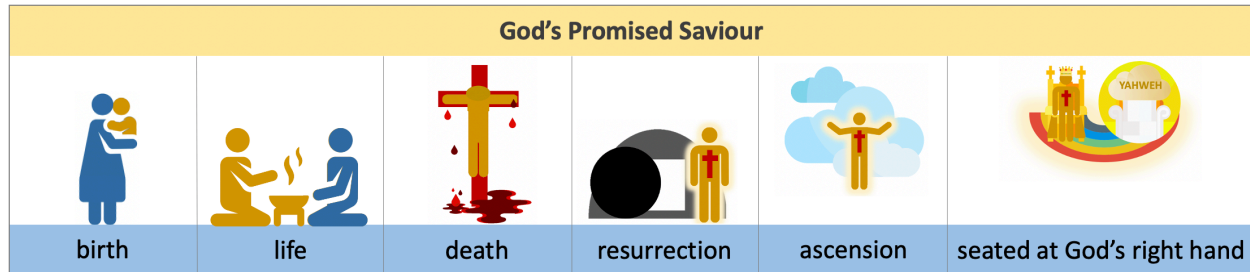


Lesson 38: Justification, Sanctification, Glorification (I)

Previously...

In the Old Testament, God kept assuring fallen mankind that He would provide a Saviour. At the start of the New Testament, we studied about Him, our Saviour Jesus.



God promised that whoever believes in Jesus will be saved. In fact, Jesus' name carries that very meaning. So Christ Jesus or Messiah Jesus literally means the "chosen saving one".

Hebrew		Greek		Latin and English
Yeshua (Joshua)	=	Iēsous	=	Jesus
Yahweh saves		Yahweh is salvation		Yahweh is salvation

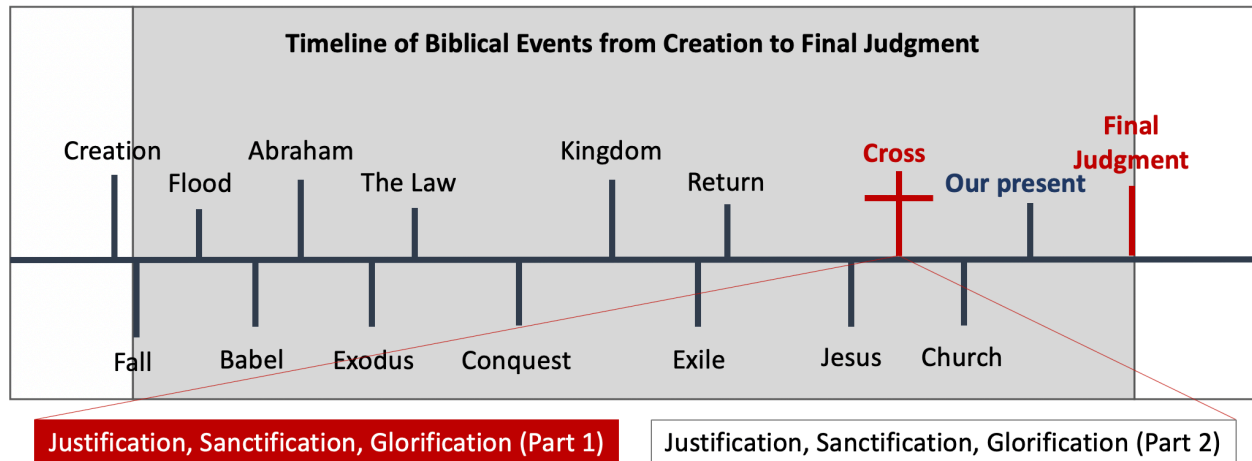
And just as God promised, we will see that Jesus is intimately involved in every aspect of our salvation.

But first, what does the word "save" really mean?

- Does it mean that once a person believes in Jesus, they will definitely be with God for eternity?
- What if they believe but live a very wicked life? Will they still get to be with God or will they end up in the lake of fire?

Many believers are confused about this.

Before we move on to learn about the church, we will study what the Bible says about being "saved". This is very important because it affects our lives directly. We must not be uncertain about this.



What does the Word “Saved” or “Salvation” in the Bible Mean?

Some people think that whenever they see the words “saved” and “salvation” in the Bible, it always means “saved from eternal death”. This isn’t true.

“Saved” and “salvation” have different meanings in different parts of the Bible.

How can this be? We will use the word “cool” to explain.

Imagine a teenager living in 1998 travels to South Korea on vacation. She sends home a postcard that says: “Korea is so cool!”



- Her father thinks his daughter is saying that South Korea is a **fun and exciting** place. It’s cool!
- But the girl’s grandfather thinks “cool” means **the weather is cold**. She needs a jacket!



Who’s right? The father or grandfather? Or are they are both wrong? How would you understand the word “cool”?

Now imagine—500 years later, an archaeologist finds the postcard. He is from the future and understands “cool” to mean “not friendly”.

- So the archaeologist thinks, “Oh, the people in South Korea 500 years ago were **unfriendly** people!”



As we can see, the word “cool” can have three possible meanings! Who is right?

To answer, we need to understand the writer. She is the teenage girl in 1998, writing with teenage vocabulary.

Perhaps the picture on the postcard shows a summer scene. This will be the context or subject of the postcard.

With this extra information, we can tell she thinks South Korea is a fun and exciting place. Her father would be right!

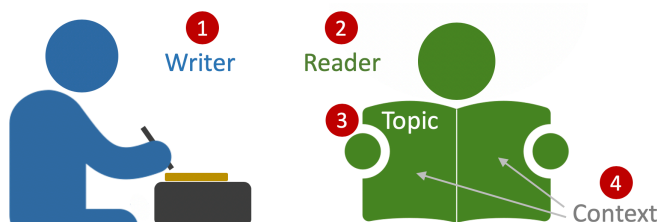


The words “saved” and “salvation” in the Bible also have more than one meaning.

But in any given passage, how would we know which meaning it is?

To understand the meaning of a word, we need to know the context

Whenever we read a book, letter or passage of the Bible, we need to ask four questions.



1. Who is the writer? (What is his cultural background?)
2. Who is the audience? (Who was the original reader?)
3. What is the topic of discussion? (Salvation? Discipline? Something else?)
4. What is the context of the passage, chapter and book? (What is the surrounding text talking about?)

Asking these questions will help us figure out what the writer meant.

Here are some examples.

Examples of how the Bible uses the words “save” and “salvation”



Old Testament

In the Old Testament, there are many times the word “save” is not talking about “saved from eternal death”.

It means saved from other things, such as:

- **Saved from enemies** (The following is a psalm David wrote after God rescued him.)

Psalm 18:2–3

- ² The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
³ I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise,
and I have been saved from my enemies.



- **Saved from trouble** (David wrote about God saving him from his troubles.)

Psalm 34:4–6

- ⁴ I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me.
He freed me from all my fears.
⁵ Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy;
no shadow of shame will darken their faces.
⁶ In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD listened;
he saved me from all my troubles.



- **Saved from pain or suffering:**
often referring to the poor and needy (for example: Psalm 40:16–17)
- **Saved from captivity:**
referring to Israel (for example: Psalm 14:7)



New Testament

In the New Testament, we also see many uses of “saved”. Some do mean “saved from eternal death”. But we would be very confused if we think that every “saved” we come across means “saved from eternal death”. Some examples:

Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
<p>Acts 16:31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be <u>saved</u>, along with everyone in your household.”</p>	<p>1 Timothy 2:15 But women will be <u>saved</u> through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty.</p>	<p>Romans 13:11–12 ¹¹ This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for <u>our salvation</u> <u>is nearer now</u> than when we first believed. ¹² The night is almost gone; the <u>day of salvation</u> will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living.</p>
<p>This was Paul’s reply when a Philippian jailer asked him how to be saved from eternal death.</p>	<p>Is Paul saying that women can only be saved from eternal death by having children?</p>	<p>Is Paul saying that we need to live in a way that’s pleasing to God before we can be saved from eternal death?</p>

It’s not difficult to see how we can misunderstand and get confused if we are unsure of the context and meaning of these important words in these and other passages!

