfect, so why try?”

Why is guilt over past sins a bad reason for trying to live a sanctified life?

What does Paul tell us will move us to enthusiastic Christian living?

*1 When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast Save in the death of Christ, my God.
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood.*

*3 See, from his head, his hands, his feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled
down.*

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

*4 Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

Read CW Hymn 125. What moves us to being enthusiastic about living for Jesus? Circle or underline the different truths that you find and label them.

Lesson 7: Good Works Flow From Faith

“But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

(Galatians 5:22,23)

In this faith all works become equal, and one work is like the other; all distinctions between works fall away, whether they be great, small, short, long, many, or few. For the works are acceptable not for their own sake but because of faith, which is always the same and lives and works in each and every work without distinction, however numerous and varied these works always are, just as all the members of the body live, work, and take their name from the head, and without the head no member can live, work, or have a name.

(Luther's Works: Vol. 44, p. 26)

“Therefore go and gather disciples from all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and by teaching them to keep all the instructions I have given you.”

(Matthew 28:19,20)

The Lutheran Church has often been accused of neglecting to teach about good works. How would you answer this accusation?

Good works are fruits of faith

“But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

(Galatians 5:22,23)

What is the relation between faith and works?

Only God determines what are good works

“Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

(Micah 6:7,8)

“They worship me in vain, teaching human rules as if they are doctrines.”

(Matthew 15:9)

Why are human beings not able to determine what is pleasing to God?

What about the church? Can it make rules as to what is pleasing to God?

What standard must a work meet to be a good work?

Discuss the following examples of people who have set up their own standards for what constitutes a good work.

1. Abortion advocates tell us it is more loving to abort a baby than to bring an unwanted child into this world.
2. Advocates of homosexuality tell us that as long as people love each other, God must approve, for God is love.
3. People tell us desertion and adultery are permissible to escape a “bad” marriage, because we need to take care of our own needs.

Good works are acceptable to God through Christ

“You also, like living stones, are being built as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, in order to bring spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

(1 Peter 2:5)

Why does God accept Christians' works as good works?

How does the fact that God accepts our works for Jesus' sake encourage us in our sanctified living?

Good works glorify God and serve our neighbor

“In the same way let your light shine in people's presence, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

(Matthew 5:16)

“Be careful that you do not do your righteous works in front of people, so that they will notice.”

(Matthew 6:1)

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who belong to the household of faith.”

(Galatians 6:10)

Why will we want to do good works?

What does Jesus warn us should not be a motivation for good works?

What is a concrete way we can show God we love him?

What is the best thing we can do for our neighbor?

God encourages us to do good works

“So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, “We are unworthy servants. We have only done what we were supposed to do.”

(Luke 17:10)

“Let us not become weary of doing good, because at the appointed time we will reap, if we do not give up.”

(Galatians 6:9)

“Let us also consider carefully how to spur each other on to love and good works.”

(Hebrews 10:24)

Does God owe us anything for the works we do?

What does God still promise to do?

Some religious leaders send out chain letters promising that if we give to their cause, God will give us back one hundred times as much. Some leaders promise that if we live virtuous lives, we can be assured of material wealth. Do Christians do good works because they expect something from God?

Why will we encourage fellow Christians to do good works?

Identify some ways in which we can encourage each other to do good works?

*1 Brothers, sisters, let us gladly
Give to God our all, our best—
Service hearty, thorough, honest,
With a living love impressed.
All our duty, all our striving,
All our time to him belong;
Praise him, then, with true devotion;
Come before him with a song.*

*2 By his mercy, by his bounty,
By the gift of Christ, his Son,
What great goodness he has shown us,
What high marvels he has done!
Let us to him promptly, freely,
Yield our bodies and our souls,
Thankful that his love protects us,
That his wisdom all controls.*

*3 Gracious Lord, accept our service
For the sake of Christ, your Son;
Lo, our hope abides now only
In the righteousness he won.
Bless and save us; help and guide us;
Watch to comfort and restore
Till in heav'n we rest rejoicing,*

Read CW Hymn 484. Notice how the love of Christ moves us to do good works. Circle or underline the different truths that you find and label them.

Lesson 8: Good Works Differ from Civic Righteousness

“And without faith it is impossible to please God.”

