

Justification Through Faith Produces Sanctification

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Prayer: Almighty and everlasting God, in your great mercy you have justified us freely by grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. We thank you for giving us the faith through which we own your forgiveness and righteousness. Continue now to send us your Holy Spirit by your Word and Sacraments that he may rule our hearts and that we may live more-and-more sanctified lives that show our abiding gratitude to you for your loyal love toward us; through Jesus Christ, the Vine to whom you have attached us that we may produce good fruit. Amen.

Introduction

What is your impression of the following statements?

"It doesn't much matter how you live as long as you believe in Jesus as your Savior. After all, salvation is by grace, not by works. In fact, sin accents the grace and forgiveness of God all the more."

"It doesn't much matter what you believe as long as you try to live a God-pleasing life. Doesn't Jesus show us that in Matthew 23, and doesn't James say that in his epistle: It's better to 'walk the walk' than 'talk the talk.'? 'Deeds not creeds' is my principle because I don't want to be a hypocrite."

"Good works are necessary to salvation."

"Good works are detrimental to salvation."

"Good works are necessary."

"We don't have to preach sanctification, because the Reformed TV evangelists already do too much of that."

"You conservative Lutheran preachers do an excellent job of preaching justification. But you sure neglect sanctification! We would love to hear more about the new lives God wants us to live now that we know and love Jesus as our Savior."

"Only the doctrine of justification motivates God-pleasing living. Therefore we don't have to preach the Law in its 'third use' as a guide for Christian living."

"You're either a 'Pietist' or a 'Charismatic' if you emphasize the doctrine of sanctification and talk about living the new life of the Spirit. You might be a Christian but you're certainly not a 'Confessional Lutheran.'"

"I'm reluctant to preach about good works for fear that people will think that salvation is by works after all. In fact, I'll admit it: I deliberately neglect preaching on some texts, or at least parts of some texts."

"You can expect some harsh criticism from conservative Lutherans if you deal with the topic of sanctification in anything other than a parenthetical way."

What do you make of each of those statements? We will give you the opportunity to analyze them at the close of this paper. Each of those statements touches in some way on the teaching of Justification and Sanctification and their relationship to one another.

In keeping with our convention theme of "Walk In Newness Of Life," the general topic before us now in this paper is "Sanctification." The specific theme that we intend to develop is "Justification Through Faith Produces Sanctification."

As disciples of our Savior, we want to believe, teach, confess and live everything that he has commanded. That includes Sanctification. Our Lutheran Confessions therefore declare:

Especially in these last times, it is just as necessary to exhort people to Christian discipline and good works, and to remind them how necessary it is that they exercise themselves in good works as an evidence of their faith and their gratitude toward God, as it is to warn against mingling good works in the article of justification. Such an Epicurean dream (that good works are detrimental to salvation, the position of Nicholas von Amsdorf) concerning faith can damn people as much as a papistic and Pharisaic confidence in one's own works and merit. (Formula Of Concord, Epitome, Article IV, Good Works)

Our Evangelical Lutheran Synod in its concise doctrinal statement, "We Believe Teach and Confess," declares boldly concerning sanctification:

"We confess that good works are necessary fruits of faith in the life of a Christian and that they proceed from a renewed heart that is thankful to God for His mercy and love. Although there is no human cooperation in the matter of one's conversion and justification, there is cooperation on the part of the regenerate Christian in his or her life of sanctification. Good works do not earn or contribute to one's salvation, but they naturally flow from the living faith which is present in the hearts of those who have already been saved by God's grace alone."

That concise statement of our synod is an epitome of all that follows in this paper.

The Words "Sanctify" and "Sanctification"

According to *Young's Analytical Concordance*, the English noun "sanctification" and the verb "sanctify" appear some 135 times in the Old and New Testaments of the King James Version. The Old Testament Hebrew verb behind the translation "sanctify" is *kadash*, whose root meaning has to do with being "set apart." The New Testament Greek verb behind the English verb "sanctify" is *hagiazō*, "to make holy"; Greek nouns with the same root as the verb are *hagiasmos*, meaning "holiness, consecration, sanctification," and *hagiosune*, "holiness." Words that in the King James Version were translated as "sanctify" or "sanctification" are, of course, rendered in a variety of ways in modern English versions.

Definition of "Sanctification"

Following its use in Scripture, we employ the term "sanctification" in two senses, a wider and a narrower sense.

In its **wider sense** "sanctification" refers to the entire gracious work which God the Holy Spirit performs through his word, from bringing sinners to faith and continuing through keeping believers in that faith until they reach eternal life in heaven. In this broad sense sanctification includes God's work of creating faith, justification through faith, sanctification in the narrow sense of Christian life, preserving the faith of the believer until death, and his final glorification. This wide use of the term is seen in 2 Th 2:13: "...from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth." (See also Ac 26:18; Eph 5:26; Heb 13:12; 1 Pe 1:2) In given passages of Scripture, one or more aspect of sanctification in the wider sense may receive the emphasis while the whole field of meaning

of the term is still in view. Luther at times uses the term sanctification in the broad sense in his catechisms; and so do we when we speak of the extensive work of the Holy Spirit in the Third Article of the Creed as simply "sanctification."

In its **narrower sense** sanctification refers to the Holy Spirit's work which follows justification through faith and consists of renewing the believer and bringing forth in him works of renewal. Some terms that mean the same as sanctification in this narrower or strict sense are the following: renewal, renovation, transformation, restoration, the new life, godly life, holy life, and spiritual growth. Some synonyms for the acts of the new life that are also a part of sanctification in the narrow sense are these: fruits of faith, fruit of the Spirit, good works, and godly acts. You can, no doubt, add to these lists of terms. The narrower sense of the term is seen in Scripture in 1Th 4:3: "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality..." The Greek in that verse which the NIV translates "be sanctified" is the noun *hagiasmos*, literally, "sanctification." (For other NT verses that refer to sanctification in its narrower sense, see for example Ro 6:19,22; 2Co 7:1; 1Th 4:7).

From the above it may be evident that properly speaking we divide even the narrow sense of sanctification into two aspects: 1.) The inner renewal of the Holy Spirit in the Christian, and 2.) the living out of that inner renewal in the Christian's new life of good works. There is obviously a "cause and effect" or "antecedence and consequence" relationship between the two aspects. Aspect #1 is the new spiritual nature fashioned by the Spirit when he creates the faith that lays hold of justification; and aspect #2 involves the good works that are the result and evidence of that Spirit-created holiness. That distinction within the narrow sense of sanctification can be seen in Gal 5:25: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

Since two people may perform the same or similar acts (e.g. Cain and Abel's sacrifices), but for one it is a work of sanctification and for the other in God's eyes it is not, we need to know what Scripture means by good works or acts of sanctification. God the Holy Spirit, faith in Christ, Christ within, love, and the Word as guide are the elements that build the definition. The following Scriptures speak of those elements and reveal the meaning of works of sanctification.

