

Week Six: Faith and Life

Summary Document

Here are the questions submitted that were considered in the message:

If Adam's sin condemned ALL people through inherent sin, why must one have to choose to accept Christ's sacrifice? Why doesn't Christ's sacrifice apply to all inherently like Adam's sin? In short, why are humans born into Adams sin, not Christ's salvation?

I know we are saved through what Jesus did not our works but how are faith and repentance involved? Why did John the Baptist and I think Jesus called people to repent and believe?

If Jesus made a way to heaven possible on the cross, why do we think it matters if people are able to understand or believe it in order to receive it?

*If you have the Holy Spirit in you and we have been washed clean by Jesus Death, can we live a perfect life?
Is it possible to live a sinless life?*

1. The State of Humanity

Humans are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). However, the first humans rebelled against God's rule in their lives and chose to live their own way (Genesis 3:1-7). The Bible calls this behaviour of putting oneself in God's rightful place "sin". This first or "original" sin has an infectious effect, spreading through creation and all humanity (Genesis 3:14-19). It means the default state of humanity is sinful (Romans 5:12-19), including us! So humans are **victims** of sin. But humans all also freely choose to reject God and live our own way (Romans 3:10-12). So humans are also **agents** of sin. But despite this, humanity still carries the image of God within it

2. Jesus sacrifice for us

The good news of the Bible is that God decided to act. Jesus came to earth, fully human and fully God, to provide the solution to the mess that humanity had got itself into. The Bible uses many images to show how Jesus death and rising again solved the problem – darkness into light, death to life, unclean to purified, prisoner to freedom. One such image is **justification**, a legal term of being made right in God's sight. By dying in our place, Jesus took upon himself the legal verdict of "guilty" that we rightly deserved, by dying in for our sake (1 Corinthians 5:21). The result is that our verdict before God is now "not guilty", not because of anything we have done, but because of what Jesus has done. Through this undeserved loving sacrifice, or "grace" of God, we are no longer condemned (Romans 8:1-2).

There are two important things about **justification**. Firstly, it is completely God's work, and not at all our work (Ephesians 2:8-9). Secondly, it is totally completed and finished (Hebrews 1:3).

3. Faith

The most helpful way to think of faith is as **dependent trust** in Jesus (Luke 18:22-23). Faith includes believing in God's existence, but is not limited to that (James 2:19). It means trusting Jesus with your life, just like you might trust a chair with your weight – by actually sitting on it! Some people come to faith (dependent trust) through examining evidence, some through a powerful experience of God, some through trusting the word of friends, some through utter helpless desperation. All of these are valid ways to faith, but the question of faith remains: do you have dependent trust in Jesus?

There are four more important things about faith. Firstly, faith is not the thing that saves us, Jesus does that on the cross. Faith is more of an instrument, or *means* of salvation. Secondly, unlike sin, faith is not “automatic” but it is available. God respects our freedom to reject him. God also provides a simple way to accept his gift of grace – even a child can trust in Jesus! Thirdly, faith itself is a gift of God, a work of God in our hearts by God's Spirit (Eph 2:8). Fourthly, repentance means turning your life around. Repentance usually begins with an acknowledgement of heading in a wrong direction, but includes a complete turnaround of life. Repentance could be seen as evidence of, or a result of true faith.

4. Sanctification

Sanctification means being made holy, or becoming more like Jesus. In the Bible we see that sanctification has begun in our lives, and is still happening. Many passages emphasise that we have a new nature, that we have changed to become children of God (2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 8:17, 1 Peter 2:22-23). Other passages emphasise that our transformation is ongoing, that it takes place day by day (2 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Corinthians 4:16, Romans 8:23-25). Sanctification is a partnership between God through his Spirit and us. We are called to trust in God's work, and to be at work ourselves in pursuing holiness (Galatians 5:16, 25).

So sanctification is different from justification in two ways: Justification is totally God's work, and not at all our work, whereas sanctification is a partnership between us and God. Justification is totally completed by Jesus on the cross, whereas sanctification is ongoing, and will continue through our lives as we become more like Jesus day by day. For this reason, we should not expect sinless perfection in this life (Hebrews 12:4). However, because of the power of God's spirit within us, there is no *particular* sin that we cannot overcome.

Two final things about sanctification. Firstly, it's important to maintain the distinction between justification and sanctification. If the two are blurred, our sinful tendencies or slow progress in dealing with temptation in our life might lead us to suspect that Jesus didn't finish the job on the cross. It's important to remember that the incompleteness of our sanctification doesn't reflect on the completeness of our justification. Secondly, sin is not our master anymore, but it lingers (Romans 6:12, 14). In Calvin's words, there remains in Christians a “smouldering cinder” of evil. We celebrate what God has done for us in Jesus, we enjoy our transformation and seek to live more like Jesus every day. And at the same time we yearn for what is to come, for the final fulfilment of God's kingdom (Romans 8:22-25).