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Sanctification Is Necessary for Salvation

Eric Snow, sermonette, April 25, 2011, UCG—AIA, Lansing, Last Day of Unleavened Bread

How does Jesus' sacrifice save Christians? How do justification and sanctification inter-relate to being forgiven for our sins and gaining eternal life? To be more specific, how does the meaning of the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread relate to the salvation process? The Passover in part is about God's grace in forgiving us without our deserving it. But the main significance of the festival that ends today concerns our need to commit to living righteously. So it's a good time to describe how actually living a righteous life relates to receiving salvation.

S.P.S. Sanctification is a condition to eternal life.

Does the theological term “sanctification” sound a little vague to any of us? It’s about living a holy righteous life. That’s what the Days of Unleavened Bread are all about.

Romans 6:12-23

Much of the meaning of this chapter closely relates to what this festival means. We need to commit ourselves to obeying God.

Verses 16, 19, 22

Chain link of logic, in final phrase of the first two of these verses. Obedience leads to righteousness, righteousness to sanctification, and sanctification to everlasting life. (NASB): “Obedience resulting in righteousness . . . righteousness resulting in sanctification . . . resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”

Obedience doesn’t earn or merit salvation. But God makes a commitment to obedience following repentance a condition to salvation. And if someone really has saving

faith, they will have the works that demonstrate its reality.

The meaning of the Passover emphasizes imputed righteousness, but the Days of Unleavened Bread highlights imparted righteousness. When we're in the first stage of the salvation process, we become justified when accepting Jesus as personal Savior and have forgiveness for all our past sins. As we enter the second stage of the salvation process, we become sanctified as we make our promise to obey God when we repented a reality by actually living a righteous life.

Romans 7:13-20, 21-24

Notice that God obviously isn't expecting us to live a perfect life while being sanctified. Paul was saved, but he clearly wasn't always obedient. "Sinless perfection" is a myth in the real world. We shouldn't think God demands perfection from us in order for us to be saved. So we shouldn't become so discouraged when we sin once

again the same way that we give up being Christians. Paul obviously didn't!

Why does God want us to actually obey Him, instead of just believing in Him? He wants us to develop holy righteous character like His since we're supposed to become like God before becoming God. That's the main purpose and meaning of life.

Romans 10:8-13

The Passover especially emphasizes justification, or imputed righteousness. Notice here that this righteousness is based on Christ's merits alone. No amount of good works alone can justify us by the main definition of the word.

Two types of righteousness must exist: Imputed and imparted. Otherwise, Romans 6 and 10 contradict each other. Both justification and sanctification have an important role to play in the salvation process. It's a major theological error to

overemphasize one at the expense of the other. The standard evangelical Protestant error has been to over-emphasize justification as salvation. The traditional Protestant theological statement, “Salvation is by grace through faith alone,” would be arguably right if changed to, “Justification is by grace through faith alone.” However, we in the Church of God sometimes have overemphasized sanctification as a condition to salvation. That belief may have led some mistakenly to give up trying to obey God’s law as a hopeless quest.

In conclusion: The significance of the Passover especially relates to justification, imputed righteousness, and forgiveness. But the meaning of the Days of Unleavened Bread is about sanctification, imparted righteousness, and obedience to God. So then, after we’re justified and sanctified comes the third stage of the salvation process, let’s look forward to when we’re glorified and live forever in God’s family.

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