"We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. " (Eph 2:10) "It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Php 2:13) "Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb 11:16) "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal 2:20) "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." (Gal 5:6) "Christ's love compels us." (2 Co 5:14) "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word." (Ps 119:9)

A catechism therefore offers this simple definition: "A good work is whatever a believer does according to God's word out of love and thanks for all of God's goodness." (*Luther's Catechism*. NPH. 1982) Although we could add the other elements included in the above verses, that basic definition is certainly workable.

It is the narrow sense of sanctification that is the topic of this paper. Even in this sense sanctification is a big subject. But as the title of this paper reveals, we are limiting ourselves and focusing on the relationship between justification through faith and sanctification. We will not drift far from the central thought that **Justification Through Faith Produces Sanctification**.

The Order of Justification and Sanctification

We come to the critical question immediately. What comes first, justification through faith or sanctification? The answer to this basic question affects all of theology. The response that we would all give naturally, apart from divine revelation, would be dead wrong. We would be spiritually dead because of it. It is only by the grace of God's Gospel revelation that we can shout the answer to our question from the top of McMahon Hill here with all joy-filled confidence.

Paul writes: "We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." (Ro 3:28) Can there be any question about the order there? Justification does not have to await the works of the sinner before it arrives on the scene. The psalmists' words also show the order: "But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared." (Ps 130:4) And again: "I will run the way of your commands, for you have set my heart free." (Ps 119:32) Our Savior says it so clearly: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit." (Jn 15:5) Justification through faith, which is none other than being grafted to Christ through faith and thereby receiving the forgiveness of sins, comes first! God in his undeserved love counts us holy heirs of salvation for Christ's sake alone; and we receive that gracious state freely through the faith God himself gives us. Our marvelous status does not hinge in any way on what *we* do. It is all based on what *he* already has done. And that cannot be undone any more than Christ can be un-crucified and un-raised. Any talk about sanctification must start at that gracious revelation from God's Scripture. We'll say it again. Justification comes first, and sanctification comes second as a consequence.

All the natural religions of this world have the order dead wrong. With only two choices of what comes first, we might be tempted to think that the law of averages would lead somebody to get it right. But it never happens. The reason that natural man consistently reverses the order and thinks that performing some kind of good acts must come first before man can find himself in something of a satisfactory state before God is the deeply ingrained "opinion of the law" (*opinio legis*) or work-righteous attitude. Look at all human-devised religious ideas and you will see "the opinion of the law" as an unquestioned principle. Look at the desperate ancients seeking to earn favor with their deities by their actions so that their crops will grow, plagues will be averted, or their afterlife will be assured. First they must perform, and then their gods' satisfaction will follow. See parents sacrificing their children to Molech so that a human action can create a fortunate state between them and a god. See cultic fertility prostitutes first engaging in their acts to give the hint and coax their deities into similar acts of fertility for the benefit of earthlings. Analyze the basic assumptions of any of today's religions and cults and there it is, the opinion of the law. Man must first perform good acts, or submit himself, or get himself in tune with a "force," or raise himself up by meditation, or please some intermediaries. Then he will find himself in some sort of acceptable condition, bad will be averted and good will follow.

It may seem unfair in this context to recall Luther's early frantic attempts to make himself righteous before God. But the principle under which the desperate monk operated was the same as that of all man-made religion: I must first do something through my actions in order to create a state in which God can tell me that he's at peace with me. First me and my deeds, then God's pleased attitude toward me. The difference between Christianity and man-made theology is explainable simply through the question of order. What comes first, justification or sanctification? (We are obviously using the words "justification" and "sanctification" here in a very loose, improper sense when speaking of the ideas of natural religion.) Sadly, much of visible Christianity remains confused about the order. The clash between "the opinion of the law" and the revelation of Scripture seems to leave many as

bewildered and theologically wobbly as a boxer that has just taken a solid right to the head. And doubly tragic is the fact that a large part of the visible church officially rejects the scriptural order. May the clear Scriptures in the hands of God's dear people in these churches lead them to see the order that their leaders are confused about or deny.

On the order between justification and sanctification the *Formula of Concord* states:

"In this way, too, the proper order between faith and good works is bound to be maintained and preserved, as well as between justification and renewal or sanctification. For good works do not precede faith, nor is sanctification prior to justification. First the Holy Spirit kindles faith in us in conversion through the hearing of the Gospel. Faith apprehends the grace of God in Christ whereby the person is justified. After the person is justified, the Holy Spirit next renews and sanctifies him, and from this renewal and sanctification the fruits of good works will follow." (FC, Solid Declaration, Article III, Righteousness, 40,41 [Tappert])

Even confessional Lutherans who know well the doctrine of justification are likely to be tripped up at times and, at least in unfortunate expressions, place a life of good works before justification. While our New Self knows and delights in the proper order, our Former Self with his old natural opinions at times speaks up and gurgles through the waters in which he is being daily drowned. Christian parents in disciplining their Christian children can slip and exclaim in their frustration something like this: "How can God ever be pleased with you the way you're behaving?"

If we preachers were to listen to tapes of all of the sermons we have delivered, how many unfortunate, misleading statements could we find concerning the order of justification and sanctification? Much of C.F.W. Walther's *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* centers on helping preachers avoid the pitfalls of reversing that order. Walther's Thesis VII reads: "In the third place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Gospel is preached first and then the Law; sanctification first and then justification; faith first and then repentance; good works first and then grace." In his "Eleventh Evening Lecture" Walther presents a sermon outline about which he says, "This outline is simply horrible." The backward cart-before-the-horse outline is this:

- True Christianity. It Consists
- 1) in Christian living
 - 2) in true faith
 - 3) in a blessed end

Francis Pieper in his *Christian Dogmatics* warns: "And even theologians who theoretically define the relationship of faith and works correctly are tempted to lose sight of this relation in practice." (Volume III, p 13)

The two men named above were professors of this essayist's grandfather and father respectively. My forefathers were taught well. I wish that what they learned from Walther and Pieper could have been passed on to me naturally through their genes and that I could likewise pass them on naturally to my offspring. But because of inherited sin and the *opinio legis*, each generation of Lutherans must ponder the clear Scriptures for itself, rejoice in its Reformation heritage, stand guard, and teach its children well. The "opinion of the law," the right hand of our Old Nature, keeps knocking at the door to coax us back to the old reversed order.