(Hebrews 11:6)

All the virtues of the heathen are but glittering vices.

(Augustine)

“Woe to you, experts in the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs that appear beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead people’s bones and every kind of uncleanness. In the same way, on the outside you seem righteous to people, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”

(Matthew 23:27,28)

Why are Jesus’ words to the Pharisees and teachers of the law so startling?

What do Jesus’ words tell us about judging works by their outward appearance?

Only believers can do good works

“And without faith it is impossible to please God.”

(Hebrews 11:6)

“You also, like living stones, are being built as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, in order to bring spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

(1 Peter 2:5)

“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”

(Isaiah 64:6)

Why can only believers do good works in God’s sight?

A church father, Saint Augustine (354-430 A.D.) made the observation: “All the virtues of the heathen are but glittering vices.” Explain how this statement agrees with the teaching of Scripture.

What distinction must we make, then, between good works done by a Christian and the civic righteousness done by the unbeliever?

Civic righteousness is necessary for the welfare of society

“For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to evil. Would you like to have no fear of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will receive praise from him, because he is God’s servant for your benefit. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because he does not carry the sword without reason. He is God’s servant, a punisher to bring wrath on the wrongdoer.”

(Romans 13:3,4)

What is the role of government in society?

How will government carry out its mission in this world?

Comment on the following statement: Government is not concerned about sanctified living, but about civic righteousness.

Read each of the following passages. What are some things that contribute to the welfare and stability of society? As you consider these “stabilizers” of society, consider also those things that threaten to destabilize society.

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.”

(Proverbs 14:34)

“They demonstrate the work of the law that is written in their hearts since their conscience also bears witness as their thoughts go back and forth, at times accusing or at times even defending them.”

(Romans 2:15)

“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.”

(Genesis 9:6)

“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing in the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, so that they do not become discouraged.”

(Colossians 3:20,21)

“He is God’s servant, a punisher to bring wrath on the wrongdoer.”

(Romans 13:4)

“In fact, when we were with you, this was our command to you: If anyone does not want to work, he should not eat.”

(2 Thessalonians 3:10)

“How long will you judge unjustly and show favoritism to the wicked? Judge in favor of the weak and fatherless. Acquit the oppressed and the poor. Rescue the weak and the needy. Deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

(Psalm 82:2-4)

Why will Christians encourage civic righteousness in public school and civic institutions?

Civic righteousness will bring temporal blessings, but what will Christians always recognize about its limitations?

How does good citizenship fit into the Christian’s life?

1 To you, our God, we fly For mercy and for grace.

Oh, hear our lowly cry And do not hide your face!

Refrain:

O Lord, stretch forth your mighty hand

And guard and bless our native land.

2 The pow'rs that you ordained With heav'nly wisdom bless;

May evil be restrained, Replaced by righteousness.

Refrain

3 Give peace, Lord, in our time. Oh, let no foe draw nigh

Nor lawlessness and crime Insult your majesty!

Refrain

4 Though vain and foolish, still We are your people, Lord.

Oh, bend us to your will; We'll serve no other God!

Refrain

Read CW Hymn 620. Notice how this serves as a good prayer for the Christian citizen. Circle or underline the different truths that you find and label them.

Lesson 9: Scripture Guides Us in the Use of Our Christian Liberty

“So whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do everything to the glory of God.”

(1 Corinthians 10:31)

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.

A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

(Luther's Works: Vol. 31, p. 344)

Christians are free from Old Testament regulations

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”

(Exodus 20:8)

“These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.”

(Leviticus 23:2)

“Of all the animals that live on the land, these are the one you may eat.”

(Leviticus 11:2)

If the mildew reappears in the house after the stones have been torn out and the house scraped and plastered, the priest is to go and examine it and, if the mildew has spread in the house, it is a destructive mildew; the house is unclean. It must be torn down.”

(Leviticus 14:43-45)

What are some of the laws God gave to Israel that regulated their lives and worship?

“But now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a chaperone.”

(Galatians 3:25)

“Therefore, do not let anyone judge you in regard to food or drink, or in regard to a festival or a New Moon or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of things that were coming, but the body belongs to Christ.”