In the Bible, there are three different but related meanings of “saved” and “salvation” that we must understand well.



Question: Why are there three different meanings?

Answer: This is because the salvation that Yahweh promises comes in three different parts.

Therefore from our previous example, this is what the passages are talking about:

Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
Acts 16:31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be <u>saved</u> , along with everyone in your household.”	1 Timothy 2:15 But women will be <u>saved</u> through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty.	Romans 13:11–12 ¹¹ This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for <u>our salvation is nearer now</u> than when we first believed. ¹² The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living.
Justification	Sanctification	Glorification

But what do each of these words mean?

When do we receive these “different types of salvation”?

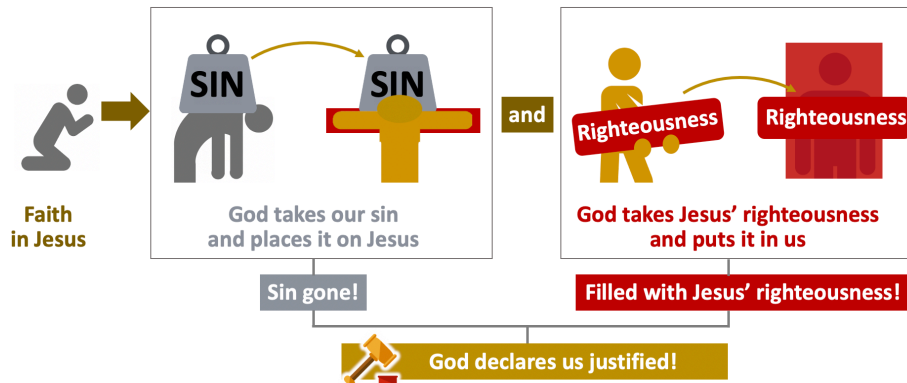
We will examine justification and sanctification in this lesson and glorification in the next.



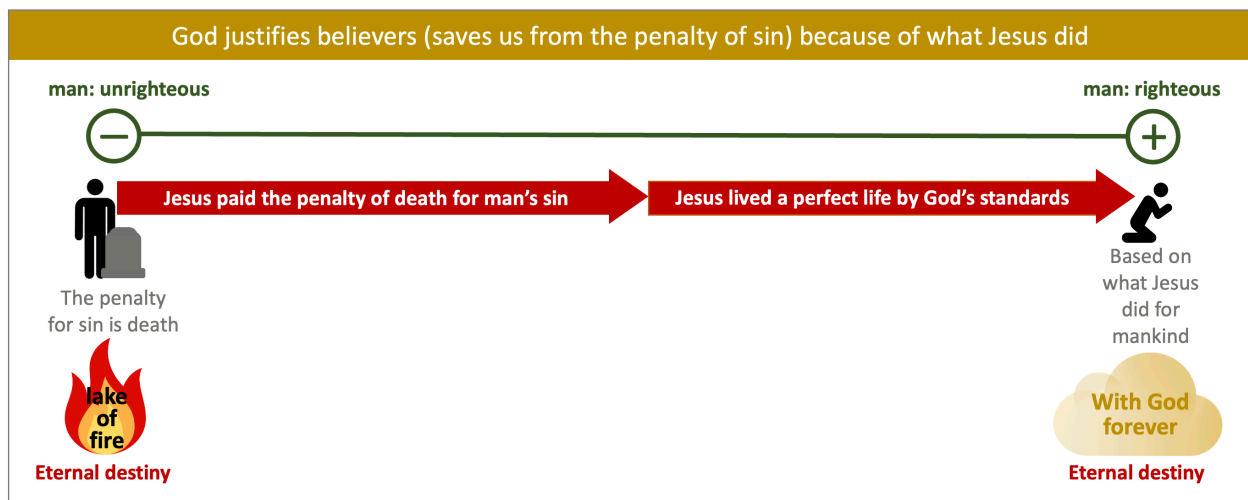
1. Saved from the **Penalty** of Sin: **Justification**

The penalty for sin is eternal death. All rebellious mankind will die the second death and spend eternity in the lake of fire. However, Yahweh provided a way of escape: through faith in Jesus.

a. What happens when a person puts his faith in Jesus?



i. When we put our faith in Jesus, Yahweh saves us from the penalty of sin by declaring us righteous. This is “justification”.



Jesus did two important things for us. First, He paid the penalty of sin by dying on the cross as our substitute.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.



Second, He gave us the righteousness we need to be reconciled to Yahweh.

Romans 5:17–18

¹⁷ For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.



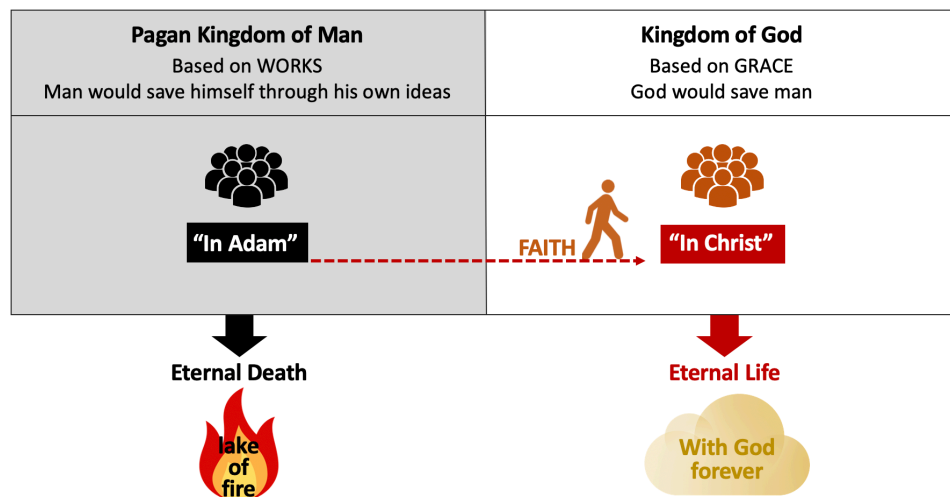
At the same time, another amazing thing happens.

ii. Yahweh transfers believers out of the “in Adam” group and places us into the “in Christ” group.

Scripture says that when we become justified, we are transferred out of the evil Kingdom of Man and into the Kingdom of God.

Colossians 1:13–14

¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.



In God's view, in this church age, there are only two types of people in the world:

- the “in Adam” group who belong in the evil Kingdom of Man and
- the “in Christ” group who belong to the soon-to-return Kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 15:22 (NIV)

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

Being “in Christ” is to be joined spiritually to Him. The New Testament uses the phrase “in Christ” about 165 times!

In a sense, we can picture being “in Christ” to joining a club where all members receive special membership benefits! What are they?

We’ll look at some examples.

Sample Benefits of being in the “In Christ” Group

1. There is no more condemnation from God.	Romans 8:1 (ESV) There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are <u>in Christ</u> Jesus.
2. God gives us the Holy Spirit.	Galatians 3:14 (ESV) so that <u>in Christ</u> Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.
3. God gives us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption.	1 Corinthians 1:30 (ESV) And because of him you are <u>in Christ</u> Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,
4. We are seated beside Jesus so He can show everyone in the age to come how gracious and kind He has been to us.	Ephesians 2:6–7 (ESV) ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places <u>in Christ</u> Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us <u>in Christ</u> Jesus.
5. God gives us His grace so we can be gracious to others.	1 Corinthians 1:4
6. God makes us into a new creation.	2 Corinthians 5:17
7. Both believing Jews and Gentiles, are made equal to each other.	Galatians 3:28

b. When do believers become saved from the penalty of sin?