What is the result when the order of justification through faith and sanctification is deliberately and consistently reversed? Simply stated, a person has neither! "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse," declares Paul in Gal 3:2. They have refused their

justification; and they have no sanctification, because it is present as a product of justification. The life of a person without justification through faith can be, in God's eyes, only a life of sin, outward display of decency, or despair. (Ro 7:5; Lk 18:11-12; Ac 16:27) It cannot be a life of sanctification in any scriptural sense of the term.

Is it important to have the right order firmly in mind and heart? It's a matter of life and death for us and the people we serve. Because of God's loyal love for his church, we know the proper order revealed in his Word. It is our heritage through the Reformation. May the Spirit, who has first shown us our justification (1Co 2:9-10) and is now sanctifying us, direct us in the practice of what he has revealed.

Justification and Sanctification are Inseparably Joined in Cause and Effect Relationship

When we say that justification through faith comes first and sanctification follows secondly, it is in the logical sense, the "cause and effect" sense, that we are using the words "first" and "secondly." In reference to time, however, they take place simultaneously. Nowhere do the Scriptures speak of justification existing for a time by itself without sanctification. Nowhere do the Scriptures speak of sanctification existing apart from justification. Where there is no sanctification, there is no justification through faith. "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead," says James in 2:26. Where there is justification through faith, there is also sanctification. "Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do," says James in 2:18.

Justification through faith and sanctification are not mingled, but they are tied together. They have an indissoluble connection (*nexus indivulsus*). Jesus said just before his death and resurrection: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (Jn 15:5) Our Confessions therefore say:

"Faith and good works well agree and fit together [are inseparably connected]; but it is faith alone, without works, which lays hold of the blessing; and yet it is never and at no time alone." (FC: SD III, 41, Triglot p 931)

Again our Confessions say:

"After a person has been justified by faith, a true living faith becomes 'active through love' (Gal. 5:6). Thus good works always follow justifying faith and are certainly to be found with it, since such faith is never alone but is always accompanied by love and hope." (FC, Epitome, Article III. Righteousness. Tappert p 474)

As soon as justifying faith exists, sanctification exists. Simply stated, faith immediately produces sanctification.

Spirit-Worked Faith and Sanctification

How is it that faith, which lays hold of justification and gives us our holy status, also has the power to produce sanctification? The basic answer is that faith is the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word and is therefore powerful, dynamic, life-giving, productive. The Scriptures reveal faith to be the gift of God, particularly of the Spirit (I Co 12:3; Ro 5:5), worked in us through the means of grace (2Th 2:13,14; Ro 10:17; 2Ti 3:15). That Spirit does not quickly slip out the back door of our hearts as soon as he fashions faith. He remains powerfully present through

the Word, building up that faith which he causes to produce in us love, gratitude and all of the fruit of the Spirit on the tree he has made alive. We therefore confess with the hymn writer:

"O Holy Ghost, Thou Fount of grace,
The good in me to Thee I trace." (TLH 375, 5)

Luther in his "Preface to Romans" writes of the great power of that Spirit-generated faith that produces sanctification.

"Faith, however, is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God, John 1:12-13. It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers; and it brings with it the Holy Spirit. O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do such works, however, is an unbeliever. He gropes and looks around for faith and good works, but knows neither what faith is nor what good works are. Yet he talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works.

Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times. The knowledge of and confidence in God's grace makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and with all creatures. And this is the work which the Holy Spirit performs in faith. Because of it, without compulsion, a person is ready and glad to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, out of love and praise to God who has shown him this grace. Thus it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire."

There is such a thing as "dead orthodoxy," that is, people knowing intellectually and stating correctly the doctrine of justification by faith without believing it. The hymnist expresses that thought.

"Tis all in vain that you profess
The doctrines of the Church, unless
You live according to your creed,
And show your faith by word and deed.
Observe the rule: To others do
As you would have them do to you."
(The Lutheran Hymnary, # 406, v 2)

But there is not such a thing as "dead justifying faith." That is an impossibility, a contradiction in terms, an oxymoron. "Every good tree bears good fruit." (Mt 7:17) A "good tree" is a person that is planted through faith in Christ and his word. "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither." (Ps 1:3) Where faith in Christ exists, a fruitful life in Christ exists through the Spirit.

The *faith alone* principle of the Reformation does not detract from or minimize sanctification. Quite the opposite! It exalts it, because it places justification through faith, the power that produces sanctification, in its rightful scriptural place. Sanctification is alive,

flourishing, and yielding its fruit wherever justification through faith is cherished and seen as the doctrine by which the church stands.

Look at Abraham to see justifying faith producing sanctification. In Genesis 15:6 we have that Old Testament passage where we see justification through faith just as plainly as we see the noon-day sun overhead on a cloudless day on the first day of summer: "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." Now look at what that faith produced in Abram in the area of sanctification. When called by God to leave his country and his father's household and go to a strange land, he simply went, even though he didn't know where he was going (Ge 12:1; Heb 11:8-9) See him as the peace-maker and man of unselfish heart when quarrels arose between his herdsman and those of Lot. (Ge 13) Observe him as the rescuer of Lot and others and the protector of their property. Watch him passionately praying, pleading before the LORD for the deliverance of the righteous in Sodom and Gomorrah. See him willing even to offer up his only son through whom the Promised Seed would come, if God so commanded. A commentary on Genesis therefore says:

"Abram's trust in God's promises didn't simply lie in his heart 'like foam on beer,' to use Luther's earthy comparison. Abram's trust in what God promised powered him to respond to God's call." (*The People's Bible: Genesis*, p 125)

Think also of Rahab's justifying faith and what it produced in her new life. The former prostitute, now the owner of Spirit-given faith, welcomed Israel's spies, showed them kindness, gave them lodging, hid them and advised them. Her living faith and consequent acts are noted in Jos 2, Jas 2:25 and He 11:31.

"By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient" (He 11:31).

"Was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?" (Jas 2:25).

The New Testament examples that we could cite of justifying faith obviously producing sanctification are legion. (Zacchaeus, the women who supported Jesus, Mary who anointed Jesus, the woman at the well, the apostles etc.) God-given faith always produces born-again hearts and fruits of the Spirit. And when we speak in the spirit of giving all glory to God, we do not have to be shy about saying this about the people gathered here: As surely as God has given you faith in your Savior and made you an heir of heaven, your Spirit-produced faith and its love and thankfulness is producing sanctification with its wonderful fruits of the Spirit. It is not a mere wish that we be sanctified when given the gift of faith. It is a gracious immediate reality assured by the Spirit and revealed in Scripture.