(Colossians 2:16,17)

Why are we no longer bound by these laws?

List some areas in which we enjoy freedom in comparison to Israel of the Old Testament.

Adiaphora are those matters that God has neither commanded nor forbidden.

Does the use of our liberty in any way affect our standing with God?

Scripture guides us in the use of our Christian liberty

In the following passages, what guidance does God give us with regard to the use of our liberty?

“I warn you, just as I also warned you before, that those who continue to do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

(Galatians 5:21)

Give an example of how this principle applies in our lives today.

“So whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do everything to the glory of God.”

(1 Corinthians 10:31)

The primary purpose we have in the use of our liberty is to glorify God. In this case Paul dealt with the matter of eating meat purchased in the marketplace in Corinth. Since this meat had been dedicated to an idol, some did not believe it was permissible to eat it. Paul encouraged actions that show sensitivity toward the concerns of others. The principle to follow was not “I’ve got my rights” but rather, “What course of action will best serve my neighbor and thus glorify God?”

Give an example of how we may apply this principle in our own lives.

“Therefore, if food causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I do not cause my brother to sin.”

(1 Corinthians 8:13)

We will not want to cause a fellow Christian to stumble in the faith by encouraging him to do what he believes is wrong. Paul again is referring to the matter of eating meat sacrificed to idols. He warns against encouraging someone by your actions to do what that person believes is sinful. Something may not be sinful. However, it is sinful for people to do what they believe is wrong.

Two Christians are traveling together through Las Vegas. It is lunchtime. One suggests stopping at one of the casinos to take advantage of the cheap luncheon buffet they are advertising. Why might the other Christian accept that proposal? Why might he reject it?

“Let everything you do be done in love.”

(1 Corinthians 16:14)

Love guides us in all we do, even in the area of our Christian freedom. Our love for others is a reflection of God’s love for us. Love, then, moves us to bear with the weak. It moves us patiently to instruct them and be concerned about their spiritual welfare.

Give an example of how this principle applies when we introduce new customs into the church.

“But let all thing be done decently and in good order.”

(1 Corinthians 14:40)

We will plan things in the church so that, when new practices are put into effect, there will be no confusion. There was disorderliness in the services at Corinth. Their services did not edify but confused people. Paul indicates that God’s people will carry out the Lord’s work in an orderly way in order to edify the church.

When the hymnal, *Christian Worship*, was introduced, many articles appeared in the *Northwestern Lutheran* (now the *Forward in Christ*) to explain the new hymnal and invite suggestions. Why was this procedure a good example of what Paul is encouraging in the above passage?

“I have become all thing to all people so that I may save at least some. And I do everything for the sake of the gospel so that I may share in it along with others.”

(1 Corinthians 9:22,23)

We will not place obstacles in the way of bringing the gospel to others. In his ministry at Corinth, Paul supported himself in the interest of bringing the gospel to others. He also was sensitive to the heritage of his countrymen. He did not flaunt his liberty lest he lose the opportunity to bring them the gospel.

Give an example of how a foreign missionary might apply this principle when working with people of another culture.

“Accept a person who is weak in faith, and do not pass judgment on things that are just a difference of opinion.”

(Romans 14:1)

We need to make a distinction between something we do not like and something that is sin. Just because people do things differently than we do does not make what they do sin. Only that which violates God's law is sin. We need to be careful that we do not make uncharitable judgments about what fellow Christians do in the use of their Christian liberty.

How did Paul apply this principle at Rome?

“Consequently, let us pursue those things that lead to peace and building up one another.”

(Romans 14:19)

Our goal is to build up the church. Insisting on doing things “our way” divides the church and robs it of its vitality. God wants us to work for unity in the church (Ephesians 4:3). He does not want us to create divisions in the church.

Give an example of how church council members or people serving on other committees will apply this to their decision making.

“After all, brothers, you were called to freedom. Only do not use your freedom as a starting point for your sinful flesh. Rather, serve one another through love.”

(Galatians 5:13)

Liberty is never a license to sin. Christians are free to serve God without being forced by the threats of the law. Yet, they also have their old Adam. Christians must be on guard lest they think their freedom to serve God without fear is freedom to defy God's will without fear of suffering consequences.