The moment a person puts their faith in Jesus, they are saved from the penalty of sin and join the “in Christ” group. It is immediate!

Romans 5:2

Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory.

c. How long will we be “saved from the penalty of sin”? How long is our justification valid for?

Once we are saved from the penalty of sin, we are justified forever. This is because Yahweh declared us legally righteous in His heavenly courtroom.

And this lasts for all time.



How do we know this? This is what the writer of Hebrews explained.

Hebrews 10:11–12

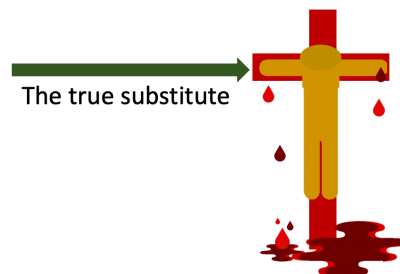
¹¹ Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. ¹² But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand.

Lamb Sacrifice:
Temporary
payment for the sin penalty



Priests offer sacrifices
again and again

Jesus’ Death:
True and permanent
payment for the sin penalty



Single sacrifice for all sins,
good for all time

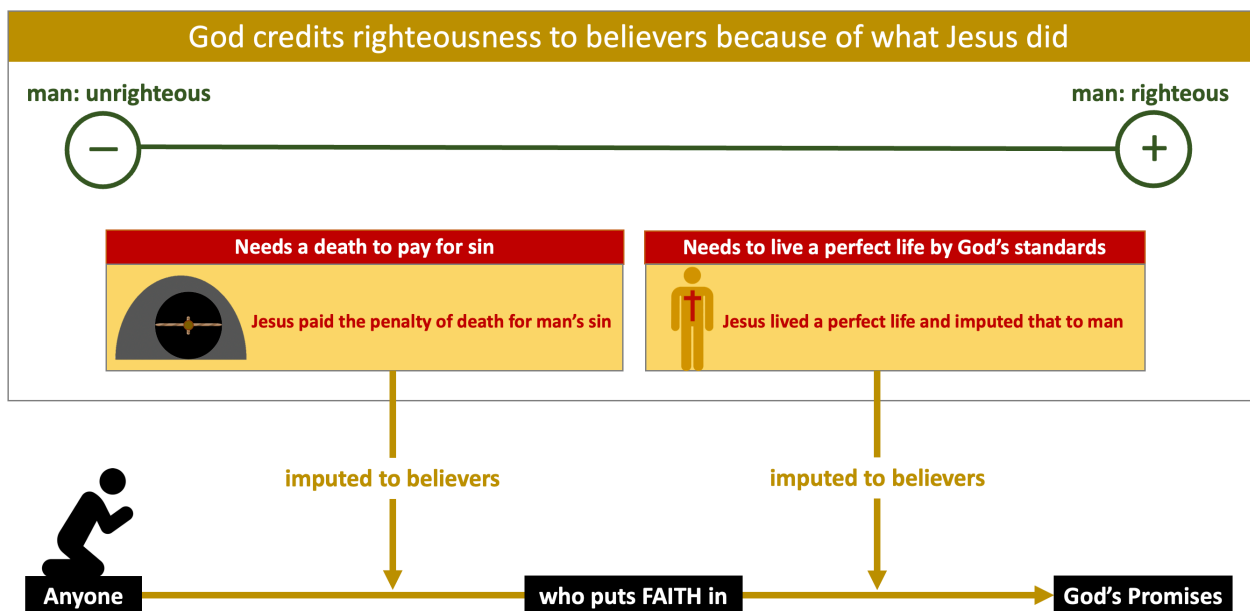
Jesus' work on the cross is a one-time event and is "good for all time", meaning it applies for all eternity and doesn't expire.

Once we are moved from "in Adam" to "in Christ", it is permanent. It brings us reconciliation and peace with God. It is secured and guaranteed by Yahweh so we can remain assured that we won't be "unjustified" by anything that we do.

Question: Why don't our future (bad) actions cause us to lose our justification?

Answer: It is because we never "earned" our justification.

- It's important to remember that we are justified based on our faith alone. We can do no work to earn or deserve being saved from the penalty of sin.



- And we can do no work to keep this justification. This is what Paul said to the Galatian church.

Galatians 2:15–16

¹⁵ "You and I are Jews by birth, not 'sinners' like the Gentiles. ¹⁶ Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law."

There are many passages that speak of this eternal security. One example is Jesus Himself assuring believers that we are not only in His grip, we are in the grip of God the Father too. Believers often call this God's "double grip" on us.

John 10:27–30

²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, ²⁹ for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand. ³⁰ The Father and I are one."



Furthermore, if we understand that Jesus says church-age believers are the "body of Christ" (Romans 12:5), it means that Jesus cannot let go of us because we are His body!



Paul also talks about this security. He says the moment we believed, God gave us the Holy Spirit as a sign that guarantees or confirms our justification. Other Bible translations use the word "sealed" (in place of "guarantee" in the verse below). It is as if we have been "reserved" by God. Satan doesn't have any right to take the believer.

Ephesians 1:13b–14

¹³ And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. ¹⁴ The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.



To make the point even stronger, Paul insists that because of what Jesus did for us, God justified us. This means no one can accuse or condemn believers of not being justified because it is God Himself who justifies believers! He gives us right standing with Him!

Romans 8:31–34

³¹ What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? ³² Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?

³³ Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself.

³⁴ Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

Paul then builds a rather long list of possible things that we might think would cause us to become unjustified. And he rejects all of them!

Romans 8:35, 37–39

³⁵ Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? ³⁷ No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.

³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul says that our own fears or worries cannot cause us to be unjustified. In fact, we ourselves, as part of creation, cannot do anything to separate ourselves from God's grip, seal and love! We cannot “un-justify” ourselves.

Do we understand what this really means?

Question: Can a person lose their justification?

Answer: Based on Romans 8, we see that a justified person cannot lose their salvation. God takes the person's original decision and locks it down.

The Old Testament shows pictures of this as well.



We need to remember how God used the call of Abraham to show how He provided and secured righteousness for him. God wants us to know that it is the same with us: He too will provide and secure justification for us when we trust Him.

Romans 4:22–24

²² And because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous. ²³ And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded ²⁴ for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

**These things
CANNOT
cause believers to lose
their justification**

- Trouble
- Calamity
- Persecution
- Hunger
- Destitution
- Danger
- Death threats
- Death
- Life
- Angels
- Demons
- **Personal fears**
- **Personal worries**
- Powers of hell
- Powers in the sky
- Powers on earth
- **Nothing in all creation**
- **Ourselves**

Event	 God and Abraham	 Trusting God for salvation
Heart Response	Abraham believed God's salvation promise.	I believe that Jesus is God and He died for my sins and gave me His righteousness.
Result	God declared Abraham righteous.	God declares me righteous forever.
Outward Action	Abraham obeyed God's call to leave his homeland.	Out of a heart of gratitude, I live to please God.
State of Salvation	Provided and secured by God.	Provided and secured by God.
Reversible?	No.	No.

The truth that God is teaching is this: He justified Abraham, counted him as righteous and saved him from the penalty of sin when he believed.

Abraham's justification was not reversible.

As Abraham lived his life, there were many times he showed no faith in God:

- He tried to provide a son for himself through Hagar, Sarah's servant (Genesis 16:2) instead of waiting for God's promised son to come from Sarah herself.
- He showed a lack of trust in God's protection by lying to Abimelech (Genesis 20:2).

However, at no point does the Bible talk about Abraham losing his justification. His justification was not based on his continued outward acts of faith. Rather, God is the One who makes his justification permanent.