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone, the new has come!" (2 Co 5:17)

"We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph 2:10)

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires." (Gal 5:22-24)

Those passages do not speak of sanctification only as what God *wants* for us and what we *hope* will happen in us. They speak of what already *is being produced* in us by God as a product of justification through faith.

Sanctification a Continuing Process

Justification is complete. A glaring difference is thus apparent at this point between justification and sanctification. God does not justify or forgive sins liter by liter, pound by pound, or inch by inch. He justifies at once completely, like a judge in a courtroom simply declaring the criminal "not guilty." "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies." (Ro 8:33) "Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits - who forgives all your sins." (Ps 103:3)

Sanctification, however, involves growth. It is a continuing activity. It is an on-going process of the Spirit in us. It is a matter of "more and more," as the following Scriptures reveal:

"Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more." (I Th 4:1)

"Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love . . ." (Eph 4:15-16)

"Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." (Col 3:9-10)

The image of God, lost through sin, is not instantaneously restored. But the *process* is in motion.

We mentioned two Old Testament believers above and their acts of sanctification. Though completely justified through faith, though walking in sanctification as a result of faith, they also sinned. Moses and the author of Joshua tell us about their sins without questioning their justification. Abraham lies twice about Sarah being his sister and is reprimanded even by unbelievers. Rahab, in the middle of her kind deeds of faith, also lies. Their sanctification is far from complete. The Bible likewise reveals the sins of other heroes of faith such as Sarah, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Mary, and Peter and the other disciples. John, a justified believer writing to other justified Christians, therefore says: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1 Jn 1:8) The Scriptures obviously do not speak of a "perfection" in sanctification as being present or possible in this lifetime.

Our Confessions therefore state:

"For since we receive in this life only the firstfruits of the Spirit, and the new birth is not complete, but only begun in us, the combat and struggle of the flesh against the spirit remains even in the elect and truly regenerate men; for there is a great difference perceptible among Christians not only in this, that one is weak and another strong in the spirit, but each Christian, moreover, experiences in himself that at one time he is joyful in spirit, and at another fearful and alarmed; at one time ardent in love, strong in faith and hope, and at another cold and weak." (FC. SD. II. Of Free Will. Triglot p 907)

We Lutherans confess in the Small Catechism that "we daily sin much." Again, Luther says:

"A will entirely given to God (*tota voluntas*) does not exist in this life. That is why we are constantly sinning while we are doing good, although less at one time and more at another. It depends on how impetuous the flesh is with its impure desires. . . Therefore the righteous man is like a rust-eaten tool which God has undertaken to polish; it cuts badly as long as it is rusty and until it is perfectly polished." (Quoted in Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says*, v. I, pp 236-7)

"This life is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness; not health, but healing; not being, but becoming; not rest, but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished, but it is going on; this is not the end, but it is the road; all does not yet gleam with glory, but all is being purified." (Holman translation, Vol III, p 31)

There are different levels of sanctification among believers; and we ourselves as individuals have our highs and lows in our lives of sanctification. A graph of our living would show jagged up and down lives even as a graph of justification would show a steady straight horizontal line representing perfect holiness credited to us through Christ. These truths are evidence of the central truth: While justification is complete even now, sanctification never is finished on earth. If only we could clone ourselves and in the process snip out that old ugly nature. But that technology will elude us whether or not humans are ever cloned. Christians will continue to be imperfect in their living while perfect in the way that God sees us through Jesus. We are *simul justus et peccator*.

The Scriptures do not explicitly answer the question of why God does not sanctify believers instantaneously and perfectly at the same time that he declares them completely holy in justification. But the question is best answered in terms of drawing us to Christ, to our justification through faith, so that we are not caught gazing upon ourselves in self-pride; and it is answered in terms of causing us to long for heaven where our fight with our old nature is over and our sanctification is complete. Paul's confident conclusion, after relating the war that continues between his new and old self, and after crying out, "Who will rescue me from this body of death?" leads us to that answer. He shouts: "Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (1Co 15:57) Luther says:

"It is true, the Holy Spirit at times allows Christians to err and stumble and allows sin to remain in them. And he does so for the very purpose of keeping us from taking pleasure in ourselves, as if we were holy on our own account. Rather we are to learn what we are and from whom we have our holiness; otherwise we would become too arrogant and presumptuous." (Quoted in Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says*, v. I, p 237)

With complete and perfect sanctification would, of course, come a perfect view of God and self. That would preclude any arrogance and self-gazing on our part if our sanctification were complete on earth. Therefore, Luther's words notwithstanding, we finally do not know with absolute certainty why God has chosen not to sanctify us instantaneously and completely. But for now we simply live with this reality expressed by Scripture and experienced by every believer: Our sanctification has only just begun, and will never be perfect under the sun. The

combat and struggle of the flesh against the spirit goes on and on for a lifetime in those who are truly the elect, the justified, the sanctified.

What purposes are served by the teaching that our sanctification is a continuing process and unfinished this side of heaven?

- *It prevents arrogance and pride in ourselves*, preserving Christian humility in us, as Luther's words above remind us. A cartoon presents this scene: There is a pond next to a seminary. At the shore a sign is posted for seminarians and faculty that reads, "Please do not walk on the water." If it takes nearly perfect sanctification to walk on water, we would not need such signs at our new seminary campus. Let him who thinks he can walk on water rejoice rather than he rides by grace in God's ship of faith.
- *It comforts us, preserving us from despair*. A line from an old Eagles' song from the 70s expresses a truth as far as our old nature is concerned: "Ain't it funny how your new life didn't change things. You're still the same old girl you used to be." The bare statement, "Christians don't do those things," is often a false or misleading statement. In so far as we are "new," we have abandoned the old way of sin. Yet we operate as "the whole person" to whom the old flesh still cleaves. As Christians, we are deeply disappointed as find ourselves thinking, speaking, and acting the old way. Some of the devil's strongest arguments start at that point with the words, "You call yourself a Christian and you did that?" We call ourselves Christians not by virtue of a completed sanctification but by virtue of our justification. Even our spiritual acts of sanctification are tainted and are not in any way a cause of our justification. I'm glad I don't have to prove to the devil that I belong to Christ on the basis of my life. I'm glad I'm a Lutheran Christian who can make this statement together with you:

"We also believe, teach, and confess that, although the genuinely believing and truly regenerated persons retain much weakness and many shortcomings down to their graves, they still have no reason to doubt either the righteousness which is reckoned to them through faith or the salvation of their souls, but they must regard it as certain that for Christ's sake, on the basis of the promises and the Word of the holy Gospel, they have a gracious God." (FC, Epitome, Article III. Righteousness. Tappert p 474)

In twenty-five years in the public ministry I have served in three different church bodies, each in fellowship with one another and members of the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Conference. The three bodies are WELS, ELS, and the Lutheran Church of Central Africa. Membership in none of those three CELC bodies has caused me to be perfectly sanctified. . In fact, I can almost hear a chorus of several nations, tribes, and languages from Michigan to Zambia to California and to Minnesota saying, "He's got that right, at least!" Neither are the other members of those bodies perfect. In whatever country and culture we are doing God's Gospel work, his people in their weakness slip, fall, and slide into old sins. We ourselves are also those people. But we are still his by grace. And for his service he continues by his word and sacraments to polish us, his rusty tools, rather than discard us as useless.

