



Romans 5:6-10

(6) For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

King James Version

Sanctification and justification are not the same. They are, however, different processes within the same purpose, and they are definitely related issues. They both begin at the same time: when we are forgiven, justified, and sanctified. Justification has to do with aligning us with the standard of [God's law](#) that in turn permits us into God's presence. We will never be any more justified than we are at that moment; justification does not increase as we move through our Christian lives.

Some believe that [Jesus Christ](#) lived and died only to provide justification and [forgiveness](#) of our sins. However, those who believe this are selling His awesome work short. As wonderful as His work is in providing us with justification, His labors in behalf of our [salvation](#) do not end there. Notice that verse 10 says we are "saved by His *life*." Jesus rose from the dead to continue our salvation as our High Priest. God's work of spiritual creation does not end with justification, for at that point we are far from complete. We are completed and saved because of Christ's labor as our Mediator and High Priest only because He is alive.

Sanctification unto [holiness](#) continues the process. [Hebrews 2:11](#) states that Jesus is "He who sanctifies," and those of us who have come under His blood are called "those who are sanctified." Note these verses carefully:

» [John 17:19](#): And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be

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sanctified by the truth.

- » [Ephesians 5:25-26](#): Husbands, [love](#) your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.
- » [Colossians 1:21-22](#): And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight. . . .
- » [Titus 2:14](#): . . . who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

Sanctification has a definite purpose that is different from justification. In one respect, justification—as important as it is—only gets the salvation process started. Sanctification takes a person much farther along the road toward completion. It occurs within the experiences of life generally over the many years of one's relationship with the Father and Son. How long did [God](#) work with [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#), [Jacob](#), Joseph, [Moses](#), [David](#), and the apostles to prepare them for His Kingdom? By comparison, will our perfection be achieved in just a moment?

Sanctification is the inward spiritual work that Jesus Christ works in us. Notice His promise, made on the eve of His crucifixion, in [John 14:18](#): "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." Moments later, when asked by Judas, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to [the world](#)?" (verse 22), Jesus replies, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (verse 23). These clear statements show that Jesus would continue His work with them following His resurrection.

As our High Priest, He continues that work in us after our justification. He not only washes us of our sins by means of His blood, but He also labors to separate us from our natural love of [sin](#) and the world. He works to instill in us a new principle of life, making us holy in our actions and reactions within the experiences of life. This makes possible a godly witness before men, and at the same time, prepares us for living in the Kingdom of God.

If God's only purpose was to save us, He could end the salvation process with our

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justification. Certainly, His purpose is to save us, but His goal is to save us *with character that is the image of His own*.

Notice [Hebrews 6:1](#): "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of [repentance](#) from dead works and of [faith](#) toward God." This verse and those immediately following confirm that, at the time of justification, we are not perfect or complete. Justification is an important beginning, but God intends to complete the process of spiritual maturation that He began with our calling. When sanctification begins, our Christian walk truly begins in earnest.

Sanctification, then, is the outcome of God's calling, faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, justification, and our becoming regenerated by God through receiving His Spirit. This combination begins life in the Spirit, as Paul explains in [Romans 8:9](#): "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the [Spirit of God](#) dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."

At this point in Christian life, the principles of Christianity must be practically applied to everyday life. At this juncture, it might help to recall what righteousness is. [Psalm 119:172](#) defines it succinctly: "My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness." The apostle John adds to our understanding in [John 3:4](#): "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." Both rectitude and love concisely characterize the same standards, the [Ten Commandments](#), and we are required to labor to perform both.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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