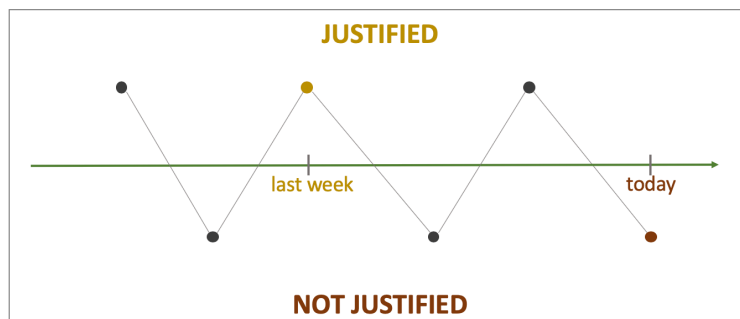
God also included some very visible lessons through the Flood and Exodus.

In both events, the people showed faith in Yahweh and so He saved them and they remained saved. It was a one-time, one-way act that He did for the people.

Event	 Global Flood: How to be saved	 Passover: How firstborns can be saved
Heart Response	Noah and his family believed God about the coming global Flood judgment.	The Israelites believed what God said about the coming judgment on all firstborns.
Result	Noah and his family were saved.	All firstborns of believing families were saved.
Outward Action	They obeyed God's instructions, built an ark and got inside.	They obeyed and followed God's instructions about the lamb sacrifice.
State of Salvation	Provided and secured by God.	Provided and secured by God.
Reversible?	No.	No.

- Noah and his family remained saved. The global Flood judgment was not reversed. Noah wasn't in the ark, then out of the ark, then back in the ark.
- The firstborns after the Passover remained saved. They never faced that judgment again. There was no picture of them killing the lamb, leaving Egypt, then "un-killing" the lamb and going back into Egypt.

Some believers think that they can lose and regain, lose and regain their justification. It's like a tennis match: in and out. One day I'm saved. Next day I'm not.



However, this isn't a picture the Bible has. In fact, believing this would make God out to be a liar.

How can He promise eternal life and then take it away? This goes against the meaning of the word "eternal". It's as if someone gave us a gift and told us that we can keep it forever, but then if he's not happy with us, he takes it back.

If God really does this, it means the life He offers is not really eternal (forever) to begin with.

No, this isn't what God does. In fact, God doesn't want us to be uncertain about our justification. This is what the apostle John wrote.





1 John 5:13

I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.

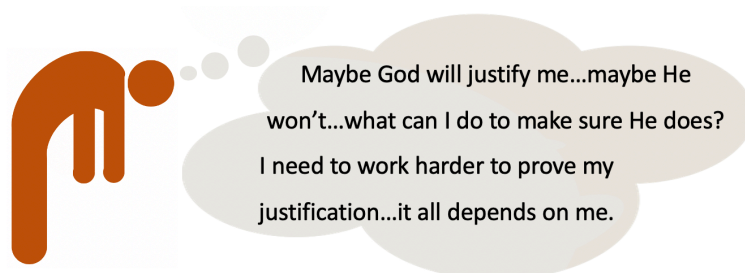
God wants us to know for certain and be totally confident that we have been justified.

Why?

- If we are unclear about where we stand with God, we can never truly love Him because we would never be secure in our relationship. Only those who are secure in their relationship will be able to grow and thrive. And God does want us to grow spiritually!

 <p>Children who are secure and confident in their parents' love can grow and thrive.</p>	 <p>Christians who are secure and confident in God's love can grow and thrive.</p>
 <p>Children who are unsure about their parents' love and acceptance can never truly love them—they are too preoccupied with their own fear, insecurity and trying to earn their love.</p>	 <p>Christians who are unsure about God's love and acceptance can never truly love Him—they are always wondering if they are justified or not and often rely on good works to earn His favour.</p>

- We would be thinking wrongly about God's character (He is fickle and legalistic) and His gift (it depends on us, not on His grace). Wrong thinking about God always leads to sin.



Justification is purely by God's grace. It is impossible for man to do anything to earn justification, but God can do what is impossible for man.

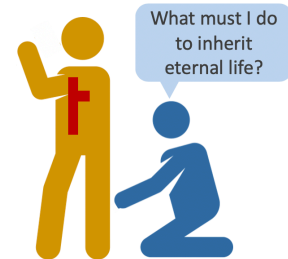
Mark 10:17, 24b–27

¹⁷ As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁴ But Jesus said again, “Dear children, it is very hard to enter the Kingdom of God. ²⁵ In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!”

²⁶ The disciples were astounded. “Then who in the world can be saved?” they asked.

²⁷ Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God.”



Jesus is saying that people can do nothing to justify themselves. Justification is God's work alone.

d. “Justification” in the Bible

In the Bible, we see different phrases that mean justification. For example, all these refer to being saved from eternal death:

- “made right with God”
- “declared righteous”
- “justified by faith”
- “gain eternal life”
- “new birth”
- “born again”
- “made alive”
- “new life”
- “sanctification” (To complicate matters, this word also has several meanings. One of them is “being saved from eternal death”.)

However, justification is only one meaning of the word “saved”. The second meaning is sanctification.





2. Saved from the **Power of Sin: Sanctification**

After we are justified once-for-all-time, we start our ongoing journey of sanctification.



a. What actually happens after we put our faith in Jesus?

The moment we put our faith in Jesus, God puts His Holy Spirit in us.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

¹⁹ Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, ²⁰ for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.



Being saved from the penalty of death (justified) was “free” for us: we paid nothing. We just believed in what Jesus did for us.

But Jesus paid a very high price—He paid with His life. To guarantee that Jesus gets to “keep” what He “bought”, God put the Holy Spirit in us. The Holy Spirit in us shows that we belong to Jesus forever.

But what do we “look” like as believers? We look like a “battleground”.



- The Holy Spirit places Christ's nature in us and stays in us. This part of us is the “new creation” or “seed” that cannot sin.

1 John 3:9 (NKJV)

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

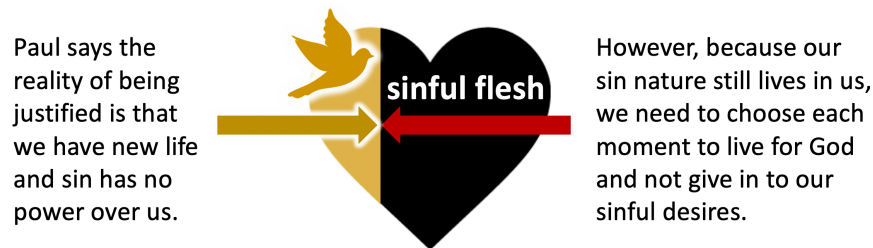
- But our sin nature or “flesh” remains, and we continue to be attracted to sin. Paul describes this well:

Romans 7:18–23

¹⁸ And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. ¹⁹ I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. ²⁰ But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²² I love God's law with all my heart. ²³ But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.

Paul is saying that his real identity and real new nature is “in Christ”. When he sins, it is his sin nature that is causing him trouble. These two competing natures are not mixed: they are fighting with each other.