- *It keeps us from a judgmental spirit in regard to others*. The weakness of others does not mark them as unbelievers outside of Christ's kingdom any more than our sin does. During the Reformation Era a common occurrence among the Anabaptists was the storming of pulpits and ejecting ministers judged to be unregenerate. How many empty pulpits in our churches and vacant podiums in our classrooms would the ELS have today if the practice were

continued by our lay people? A recent study of USA students in Lutheran schools in grades 6-12 indicated that these students "are far less involved in drinking-and-driving, binge drinking, and sexual relationships, for example, than their public school peers." (*Metro Lutheran*) While we rejoice in such statistics, we know that Lutheran schools, Lutheran churches, and Lutheran homes, including those of theologians, are not exempt from the sins of the flesh. Sins, yes, shocking sins of darkness from Christians, will continue come to light. During the days when the writing of this paper was in progress, several disappointing examples of weakness in sanctification were revealed in the case of fellow confessional Lutherans. Alcohol abuse, spousal abuse, slander, arrogance, greed, lust, acting on lust - sins against all the Commandments are alive still in Christians because of the old nature. Yet our attitude toward fellow believers who have sinned and repented can be that of John: "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." (1Jn 2:1-2)

- *It exhorts us to continuing progress in our walk of sanctification.* We are running a lifelong race. We dare not presume to stand still. There is progress to be made. Despising God's will for our lives and rejecting his power to sanctify has disastrous consequences according to Scripture.

Hebrews 10:26-27 says: "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." Paul in 1Timothy 1:18-20 reminds Timothy that Some ... have shipwrecked their faith. He then names two such people to show that he is not just speaking in the abstract. 1Corinthians 6:9-10 warns: "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. The next verse goes on to say, And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God."

Our confessions therefore condemn the idea that malicious and persistent sins do not affect faith and the Spirit living with us:

We also reject and condemn the teaching that faith and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are not lost through malicious sin, but that the holy ones and the elect retain the Holy Spirit even though they fall into adultery and other sins and persist in them. (FC, Article IV, Good Works)

The "strangling fig" of Australia provides an illustration of the spiritual disaster of unchecked sin and neglect of sanctification. This genus of a plant in the rainforest starts as a small vine. Then it twines its way up around the trunk of a host tree. As it grows, its stem thickens and starts to choke the life out of the tree. The host tree is eventually strangled and rots away while the vine of the strangling fig grows to become a tree itself. Ignored and unchecked sin is like that harmless-looking little creeper. The little gossip that looks so innocent and feels so good, the savoring of a little thought of revenge, the little bit of lust or greed. When allowed to continue to creep and entwine themselves around a person of faith, these can eventually squeeze the life out of faith and leave only a decaying form. This is no less the case than the sins of drunkenness, prostitution, and adultery. God's answer to the

creeping sin syndrome is the repentance that he works in us by his word and the holy life, innocent death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was stretched out on the sin-freeing tree of the cross to free us from the guilt and punishment of sin and to enable us to resist its choking power. (Illustration from Robert J. Wiebusch in *THE LUTHERAN*, official publication of the Lutheran Church of Australia)

Paul uses another illustration, one of a race. Willful sin can hinder and entangle the feet of a runner and cause him to fall from the race. But in his means of grace God equips us for the race and empowers us to progress, even as he did those who ran before us. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith . . ." (Heb 12:1-2)

- *It draws us continually to our justification through faith for assurance and motivation.* There alone we are guaranteed our forgiveness and status by grace before God. There alone we are renewed and motivated for progress in holy living. The Scriptures say it often and clearly. What God has done for us inspires and produces sanctification. The thesis that is the title of this paper finds its support in the following (and many more) passages. Some of them simply state the fact that justification through faith produces sanctification; and others exhort sanctification on the basis of justification because it alone, through the Spirit, has such power.

"If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O LORD, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared." (Ps 130:3-4)

"He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." (2 Co 5:15)

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship." Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Ro 12:1-2)

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." (2Co 5:14-15)

"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (Eph 5:1-2)

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age." (Titus 2:11-12)

"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:11)

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:11)

A distillation of the above passages is simply this: By grace we are justified! Therefore now let sanctification live in us!

Cooperation in Sanctification

In conversion to justifying faith, we are completely passive. But in sanctification, we truly cooperate with the Holy Spirit. This is obviously another of the great distinctions between the two doctrines. Is this surprising to Lutherans to hear that man cooperates with the Spirit in sanctification? Not at all. It is the language of Scripture and therefore our Confessions. The Scriptures speak of converted man according to his new nature truly wanting what God wants. The Formula of Concord in this regard quotes Psalm 110:3, Romans 8:14, Galatians 5:17 and this passage: "For in my inner being I delight in God's law." (Romans 7:22) The Formula then says:

"From this it follows that as soon as the Holy Spirit has initiated his work of regeneration and renewal in us through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that we can and must cooperate by the power of the Holy Spirit, even though we still do so in great weakness. Such cooperation does not proceed from our carnal and natural powers, but from the new powers and gifts which the Holy Spirit has begun in us in conversion, as St. Paul expressly and earnestly reminds us, 'Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain.' (See the Tappert footnote concerning this quotation from 2 Co 6:1) This is to be understood in no other way than that the converted man does good, as much and as long as God rules him through his Holy Spirit, guides and leads him, but if God should withdraw his gracious hand man could not remain in obedience for one moment. But if this were to be understood as though the converted man cooperates alongside the Holy Spirit, the way two horses draw a wagon together, such a view could by no means be conceded without detriment to the divine truth." (FC, SD, Article II. Free Will. Tappert p 534.)