How does this apply in the area of using alcoholic beverages?

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not allow anyone to put the yoke of slavery on you again.”

(Galatians 5:1)

When the gospel is at stake, when people say something is sin and it isn't, then we are to stand on our Christian freedom. When certain people told the Galatians that they needed to observe the Mosaic Law in order to be saved, Paul told them to insist on their freedom. To do otherwise would have been a denial of the gospel. Salvation would have been lost.

Give an example of how this principle applies when we consider on which day we should worship.

*1 O God of mercy, God of might, In love and mercy infinite,
Teach us, as ever in your sight, To live our lives to you.*

*2 You sent your Son for all to die That fallen man might live thereby.
Oh, hear us, for to you we cry In hope, O Lord, to you.*

*3 Teach us the lesson Jesus taught: To feel for those his blood has bought,
That ev'ry deed and word and thought May work a work for you.*

*4 All are redeemed, both far and wide, Since Jesus Christ for all has died;
Grant us the will, and grace provide, To love them all in you.*

*5 In sickness, sorrow, want, or care May we each other's burdens share;
May we, where help is needed, there Give help as though to you.*

*6 And may your Holy Spirit move All those who live to live in love
Till you receive in heav'n above All those who lived for you.*

Read CW Hymn 499. Notice how this hymn furnishes the motivation for a God-pleasing use of our Christian freedom. Circle or underline the different truths that you find and label them.

Lesson 10: The Christian Life is Both a Life under the Cross and a Life of Hope

“We must go through many troubles on our way to the kingdom of God.”

(Acts 14:22)

The Christian cannot expect a life free from the pain of trials in this world.

The Christian's life is a life under the cross.

(Lange, 182)

“Share hardships as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”

(2 Timothy 2:3)

What message did Paul give Timothy concerning his ministry?

“Dear friends, do not be surprised by the fiery trial that is happening among you to test you, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead, rejoice whenever you are sharing in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”

(1 Peter 4:12,13)

What two truths concerning a Christian life does Peter express in this passage?

The Christian life is a life of suffering for the sake of the gospel

“If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”

(Mark 8:34)

“You will be hated by all people because of my name...”

(Matthew 10:22)

What is the cross Christians bear in this world?

Why can Christians expect to carry a cross?

We must go through many troubles on our way to the kingdom of God.”

(Acts 14:22)

What can Christians expect in this world?

How was Paul’s life living proof of what he was telling the early Christians?

List some other examples from Scripture of how God’s people have faced persecution for the sake of the gospel.

List some other ways in which Christians today suffer for the sake of the gospel.

“I even envied the arrogant when I observed the peace of the wicked. Surely you place them on slippery places. You cause them to fall into destruction. How quickly they come to ruin, completely destroyed by terrors! They are like a dream when someone wakes up. So when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them like an illusion.”

(Psalm 73:3,18-20)

What temptation do Christians face as they compare their lives with unbelievers in this world?

Why is that foolish?

“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven.”

(Matthew 5:44,45)

Instead of envying unbelievers or hating those who persecute us, what will we do?

Where does the strength to do this come from?

“Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.”

(Job 14:1)

“For the Lord disciplines the one whom he loves, and he corrects every son he accepts.”

(Hebrews 12:6)

What else do Christians suffer in this world besides persecution for the sake of the gospel?

Why does the Lord permit trials to come into our lives?

Christians are encouraged by the hope they have through the gospel

“Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he gave us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, into an inheritance that is undying, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.”

(1 Peter 1:3,4)

“And hope will not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.”

(Romans 5:5)

What is the Christian’s hope?

How does the Christian’s hope differ from the world’s hope?

What makes our hope so sure?

“We are eagerly waiting for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. By the power that enables him to subject all things to himself, he will transform our humble bodies to be like his glorious body.”

(Philippians 3:20,21)

“Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things.”

(Colossians 3:2)

“Through faith you are being protected by God’s power for the salvation that is ready to be revealed at the end of time. Because of this you rejoice very much, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various kinds of trials.”

(1 Peter 1:5,6)

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It trains us to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, that is, the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are his own chosen people, eager to do good works.”

(Titus 2:11-14)

What practical effects does our Christian hope have on our lives?