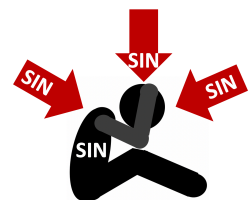
Romans 6:6–7, 11–14

⁶ We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. ¹¹ So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

¹² Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. ¹³ Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. ¹⁴ Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

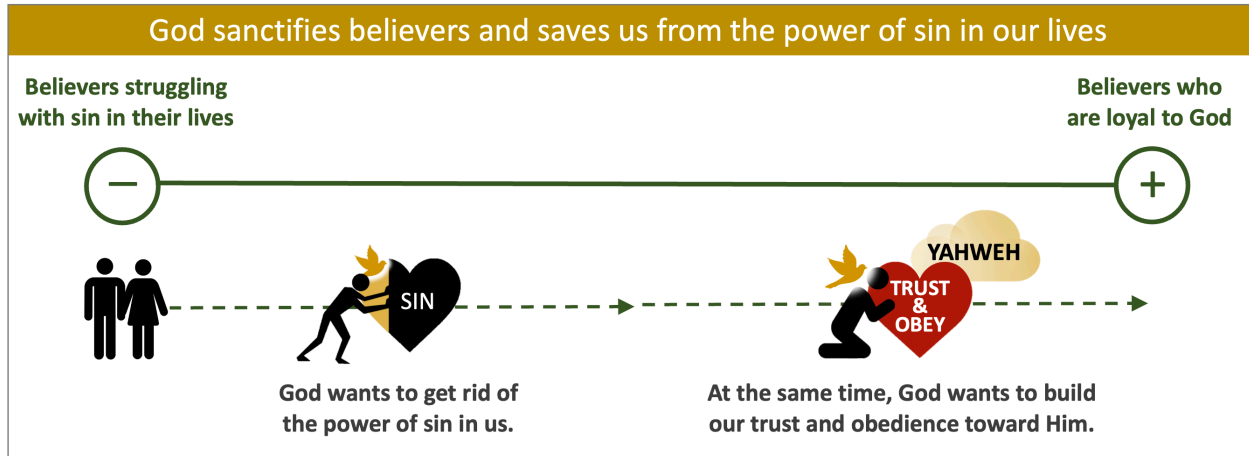
God has already saved us from the penalty of sin (justified), but He also wants to save us from the power of sin in our lives (sanctified).

Why? Because sin always destroys us and all our relationships. And He does not want us to live like that.



b. What is Sanctification?

“Sanctification” is related to the word “saint”. It has to do with becoming more holy. People also call this “spiritual growth”. This is the picture of “sanctification”.



There are two aspects to sanctification:

i. Battling our sinful flesh and pushing it out of our lives so that sin has no power over us.

God wants to get rid of sin in us, but He doesn't ask us to do this alone. God gave all believers His indwelling Holy Spirit to help us.

This is what Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do.



John 14:16–17a, 26

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. ²⁶ But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

Notice that the job of the Holy Spirit is to “teach” and “remind” believers of God’s Word. This means that the more of God’s Word we have in our lives, the more the Holy Spirit can work in us. He has more content to “remind” us of and work with, so to speak. So if we want to be more successful in battling our own sin, we must fill ourselves with the Bible! We must cooperate with the Holy Spirit!

However, the Holy Spirit does a lot more. We will cover this in a later lesson.

ii. Building our loyalty to God and our obedience to Him.

Yahweh didn't save us from the penalty of sin just for us to sit around all day. As His children, He wants us to be obedient to Him by doing good works and being a blessing to the world.

Ephesians 2:8–10

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

The more we trust in God and His plans for us, and the more we obey Him, the more we become like Jesus. This is God's will for all believers.

Romans 8:29

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.



So, by pushing out evil in us and building loyalty to God, He will save us from the power of sin in our lives. This sanctification journey also requires faith in God to do this work.

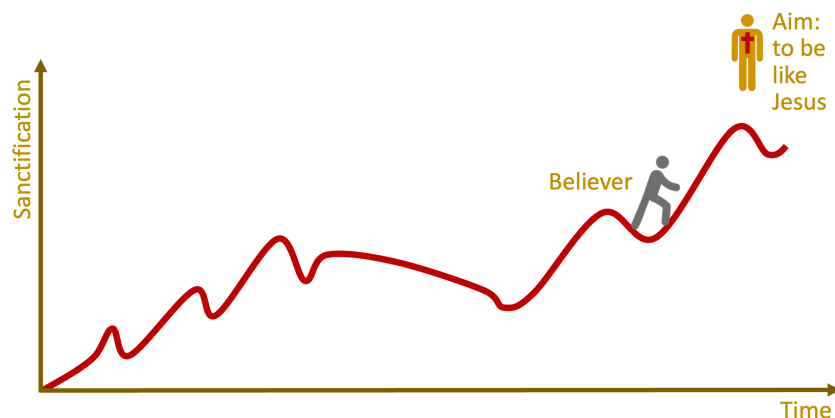
c. How long does our sanctification journey go on for?

The Holy Spirit prompted the apostle Paul to compare practising sanctification to training like an athlete (for example, 1 Corinthians 9:24–27). Practising sanctification will go on for the rest of our earthly lives because we need to keep training our will to make God-honouring choices.

Paul says that when our “veil”, or hard hearts towards God is removed (meaning we become believers), through practising sanctification, we will become more and more like Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3:18

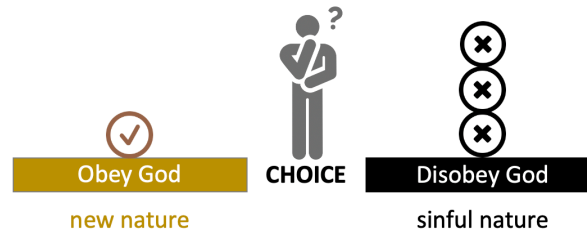
So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.



This is an ongoing, daily, spiritual process. This is how Paul describes it.

Colossians 3:8–10

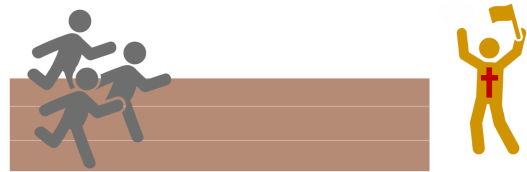
⁸ But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. ⁹ Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. ¹⁰ Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.



How do we know that we will not finish our whole process of sanctification in this life? Paul says this about himself.

Philippians 3:12–14

¹² I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. ¹³ No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.



We must therefore not have the idea that we can be perfect in this life. Or even worse, have the idea that unless we are perfect, we are not “real Christians”. This is not what the Bible teaches.

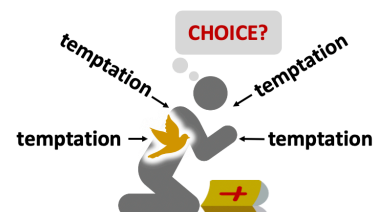
At the end of this life, God will finish the work of sanctifying us. We know this because the Bible says that nothing unclean can be in His presence (Revelation 21:27). So He will make us perfect before our spirits get to heaven!

d. Examples of “saved” from the power of sin (sanctified)

The Bible uses the words “save” or “salvation” to describe this lifelong, often painful process of sanctification or spiritual growth. For example:

Philippians 2:12–13

¹² Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. ¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.



In this letter to the church in Philippi, Paul uses “salvation” to mean sanctification. He is encouraging believers to work hard and cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Paul isn’t asking them to work for their justification.

In this next example, Paul is writing to Timothy who is a young pastor and a firm believer in Jesus. But it seems Timothy felt unsure about himself, so Paul encourages him to be diligent in his pastoral duties and watch closely how he lives as a disciple of Christ.

1 Timothy 4:14–16

¹⁴ Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.



“Salvation” here does not mean justification. It doesn’t mean Timothy has to work to be justified or to keep his justification.

Paul means being saved from the power of sin in his life. It means building loyalty and obedience to God. This hard work is all about sanctification!

Earlier, we read a rather mysterious instruction from Paul.

1 Timothy 2:15

But women will be saved through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty.

This is also not about justification.

When we understand what the book of 1 Timothy is about (the context), we see that Paul is saying that women can find meaning and fulfillment in the role of a mother who trains her children well in the ways of God.

How? As she clings faithfully to God in raising her children, God can use her role as a mother to grow her spiritually. The word “saved” here is about sanctification.



It’s easy to see how believers can get confused about what it really takes to be “saved from eternal death” if we mix up justification and sanctification.

3. More Confusion between Justification and Sanctification

Here is an often asked question.

Question: If we think that a person is showing no sanctification or spiritual growth in their life, does it mean the person is actually not saved?

