

Romans 5:1-11 – “What About Sanctification?”

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Intro: The comments I received about last week’s lesson touching on assurance of salvation were encouraging and led me to understand that some further explanation of the role of sanctification in the Christian life might be a blessing as well, so tonight we’ll take a “mini-detour” from our studies in John to look in depth at the question, “What About Sanctification?”¹

Proposition: Sanctification is an important part of the Christian’s life but is not germane to the theme of ultimate salvation.

We’ll use various Scriptures in our study tonight, but the principal passage we’ll concentrate on is Romans 5:1-11, in which we’ll see: (vv.1-2) Justification Leads Certainly to Glorification; (vv.3-5) Sanctification Has a Place in the Christian’s Life; (vv.6-11) God’s Love Guarantees Ultimate Glorification.

(vv.1-2) Justification Leads Certainly to Glorification – **Romans 5:1–2 - 1** *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* We studied this last week, so we need not go into it in depth except to say that in this verse and again in Romans 8:30 the absence of the doctrine of Sanctification in these descriptions of Justification and Glorification is intentional. Justification is a term for our “being saved,” or being put back into a right relationship with God. Glorification is a term that speaks of our ultimate sharing of God’s glory, and this is the eternal destiny awaiting every believer. The omission of Sanctification, which means growing in Christlikeness, is intentional in these verses because Sanctification, important as it is, is not part of the discussion. Our Justification insures the certainty of our Glorification. But that leaves the question, “If Sanctification is not part of the salvation discussion, what about Sanctification? What is its place in the Christian’s life?” That is the next thing we’ll discuss.

(vv.3-5) Sanctification Has Its Place in the Christian’s Life – Our text takes us into the area of Sanctification immediately after stating the principle outlined above because the question of sanctification naturally arises at this point: **Romans 5:3–5 - 3** *Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.* What we are told here is that through the experiences of life we endure as Christians, we are progressively being changed into the character of Christ. The Holy Spirit is working in us through the Word and through the pilgrimage of life to bring our faith to maturity. This is what Sanctification is: a pilgrimage to maturity in Christ.

The best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself, so let’s look at some passages from the book of Exodus that picture this process of sanctification.

Exodus 13:17 - 17 *When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, “Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.”* God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt, a picture of our deliverance from the kingdom of darkness under the sway of its evil prince, Satan. God did not take the people directly to the promised land because He knew their faith, though real, was too weak to face warfare without failing. Instead, He took them on a forty-year pilgrimage through the wilderness, revealing Himself to them and refining their faith. In the wilderness, God cut-off from them Egypt’s unbelief, replacing it

¹ The outline of the argument I followed comes from Martyn Lloyd-Jones’ exposition of Romans 5.

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with a diamond hard confidence in Himself which they displayed when Joshua eventually led them into Canaan. This pictures the believer’s pilgrimage to a mature faith over the course a lifetime of experience with God.

Exodus 14:10–14 - 10 *When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. 11* *They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? 12* *Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” 13* *And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. 14* *The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”* At the Red Sea, God strengthened their faith by showing Himself to them as the one who protected them from the power of Egypt, a symbol of the unbelieving world we face as Christians.

Exodus 15:22–27 - 22 *Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. 23* *When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. 24* *And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” 25* *And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the LORD made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, 26* *saying, “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer.” 27* *Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.* At Marah, God showed Himself to them as the One who could make bitterness into sweetness.

The list goes on and on:

- In Exodus 16, God showed Himself to them as the one who can provide for their needs.
- In Exodus 17 God showed Himself to them as the one who can lead them to the living waters.
- In Exodus 17 God also showed them that He was the one who defeats their enemies.
- In Exodus 18 God showed them that He delivers them from chaos.

You get the idea. Their faith was weak, so God took them on pilgrimage for forty-years, turning their weak faith into strong faith by revealing Himself to them through His Words and deeds on their behalf. In just this same way, through the pilgrimage of the believer with God, we are sanctified – brought to Christlikeness – through a lifetime of God’s dealings with us. Sometimes we make progress; sometimes we fall backwards, but like the children of Israel, we never are sent back to Egypt, never sent packing from the family of God. We remain His children because His love for us never quits.

(vv.6-11) God’s Love Guarantees our Ultimate Glorification – Romans 5:6–11 - 6 *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7* *For one will scarcely die for a righteous person— though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8* *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9* *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10* *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by*

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his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. This is one of the most amazing passages in all of Scripture dealing with the believer’s assurance of salvation. Follow the argument closely:

- When we were weak and could do nothing to save ourselves, Christ died for us.
- Now that we have been put right with God through that death, it is a logical certainty that we will never have to suffer the wrath of God (eternal judgment).
- A reiteration for the sake of emphasis follows: If God saved us when we were His enemies and our sins were disgusting to Him, isn’t it obvious that now that we are His own blood-bought children, He will finish what He started at our salvation?
- With such certainty as we have, all we have left to do is rejoice in God because of what He has done for us in Jesus.

The Scripture pounds the argument home to leave no doubt about the matter. Who would die for a righteous man? Almost no one. What about a good man? Maybe someone, but here’s the astonishing truth: When we were neither righteous nor good, Christ died for us. *What astounding love!*

And the logic is inescapable. Note the twice used phrase, “*much more.*” This signals the use of “greater to lesser logic” to prove the point beyond dispute. Greater to lesser logic says that if the greater proposition is true, the lesser proposition must necessarily be counted as true. In other words, if God sent Jesus to die for you and me when we were without hope (greater proposition and obviously true), then our final salvation because of that death and God’s faithfulness (lesser proposition) must necessarily be true as well.²

No wonder these Scriptures conclude with an outburst of rejoicing. *What astounding love!* Ultimately, our salvation comes down to just one indisputable fact: We are saved because, and only because, God loves us. That we would be sanctified is God’s will for us, but it is a separate issue from our salvation. It neither causes us to be saved by our being good, nor stops our salvation when we blow it. God’s choice to justify us to Himself through the death of His Son, leads inevitably to our being raised with His Son to eternal life. Not because of who we are, but only because of who He is.

Conclusion: Every sermon must have an application. Every lesson requires an answer to the question, “So what?” What’s our “So what?” The Scripture gives us the “So what” to the argument in Romans 8:37-39 when the Holy Spirit concluded the teaching on assurance of salvation begun in Romans 5:1. Here is how He sums it all up:

Romans 8:37–39 - 37 *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38* *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present*

² See Mark 2:1-12 for Jesus’ use of greater to lesser logic to prove His authority to forgive sins.

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*nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*