The hymn writers voice the cooperative spirit of our new nature that wants what God wants. While the continuing struggle between New and Old is always behind the scenes, the desire of our New Person surfaces clearly and leads to such expressions as these:

"Take away the love of sinning." (ELH 407, v 2)

"I long to be like Jesus, Meek, loving, lowly, mild
I long to be like Jesus, The Father's holy Child." (TLH 652, v 4)

"Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee." (TLH 400, v 1)

This cooperation in sanctification, of course, in no way contributes to justification through faith, which hinges on nothing but God's accomplished acts of grace in Christ.

God himself is always the author of the justified believer's cooperation, his willing attitude, and the works of sanctification that follow. As the Scriptures declare, "It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Php 2:13) (Note the FC quotation above concerning the cooperation not being like two horses drawing a wagon together.)

Sanctification and the Preaching of the Law

While the Gospel is the only motivation for sanctification, the law is also to be preached to Christians as we grow in our new life that has resulted from justification through faith. We have only to look at the repeated pattern in Paul's letters to see this truth demonstrated. First

will come a section that tells what God by grace has accomplished for us. Then comes the word "therefore," (the Greek word *oun*) as a transition. And then follows a section directing the Christian's grateful response according to the "third use of the law," the law as guide or rule. Paul is thereby saying the following. "This is what your gracious God has done for you. Now this is how God himself wants you to thank and glorify him. Here are the very things that he wants, not things that you might invent or guess to be pleasing to him. This is his will, his law, that is now your delight since you have been freed from its condemnation."

Examples in Paul's Letters of moving from justification, to transitional word or statement, to sanctification directed by the "third use of the law" can be seen in Romans 12:

"Therefore, I urge you;, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer you bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world...Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought...Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality..."

Again in Ephesians 4:

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient...He who has been stealing must steal no longer... not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths...Be kind and compassionate to one another..."

Or yet again in Colossians 3:

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above...You must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander...Do not lie...Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness...Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another..."

Why do we say something that is so obvious from Scripture, namely, that Christians need the preaching of the law according to its third use as a guide, as well as its first and second uses as curb and mirror? It is because "antinomianism" is continually sneaking around. Sometimes, perhaps, it is not a crass form of antinomianism, but simply a tragic neglect of needed law preaching.

Antinomianism (from the Greek *anti*, "against + *nomos*, "law") in the 16th century came in two forms. During the lifetime of Luther, John Agricola advocated a crass form of antinomianism in which he rejected any use of the law in the church. He declared that repentance is to be taught not from the Ten Commandments but through the Gospel and that the law has no relevance for the Christian. Luther utterly rejected such ideas.

After Luther's death a more moderate form of antinomianism confronted Lutherans. Its advocataes now did not deny the first and second uses of the law (the so-called "theological use"), that is, its use as curb and mirror. But they did reject its third use, that is, as a guide to Christians in connection with good works (the so-called "didactic use"). Article VI of the Formula of Concord presents the biblical response to this second wave of antinomianism.

Our Confessions say:

"We believe, teach, and confess that the preaching of the Law is to be urged with diligence, not only on upon the unbelieving and impenitent, but also upon true believers, who are truly converted, regenerate, and justified by faith." (FC. SD. VI. Triglot p 805")

If we were 100% "new man" already now, it is true that we would not need the law at all. We would know instinctively God's holy immutable will and follow it perfectly - just as Adam and Eve did, and just as we will in heaven. But we are not now 100% new. Our new self "is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Col 3:10; see also Eph 4:24). But on this earth we Christians are still far from totally renewed. The old flesh still cleaves to us. We function not as totally new but also with the tugging and jostling of the abominable clinging old critter within. We think, speak, and act as a "package deal" of new and old. As long as that is true, we will need the law to guide us in what works are pleasing to our God whom we now, according to our new nature, love and want to serve. God's law functioning as guide keeps us from inventing works and calling them good works which God commands when in fact they are a fabricated piety. The law tells us what God himself commands and calls good works.

This "third function" or "third use" of the law was present also at the very giving of the Ten Commandments together with its first and second uses. The language of the Small Catechism's explanations to the Commandments show that Luther had also the "third use" in view.

Luther wrote powerful words about the necessity of preaching the law, in all of its three uses, to Christians in their lives of sanctification.

"My friends the Antinomians preach exceedingly well - and I cannot but believe that they do so with great earnestness - concerning the mercy of Christ, forgiveness of sin, and other contents of the article of redemption. But they flee from this inference as from the devil, that they must tell the people about the Third Article, of sanctification, that is, of the new life in Christ...They are excellent preachers of the Easter truth, but miserable preachers of the truth of Pentecost. For there is nothing in their preaching concerning sanctification of the Holy Ghost and about quickening into a new life. It is proper to extol Christ in our preaching; but Christ is the Christ and has acquired redemption from sin and death for this very purpose that the Holy Spirit should change our Old Adam into a new man, that we are to be dead unto sin and live unto righteousness, as Paul teaches Rom. 6,2ff., and that we are to begin this change and increase in this new life here and consummate it hereafter. For Christ has gained for us not only grace (gratium), but also the gift (donum) of the Holy Ghost, so that we obtain from Him not only forgiveness of sin, but also the ceasing from sin. Anyone, therefore, who does not cease from his sin, but continues in his former evil way must have obtained a different Christ, from the Antinomians. The genuine Christ is not with them, even if they cry with the voice of all angels, Christ! Christ! They will have to go to perdition with their new Christ." (Luther in his treatise "Concerning Councils and Churches." Quoted in Walther's Law And Gospel, p 122 ff.)

Strong words indeed! They show that in Luther's mind justification through faith and sanctification are tied tightly together. If we are going to call ourselves "Lutherans" and not

"antinomians" we will preach both in the balance of Scripture, earnestly, powerfully, clearly, continually!

Walther then goes on to comment on Luther's words:

"Luther has given an extreme description of Antinomian preaching. None of you will readily imitate that method, but it is easy to fall into something like it..."

"Luther's remarks about Easter and Pentecost preachers deserve to be remembered. It is well if on Easter Day you emphasize with great force, and expatiate on, the victory of Christ over sin, death, devil, and hell. But you must also be good Pentecost preachers and say to your hearers: "Repent; for then the Holy Spirit will come with His grace and comfort, enlighten, and sanctify you." We shall never attain to perfect sanctification in this life, but we must make a beginning and progress in this endeavor. For he that does not increase, decreases, and he that decreases will ultimately cease entirely using what God has given him. Finally, he will be a dead branch on the vine."