Answer: Not necessarily.

There are four possible positions that people can be in.

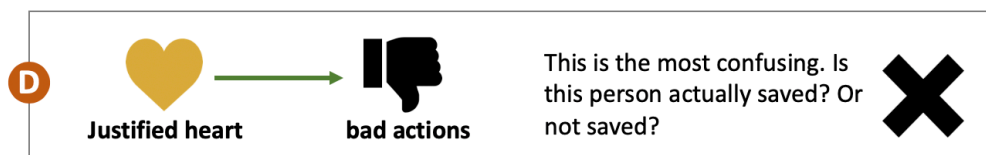


In the ideal situation, a person who is justified will also go on to become sanctified, where it is clear to everyone that this believer has more and more of the fruit of the Spirit (which is the work of the Holy Spirit) in their life (Galatians 5:22–24).

But the reality is that we live in a world where we may see other conditions.



However, the following position is the most confusing and many of us struggle with this.



For example, a person may say they are a believer, but in our eyes, there is absolutely no “fruit” in their life. So, we wonder, “Are they actually justified?” The reality is that we really won’t know.

Why? Firstly, we are not good judges (see Lesson 10 pages 23–24).

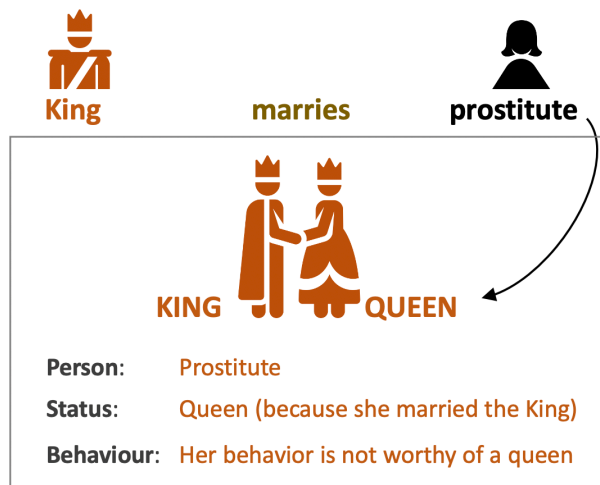
- We can’t look into people’s hearts like God can. For example, everyone thought that Judas Iscariot, Jesus’ disciple, was a believer. Only Jesus knew he was not (John 13:21–26, 6:64).
- Our judgment is often marred by our own sin and biases.
- Also, we are finite and base our judgments only on what we can see, which is only a small piece of the bigger picture, which is not visible to us.

Secondly, based on what we see, we sometimes arrive at the wrong conclusions. Here is a story to help explain.

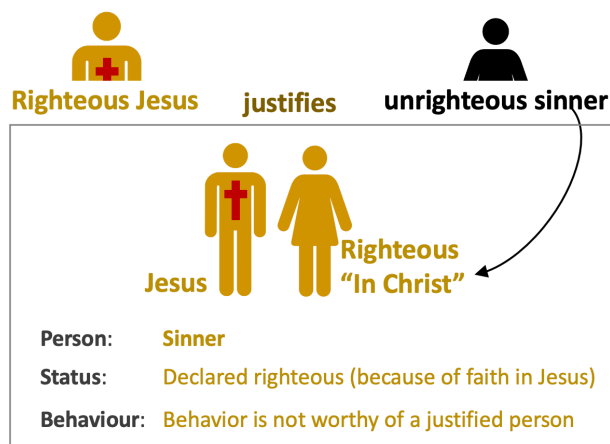
a. Illustration: The king marries a prostitute

A king marries a prostitute. She becomes the queen, not because she is worthy but because she marries the king. He changes her status.

Immediately after marriage, her behaviour is still much like a prostitute but her status is now the queen. She remains the queen because of her marriage to the king and not because of how she behaves.



In the same way, when we put our faith in Jesus to save us, Christ changes our status. He places His righteousness in us. He justifies us so we are “in Christ”. But our behaviour may not be appropriate for someone who has been declared righteous in God’s eyes at this point in time. But we are still justified because of what Christ did, not because of our behaviour.





Over time, in the safety of the king’s love, the queen learns how a queen really behaves. And her behaviour changes to suit her role as the wife of the king. Her status however, never becomes “more queen”. She has been the queen since the day she married the king. Her status never changes, but her behaviour does.

Who she is and how she behaves are not the same thing.

In the same way, justification (becoming the queen) and sanctification (behaving like the queen) are different from each other.

We grow more like Christ over time but never more righteous because we have been wearing the full righteousness of Christ since the day we believed.

<p>Over time...</p> <p>Person: Was a prostitute, but no longer</p> <p>Status: Still the Queen (her status cannot improve because she is already the queen)</p>  <p>Behaviour: Her behaviour is more like a queen as she rests in the security of the king's love and learns from him how to be queen</p>	<p>Over time...</p> <p>Person: Was "in Adam", but no longer</p> <p>Status: Still justified (doesn't become "more" justified)</p>  <p>Behaviour: Behaviour changes to be more like Jesus (becomes sanctified)</p>
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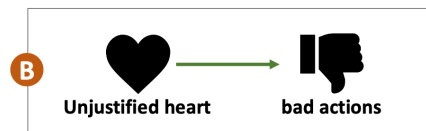
So, what about someone who says they believe but shows no sanctification.

- **Is it possible this person was justified and later lost their justification? No.**

As we have seen, justification is a one-time event that Yahweh performs on a person who puts their faith in Christ. God does not undo it, and a believer cannot "unjustify" themselves since justification is an act that God does.

- **Is it possible this person is actually not justified? Yes.**

This is because justified people who have the Holy Spirit working in them should show sanctification in their lives.

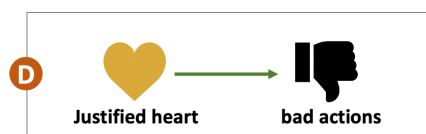


Romans 8:5–7, 9

⁵ Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. ⁶ So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. ⁷ For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. ⁹ But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)

- **But is it also possible that they are justified but are slow to show sanctification? Yes.**

They may be like the prostitute who is in the process of learning and practising how a queen behaves.



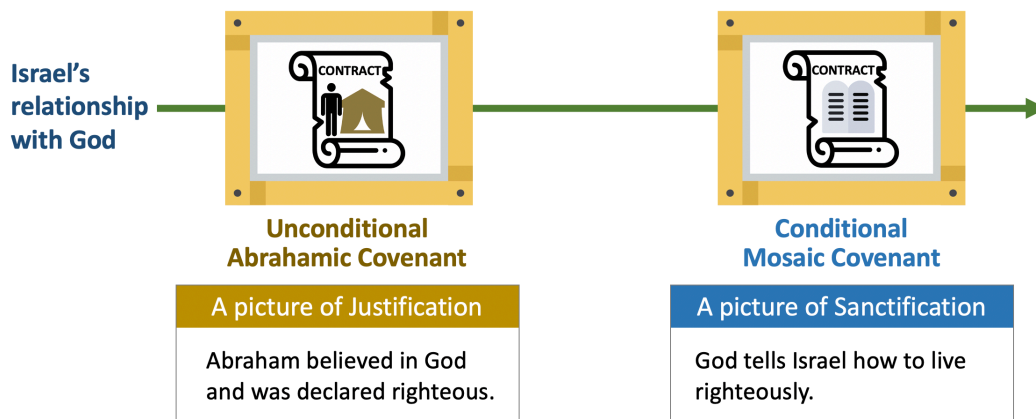
God's illustration of the journey of the nation of Israel helps us understand this better.

