

Being Washed, Sanctified and Justified

In 1 Corinthians 6, the Apostle Paul outlines 10 forms of behaviour, which will exclude from the kingdom of God:

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, not covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, not extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

It is part of the perversity of human nature, that each of these behaviours are currently accepted and even promoted in the world around us. But for those who desire to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:4), these are things to lay aside:

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1).

This is what the Corinthians did. They were once dead in their trespasses and sins, but they turned away from those things, to serve the Living God:

“and **such were some of you**: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).

Notice the threefold honour granted to those who turn from their sins: they become:

1. Washed
2. Sanctified
3. Justified

We shall consider each of these aspects in turn.

WASHED

Having forsaken the way of death and destruction, the hearts of the believers become purified by faith (Acts 15:9). Desiring to cleanse their way (Psa. 119:9), they take heed to the word of God, which is a purifying influence upon them. So the Apostle exhorts elsewhere concerning the ecclesial bride of Christ:

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it **by the washing of water by the word**, That he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27).

Indeed, this is a theme of our chapter, 1 Corinthians 6: “ ... for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6: – see verses 15-18). Being washed by the cleansing influence of the Word, we can become joined to the Lord as “one spirit” – that is, united in purpose, desire, and eventually nature (1 Pet. 1:4), like a bride perfectly suited for her husband.

Hebrews chapter 10 similarly speaks of this washing:

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22).

The washing described here, is not to do with the cleanliness of the water into which believers are baptised – rather it is a comparison with the sacrifices under the Mosaic Law: the bodies of the animals offered had to be washed first. Notice the language of Sacrifice in Ephesians 5, cited above: “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” – like the offerings under the law.

The priests also had to be washed into their ministry. So Moses was commanded:

“... And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water” (Exo. 29:4).

Even so, as we saw in the last issue, Jesus as the Antitypical Aaron commenced his ministry with a washing – a baptism. His brethren must also be baptised to wash away their sins (Acts 22:16). But baptism alone cannot save: the Lord taught: “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mrk 16:16). Belief is important also – and it is necessary to understand the principles of the Gospel in order to believe them. And that belief must be demonstrated in works, for “faith without works is dead: (Jas. 2:20).

The great company of the faithful are “they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14). But though they have exchanged their filthy rags (Isa. 64:6) for white robes, they must not be self-righteous:

“there is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Prov. 30:12).

It is quite possible then, to be proud of being pure and righteous, yet remain in a state of filthiness. As the Lord taught:

“ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead mens’ bones, and of all uncleanness” (Mat. 23:7).

SANCTIFIED

In his prayer to his Father, the Lord prayed for his disciples: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (Jno. 17:17). And again, “for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (Jno. 17:19). The Word of Truth then, is the means whereby we can become sanctified. But the Lord also required sanctification! After the pattern of the Altar under the Mosaic law (Exo. 29:36-37), Jesus had to be sanctified first, in order that he could then sanctify those who would believe his word. In this way, “both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren ...” (Heb. 2:11).

As we demonstrated above, we can be sanctified by the Word of Truth. But only inasmuch as it is a record of the atoning principles by which we can become clean and holy in the sight of our God. The Lord Jesus Christ came to do the Will of his Father:

“by which Will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10).

The Lord laid down his life, so “that he might sanctify the people with his own blood” (Heb. 13:12). But such can only be so, if we have the required faith in the work of God in Christ. Hence, when the Lord gave a commission to the Apostle Paul, he sent him “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18).

Notice again, that sanctification is associated with having eyes opened to behold the principles of the Gospel message (cp Psa. 119:18), and the turning away from darkness to light. Only then can the believer “receive forgiveness of sins”, and be granted an “inheritance” in due course. For the unenlightened, they are blinded by the god of this world to the shining brilliance of the Light shining forth from Messiah, and will so remain unholy, defiled, and dead in their trespasses and sins.

JUSTIFIED

Galatians chapter 2 demonstrates a fundamental principle that lies behind the system of salvation established by the great Deity:

“... a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, **that we might be justified by the faith of Christ**, and not of the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16).

The word “justified” signifies, *being counted righteous*, and in these words we have the principle being established that a man cannot be made righteous in the sight of Yahweh by obedience to Law. Rather, it is through faith, or belief in Jesus Christ, that righteousness is imputed. In this article, we shall consider this vital aspect of our salvation, and follow the theme through both Old and New Testaments.

In Romans chapter 3 and 4, the principle of Justification by Faith is dealt with in considerable detail – particularly chapter 4. Here the cases of Abraham and David are considered as examples of men who were considered righteous (i.e. justified) through faith, despite having been sinners and not being justified by works:

“If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:2-3).

The “Scripture” being cited here, comes from Genesis chapter 15:

“He [i.e. Yahweh] brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy Seed be. And he believed in Yahweh; and he counted it to him for righteousness ...” (Gen. 15:5-6).

Abraham’s faith then, was not merely a nebulous feeling that exists in some today, it was a firm conviction regarding a specific promise. The Apostle comments concerning Abraham thus:

“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Rom. 4:18-20).

Notice the terms employed here: “being not weak in faith”, “He staggered not”, “being fully persuaded”. There was no shadow of doubt in Abraham’s mind: that the promises that God had made would indeed come to pass exactly as described. He trusted in the principle of life out of the dead: both the natural impotence of his own body, and that of his elderly wife – and these things were “not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead ...” (Rom. 4:23-24). We therefore, must share Abraham’s faith if we are to be blessed in the same way as he – being counted as righteous.

In the above, we have demonstrated what it means to be washed, sanctified, and justified in the sight of our Creator. Salvation is not a passive thing: sometimes it is taught that all we need to do to be saved, is to recite a short prayer inviting Jesus to come into our lives – and then we will be irrevocably saved. But the reality is different: “without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb. 11:6). We must therefore “diligently” seek God, and we must be proactive in seeking His Ways. The only source of knowledge about the way of salvation, is the Bible, the Inspired Word of the Living God. We must therefore give all due diligence to its pages, that we can become wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

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