Concerning the law in its third use, the hymn writer reminds us:

"To those who help in Christ have found
And would in works of love abound
It shows what deeds are His delight
And should be done as good and right." (TLH #295, 3)

From this rather long section of our essay and its extensive quotations from our Confessions, Luther, and Walther, you can probably sense the author's feeling that third use of the law preaching is often short-changed or even grossly neglected. While we do not advocate preaching justification less in order to preach sanctification more, we most certainly urge that our balance between the two be the balance of Scripture itself. If we tore from our Bibles all of its portions that deal with exposing a believer's lack of sanctification and guiding his new life, how big a chunk would be gone? We need to put in God's hands our fears that if we preach sanctification, people will get wrong ideas about the way of salvation. Let God worry about God's worries. It is his word. Let him take care of how it is received after we preach it faithfully. If we worried about how people might abuse his word to the extent that we would stop preaching chunks of it, then we would never preach the doctrine of justification itself. After all, that wonderful message of free forgiveness for all might lead to people abusing it and using it as a license to sin. Should our fears prevent its proclamation? God forbid! Let him take care of such problems. And let him take care of how people accept his doctrine of sanctification after we have faithfully preached his doctrine of justification. If we confessional Lutherans, who know the proper order between justification and sanctification, do not preach sanctification, who will hear it rightly preached. God forbid that we become *de facto* antinomians in our preaching even as we pay lip service to our Lutheran Confessions.

The Value of Works of Sanctification

Works of sanctification do not contribute to salvation, which is "the gift of God - not by works." They therefore do not give us any bragging rights before God or man, "so that no one can boast." (Eph 2:8-9) We boast only about our loving Lord who freely justifies for Jesus' sake. Furthermore, none of our works are completely holy, but are tainted by the sin of our old self that is mingled with them. Neither can they be used by man in any absolute way as proof of

justification through faith, though they provide evidence. What then is their value in addition to their obvious worth to someone helped through Christian works of kindness?

1. Works of sanctification have value because a) *God himself works them*, b) *wants them*, c) *paid a great price to produce them*, and d) *accepts them for Christ's sake*.

a) Our works of sanctification are *God's work* in and through us. Who among us would dare to place a low value on what the LORD of all the universe performs! We had better not, then, belittle our good works of which he is the creator, which the Scriptures so clearly teach:

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph 2:10)

"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good pleasure." (Php 2:13)

"Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God." (2Co 3:5)

(See also 1Co 12:6-11)

b) *God wants our works* of sanctification. It may seem strange that the LORD wants and chooses to make use of us and our works. But he does. Paul says that "it is God's will that you should be sanctified" (1Thes 4:3) and that we are "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph 2:10) The justified child of God will certainly not despise what his gracious Father desires.

A few days ago a report appeared in the *Tidene* newspaper of Bergen, Norway, that the Norwegian military had put a 98-year-old woman, Gyda Kaland, on its reserve list. The military thought they could use her because she had just bought a new farm tractor. The military maintains a list of useful civilian vehicles and advises owners that they and their vehicles may be summoned to active service in wartime. A 98-year-old woman and her trusty tractor wanted for the defense of Norway! Strange? Maybe. But not as wonderfully strange as sinners and their imperfect works wanted by the God of heaven and earth for service. Yet that is the case.

God did not need a Moses to lead his nation out of Egypt. God did not need a Joshua to fulfill his promise of a special land for Israel. He did not need an Esther to free his people from Haman's wicked plot of exterminating the Jews. He does not need us public servants and lay servants to make his Kingdom work successful. He does not need our acts of kindness toward needy people. "He is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything." (Ac 17:25) Yet he wants and chooses to use our acts of service "for such a time as this." (Est 4:14)

c) In fact, an explicit purpose of Jesus' work, *a purpose of justification, is sanctification*, as the Scriptures declare. We are not only saved *from* sin, Satan and hell but *for* sanctification in this life and perfect service forever in heaven. Zechariah in his song says: "He raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David...to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days." (Lk 1:69,74,75) Paul writes: "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." (2Co 5:15) Immediately after penning the beautiful Gospel words of Ephesians to 8-9 that show our salvation to be "by

grace" and "through faith" and "not by works, so that non one can boast," Paul writes: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph 2:10) Good works do not save us, but we are saved for good works! Peter also writes: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness." (1Pe 2:24) Is there any question that, according to Scripture, a purpose of justification is sanctification?

- d) Furthermore, "although they are still imperfect and impure, (*works of sanctification*) are acceptable to God through Christ." (FC. SD. VI, 23. Triglotta p 969) The same Gospel that motivates us to do good works forgives the sin that taints them and makes them pleasing to God through Jesus. Luther, commenting on Jesus' Vine and Branches discourse in John 15, says: "If the person is a Christian, then the work, be it as big or as little as it will, is good fruit ... and all such works are precious grapes, even though sin creeps in now and then and there are false steps." Peter says that Christians are "ofering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ." (1Pe 2:5) From Hebrews 11:4ff it is clear that God freely accepts the acts of those who live "by faith." What God accepts must have value to him and should not be despised or belittled by man.

Our Lutheran Confessions therefore state:

"... it is God's will and express command that believers should do good works, which the Holy Ghost works in believers, and with which God is pleased for Christ's sake, and to which he promises a glorious reward in this life and the life to come." (FC, TD., IV Good Works, *Troglotta* 951)

2. Works of sanctification have value because *they receive a glorious reward of grace here and hereafter*, as the quotation from the *Formula of Concord* above just reminded us. The key expression here is "reward of *grace*" as opposed to "award of merit." But rewarded they certainly are! And gloriously, as Scripture's many promises, such as the following, reveal:

"The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor." (1Co 3:8)

"But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked." (Lk 5:35)

"For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." (1 Ti 4:8)

"But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Lk 14:13-14)

Think also of the promises of reward in the Old Testament, promises of prosperity in the Promised Land when the covenant stipulations are followed, the promise in connection with the Fourth Commandment, etc.

Quite obviously, great care must be exercised when speaking about the reward of works of sanctification lest justification by grace through faith begin to be questioned

in our minds. The rewards of works are rewards of grace and not of right. They are rewards promised and freely given by a gracious God to those who know they have merited nothing. The works themselves, tainted with sin as they are, deserve nothing in return. Yet God, for the strengthening and comfort of his humble people, promises and gives reward to their works so that they might know that their labor and misery in an unbelieving world is not worthless to him. As Francis Pieper says, "If anyone claims any merit on the basis of having performed good works, he is excluded from the Kingdom of God - a fact which anyone at all acquainted with the teaching of Christianity will admit at once ... If a person hands God a demand for wages based on his works, he has abandoned that faith which makes him a Christian." (*Christian Dogmatics*, III, 53-54) The double truth that God chooses to reward works of sanctification and that no one can rightfully demand his reward is especially clear from Matthew 19:27 - 20:16 in the juxtaposed accounts of The Rich Young Man who cannot merit God's rewards and the ensuing promises of reward to faithful disciples, and the account of The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard.