b. Illustration from the Bible: The nation of Israel

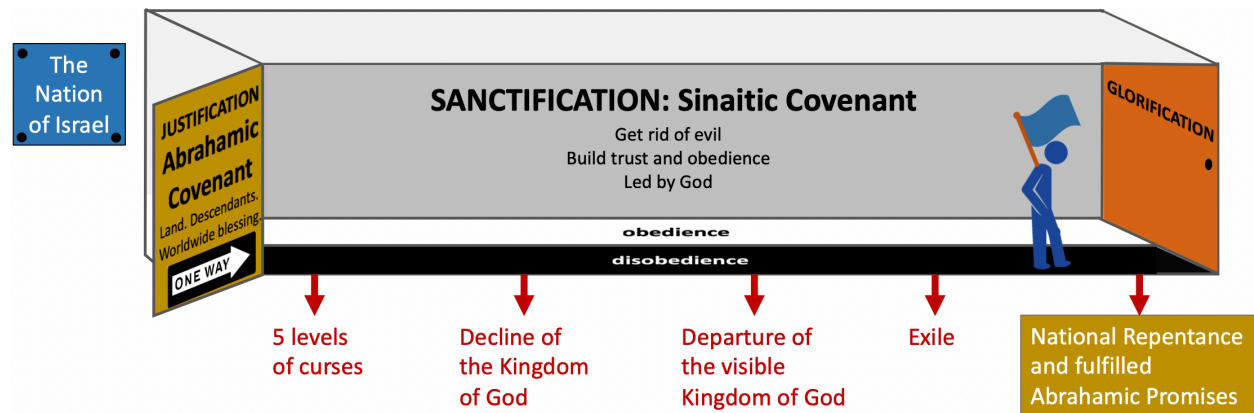
God uses Israel to teach us biblical truths about justification and sanctification. To prevent confusion, it's helpful to think of the entire nation of Israel as a company; we are discussing Israel at a "company" level. (All workers within the company still have to respond individually to company contracts, events and decisions.)

So what is the story of Israel?

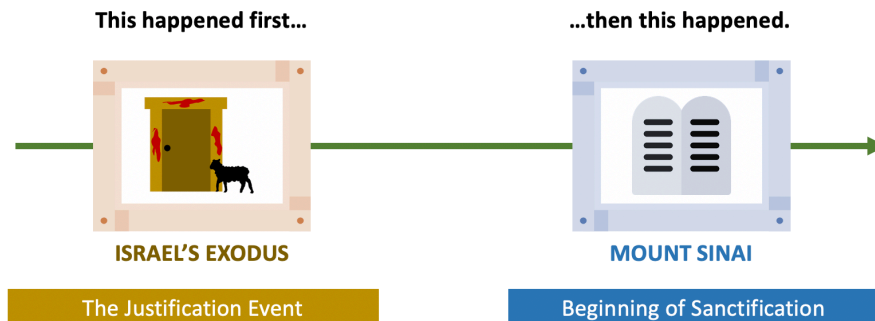
- First, Yahweh called one man, Abraham, and made him promises of land, descendants and through him would come a worldwide blessing.
 - **Abraham had earlier in his life believed (and was justified).** Then, Yahweh made a covenant with him and his descendants regarding these three promises.
 - This contract was unconditional, meaning that God would fulfil it.
 - Later, God created the nation of Israel from Abraham's descendants and they inherited the covenant.
- Because Israel was now in a relationship with Yahweh, He taught them the right way to behave, meaning that He gave them His "house rules" or "family rules".
 - **Yahweh gave Israel the Mosaic Covenant (this pictures what it means to be sanctified).**
 - This was a conditional covenant: Israel had obligations.
 - To encourage a good relationship between Israel and Himself, God promised blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience.



- Israel as a nation was disobedient from the beginning, choosing to break Yahweh's laws repeatedly. As promised, Yahweh punished Israel severely. Looking at Israel, other people would not believe they had a relationship with Yahweh!
- However, **because of God's faithfulness** to the Abrahamic Covenant, Israel remains in God's plan. Yahweh would fulfil all His unconditional promises to Israel. This is a picture of justification.



In the same way, we also see this pattern when we compare the Exodus event and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai.



Justification first: God mercifully and supernaturally saved Israel from Egypt.

Followed by how to be sanctified: Only after that, He gave them their “house rules”.

God did not save Israel because they were already showing signs of sanctification. Israel did not need to submit to Yahweh as their Lord first before He would save them.

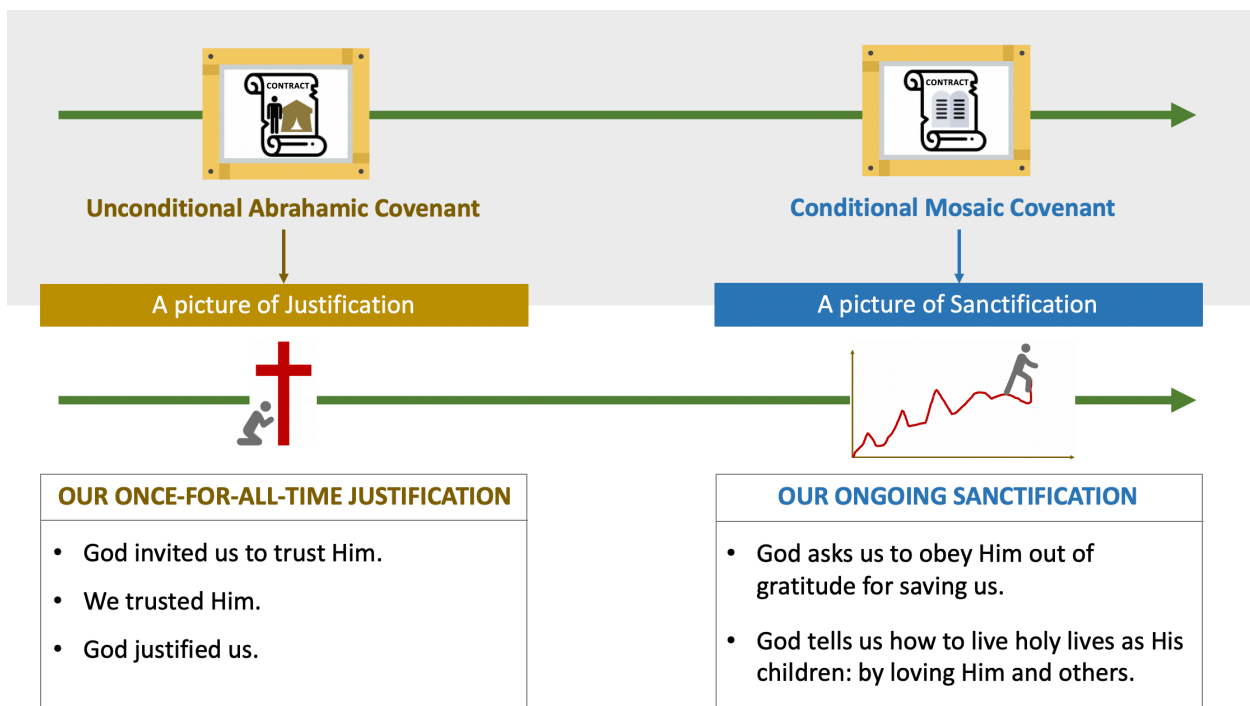
Rather, only after God saved them, then He told Israel to honour their relationship with Him as their God and Lord through paying close attention to their sanctification.

