

The true believer is justified on the basis of the death of Christ, placed in Christ, is born again and becomes a new creation. There are continuing consequences – rights and responsibilities – which come with being a child of God. Such continuing results of true conversion should not be ignored or minimized. Cf. Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 8:13; Galatians 3:1-3.

The related issues belong to a broader theme called sanctification. To sanctify means to set apart. Technically there are three aspects of sanctification in our salvation. God set the believer apart from the world to Himself in justification, i.e., a past, positional sanctification. The future glorification of believers is a final, complete sanctification. Presently God continues to set the believer apart from sinful behavior to live for God. The believer grows in a holy character. This is a present, progressive sanctification. Three primary truths counter much of the false thinking in this area.

### **I. *God saved us for Himself.***

1. *God's work of redemption makes God our owner (1 Corinthians 6:19b-20a).* A price was paid to free us from sin. God bought us and we are now not our own. God freed us from sin to become His property.
2. *God unites the believer with Christ in order that the believer might live a new life (Romans 6:4, 8, 11).* We now have a new life which is oriented away from sin and toward God. The believer has been made free from sin to live for God.
3. *It is the will of God that the believer's life be set apart for Him (1 Thessalonians 4:3).* God's purpose for us is that our lives be set apart for Him. In the context of this verse (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20) sanctification is related to sexual purity. Paul makes the idea of sanctification very definite. To be set apart for God, means avoiding sexual immorality. This is God's will. See 1 Th 4:7 – God called us “in sanctification”, i.e., to be set apart for Him.

God has saved us for Himself. It is wrong to think that God saved the believer without expectation of change. This ignores God's purposes in salvation.

### **II. *God continues to be at work in the believer.***

1. *God carries on to completion what He has begun (Philippians 1:6).* We can trust God to do the job He started. When God justified the believer, he began a good work. God will carry on His good work in the believer right through the return of Christ, when that work will be completed. Cf. Phil 2:13.
2. *God carries His work of salvation on to completion by His Spirit.* Part of the initial blessings of salvation is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Cf. Acts 2:38-39. The Holy Spirit is God's agent of sanctification. Most familiar is perhaps the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). When we live by the Spirit, we will not serve sinful desires. Cf. Galatians 5:16, 25; Romans 8:9. By His Spirit God convicts us of sin, produces in us proper responses, helps us to understand His Word and apply it in our lives.
3. *God continues to work in the believer through His Word.* John 17:17 – “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth”. God uses His Word to reveal our sinfulness. Cf. James 1:23-25; Hebrews 4:12-13. God also uses His Word to cleanse the believer. Cf. Ephesians 5:26; John 15:3. God uses His Word to show us Christ into whose image we are being changed. Cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18. As we see Christ in Scripture and concentrate on Him, God changes us into His image. This is part of God's ultimate plan to make us like Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29).

It is right to ask if God has even begun a work in a person, if there is no evidence of a continued work of God. If a person is truly a child of God, then God will be at work and there will be fruit. When there is no fruit, we should not doubt God's work, but rather the true condition of the heart.

### **III. *God calls the believer to take responsibility to flee sin and cling to Him.***

1. *The believer takes responsibility by being a hearer and doer of the Word.* Cf. Matthew 7:24ff.; James 1:22; Philippians 2:12. In Romans 6 the believer is called upon to know what God has done, count on it as true, yield themselves to doing right, and obey. Because God is working, because God has changed the true believer, then the true believer will find success in obeying God. We will want to do what is right. These are marks of the true believer. At the same time, however, keeping the law is not a way to become sanctified (Romans 6:14). The law has no power in it to help keep it. It condemns and might incite to sin. Nevertheless the entire Word of God, the Scriptures, remains profitable for us. In it we see Christ. In it we can determine the will of God. We seek to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. Then we “will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Rom 12:2 NIV)
2. *The believer takes responsibility by heeding the Spirit of God.* Our aide to this is the Spirit of God. We take responsibility by submitting to God's Spirit, neither grieving nor quenching Him.

This change in living marks the true believer. It is an essential part of the work of salvation which God accomplishes in and for the believer. God justifies the true believer. He sanctifies the true believer. One day He will glorify the true believer, when Jesus is met face to face.

Take heed to Paul's warnings in Galatians 5: 1 & 13. We must avoid the extremes of legalism and license. We are freed from sin to live for God.