The main truth that we seek to establish here is that works of sanctification have value because of the reward that God in grace freely promises concerning them. This should strengthen and comfort us in our lives of sanctification and keep us from getting tired of faithful service in an often unappreciative world. (See 1Ti 3:13) The fact that some will not understand the difference between rewards of merit and rewards of grace should not prevent us from proclaiming the truth of Scripture that God chooses to reward the good works of his people who are in his kingdom of pure grace.

3. Jesus says that our works of sanctification *result in praise and glory for God*. "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Mat 5:16) "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." (Jn 15:8) Whatever results in God's praise and glory is of inestimable value. Our prayer therefore is:

"Lord, grant that I in every place
 May glorify Your lavish grace
 And serve and help my neighbor." (TLH # 429, 2)

4. They are of great value to the believer because they are *a way of saying thank you to God for his gift of justification through faith*. Gratitude craves expression and finds it in acts of love accepted by our Savior, who assures, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Mt 25:40)

At the airport in San Juan, Puerto Rico, I observed a young boy and an older man who was apparently his grandfather. It was evident that they had a wonderful relationship as they laughed and talked with each other. When it was time to check in, the boy didn't think that Grandpa should carry his big suitcase alone. He wanted to help and show that he cared for him. Grandpa could have carried the suitcase much better all by himself. In fact, with the kid holding on and basically getting in the way, Grandfather had to stumble along as he moved. Yet they both continued to laugh and talk in this bonding experience. The boy was expressing his relationship with his grandfather by his action, and Grandpa was accepting his help, awkward as it was. That's no much different from our works of sanctification done in gratitude and our Lord's acceptance of them, imperfect as they are.

5. God uses our lives of sanctification in evangelism and mission work to *gain a hearing for the doctrine of justification through faith*. A Christian's life is not a means of grace, but it may lead to a hearing for the Gospel which is. From the time of the first Christians to the present, believers demonstrating "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness" and other fruits of the Spirit have led to this question from unbelievers: What is "the reason for the hope that you have"? (1Pe 3:15) In days of persecution when these fruits were noted in the face of martyrdom, the blood of the dying Christians became seed. Only in heaven will the value of deeds of love in regard to evangelism and mission work be clearly seen.

Conversely, how many God-given opportunities for witness have been lost by lack of sanctification? "I wouldn't even consider talking to him about spiritual things because I've seen what he's really like. He can sure 'talk the talk,' but he doesn't 'walk the walk'! And that bothers me." While people are always lost by their own fault, how often hasn't that complaint been made by unbelievers? It is putting God to a sinful test when we speak the truth of his word while remaining satisfied with a low level of sanctification and then expect that people will ask us to give the reason for the hope within us. The letter of recommendation, or rather non-recommendation, for a prospective student first quoted Ephesians 5:14, "speaking the truth in love." Then the writer noted that he thought the student characteristically wanted to do the first but not the second. How important for our witness to the world it is that God's truth be spoken by people who are being sanctified by it, in other words, that our witness be accompanied by a life of love. Like Paul, we want to "put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited" (2 Co 6:3).

How many people have been willing to listen to a missionary explain God's plan of salvation after they were first treated by patient and caring nurses at the medical dispensary in the middle of the bush at Mwembeshi, Zambia? What affect did an outpouring of sympathy and funds have on a cancer-stricken man in our Santiago, Chile, mission field, on tuberculosis patients in Lima, Peru, on flood victims closer to home? Were these not some of the "good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do," (Eph 2:10) and which he may have used for great spiritual benefit?

6. Works of sanctification *give outward evidence of justification through faith*. This last point brings us directly back to the title of this paper, "Justification through faith produces sanctification." Sanctification provides evidence of the justification from which it flows. Justifying faith is invisible, but what it produces is not. When Jesus says to you on the Last Day, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me," (Matthew 25:40) he will be saying in effect that you have demonstrated the justifying faith which he freely gave you and through which alone you receive eternal life. By pointing to what you did, he will be showing you and all others the faith through which you are justified. (See Ja 2:18) The hymn writer says it poetically:

"Faith to the cross of Christ doth cling
And rests in Him securely;
And forth from it good works must spring
As fruits and tokens surely;
Still faith doth justify alone,
Works serve they neighbor and make known
The faith that lives within thee." (TLH 377, 9)

Acts of sanctification that reflect justification are thus something of great value. They point to that great "article by which the church either stands or falls" (*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*).

Summary

Our convention theme of "Walk in Newness of Life" is not some optional, peripheral exhortation to us. It is an appeal of God himself in Scripture. Our walk in our new life of sanctification is produced by the Spirit as a consequence of our justification through faith. It is a continuing process that is motivated by the Gospel-truth of our justification and guided by the Law in its third use. The Scriptures ascribe great value to the works of our new Spirit-given life, which reflect our justification by grace through faith.

PRAYER

Dear Spirit of power and life:

Live in our minds to control our thoughts.

Dwell in our mouths to direct our speech.

Inhabit our bodies to rule our activities.

When in our weakness we do not follow you, give us sorrow over our sins; direct us again to our Savior's perfect life and redeeming death; then give us a renewed love and gratitude to you that causes us to grow day by day in grace and holiness. Hear us for Christ's sake. Amen.

For Discussion

1. Analyze and react to each of the statements that appear at the beginning of the essay.
2. Jesus used the metaphor of the vine and branches producing fruit to picture justification through faith and sanctification. Luther, using a picture, said that it is as impossible to separate works from faith as it is to separate heat and light from fire. What comparisons or pictures can you offer that would help in teaching the relationship between justification and sanctification?
3. On the basis of Ephesians 2:8-10, explain the relationship between justification through faith and works of sanctification.

"For 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 to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."
4. Does Jesus' Great Commission of Matthew 28 relate to sanctification? How?
5. The paper quoted some hymn verses that express the relationship between justification and sanctification. Can you quote other such expressions from hymns or other writings?
6. Why is preaching that does not acknowledge the Christian's new self bad preaching?
7. Discuss the topic "The Reward of Good Works," using as your starting point these statements by Francis Pieper:

"Scripture teaches that the good works of Christians receive a reward (1Co 3:8, yea, a very great reward (Mat 5:12; Lk 6:23;35))"

"We shall unhesitatingly teach, both publicly and privately, that God rewards the good works of Christians here in time and, particularly, in eternity (1 Tim 4:8; Lk 14:14)."

"But this reward, so Scripture further instructs, must be regarded as a reward of grace."