Our ongoing sanctification versus our once-for-all-time justification

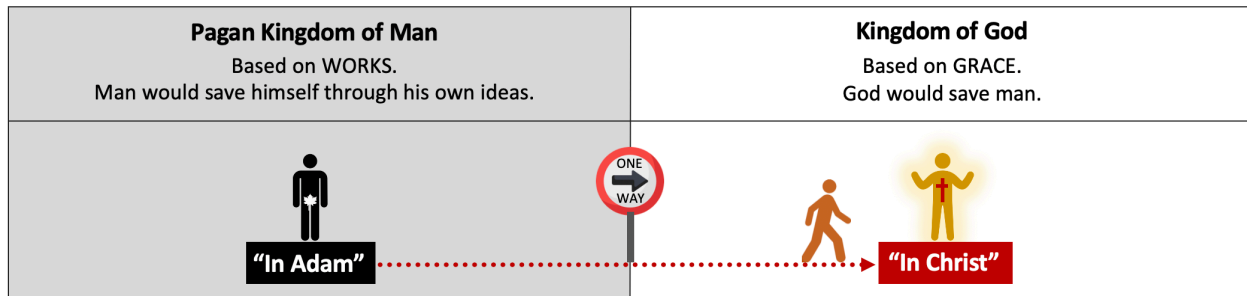
Understanding Israel's justification and journey of sanctification helps us understand our own.



- **Justification (a one-time event):** When we put our faith in God, God justifies us immediately. We enter the one-way door that guarantees reconciliation with Yahweh.
- **Sanctification (a lifelong process):** God then tells all believers there are “house rules” in being in a relationship with Him. All believers are supposed to follow the “law of Christ”: love God and love others. By faith, some believers will be obedient and do a good job of obeying the Holy Spirit and winning against their sinful flesh. Others will not. But justification is a one-way door. All believers will still remain reconciled with God.



Being justified changes our **relationship** with God from being “in Adam” (enemy of God) to being “in Christ” (child of God). It is a permanent bond. We cannot lose that relationship with God. Just as we will always be children of our parents, we will always be children of God. There is no “un-justification”.



Being sanctified affects our **fellowship** with God. While our relationship is unbreakable, our fellowship with God is breakable. For example, when we disobey our earthly parents, they remain our parents but our fellowship with them is bad.

In fact, God uses the third divine institution of family to help us understand this. His relationship with believers, whether Israel or the church, is like that of father and child in a family setting.

Hebrews 12:5–7, 10

⁵ And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said,

“My child, don’t make light of the Lord’s discipline,
and don’t give up when he corrects you.

⁶ For the Lord disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.”

⁷ As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father?

¹⁰ For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness.



Likewise, our sin, disobedience and unwillingness to live as God wants us to can spoil our fellowship with Him. But broken fellowship is temporary and can be restored.

1 John 1:9

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

When we encounter someone who claims to be justified but shows no sanctification, it is probably best to conclude that we actually do not know their actual position in Christ.

It would be best to continue taking opportunities to share the gospel and encourage them to take the Bible and Jesus seriously.

This is what we hope will happen if we faithfully do this:

- If they are an unbeliever, they will get to hear the gospel of Christ from us.
- If they are a believer, they will be encouraged and challenged to live better for God.



He says he used to be a believer, but has since renounced or given up his faith. He now says he is an unbeliever. Is he saved or not?

This is a heart-wrenching question that many Christians really struggle with, because so often it describes one or more of our loved ones.

We all wish we knew the answer to this because we care for our loved ones so much! We ask because it pains us to think of the eternal consequences.

But the reality is that we would not know. Only God knows their heart and whether they had put their faith in Him. However, here is what we do know:

A. If they had put their faith in Christ for salvation, then God has justified them even if they fail miserably in sanctification.



The Bible includes examples of such people.

More...

Example 1: The Exodus Generation

The generation of Israelites whom God saved from Egypt consistently rebelled against Him. This is what Moses said.

Deuteronomy 9:23–24

²³ And at Kadesh-barnea the LORD sent you out with this command: ‘Go up and take over the land I have given you.’ But you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God and refused to put your trust in him or obey him. ²⁴ Yes, you have been rebelling against the LORD as long as I have known you.



Because of their rebellion, God killed all of them except two men. This is what God said.

Numbers 14:29–30

²⁹ You will all drop dead in this wilderness! Because you complained against me, every one of you who is twenty years old or older and was included in the registration will die. ³⁰ You will not enter and occupy the land I swore to give you. The only exceptions will be Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.



These people showed no works to prove that they were justified. They lived poorly. They were not faithful to Yahweh till the end. They even worshipped idols!

Based on their actions, many Christians would say they are not justified.

Yet, when the writer of Hebrews listed down people whom God commends for their faith, this generation of Israelites were included!



Hebrews 11:29

It was by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground.

Yahweh is the only One who knows the hearts of people. And He inspired the writer of Hebrews to praise this very generation of Israelites for their faith! God is saying that these people were justified, even if they showed little sanctification.

This does not mean there were no consequences for their lack of sanctification. These people died in the desert. They never got to rest and enjoy the Promised Land.

In fact, there are consequences in this life and the next for a lack of sanctification. We will study this in the next lesson. However, the point here is that losing justification is not one of the consequences.

Example 2: Jude's Letter

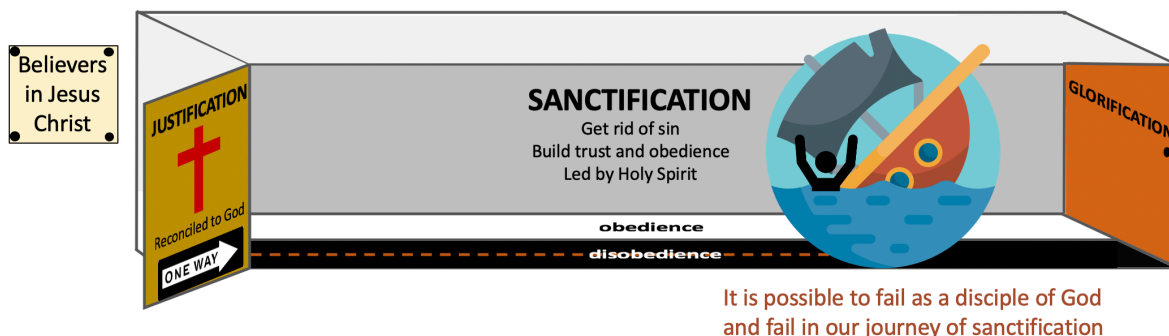
Jude wrote to believers to warn them about false teachers who will lead them to “shipwreck” their faith.

Jude 3–4, 12

³ Dear friends, I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share. But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people. ⁴ I say this because some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God's marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives. The condemnation of such people was recorded long ago, for they have denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

¹² When these people eat with you in your fellowship meals commemorating the Lord's love, they are like dangerous reefs that can shipwreck you.

If there is no way that a justified person can live as a failed disciple of God or make disastrous choices, Jude would not have written this. Yet, he is writing to warn these believers to be on their guard. He did not tell them that they would lose their justification. He told them their faith would be shipwrecked. They would become failed disciples.



Example 3: Hymenaeus and Alexander

Paul writes to warn Pastor Timothy to keep a close watch on his faith and conscience. By conscience, he means not to do what he clearly knows is wrong. Then Paul talks about two people in Timothy's church who have shipwrecked their faith. So Paul threw them out of church (or excommunicated them) to discipline them, so they would learn not to blaspheme God.

1 Timothy 1:19–20

¹⁹ Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked.

²⁰ Hymenaeus and Alexander are two examples. I threw them out and handed them over to Satan so they might learn not to blaspheme God.

Paul was pointing to these two men as believers. He said they had faith. Only justified people can be said to have faith. But they shipwrecked it. They went off course. At no point did Paul talk about them being unjustified.

These examples show that it is possible to become a failed disciple of God, just as the Exodus generation of Israelites were. So, if our loved ones did put their faith in Christ, even if they shipwrecked their faith, they remain justified.

While these thoughts may be comforting to some Christians, this makes other Christians uncomfortable. These Christians feel this is unfair. They feel that unless Christians are faithful to God to the end, they must not be saved.

It is true that Christians who remain faithful to God till the end will reveal the true state of their hearts by how they live—their faithful lives show they are believers.

However, as these examples show, we cannot say with complete confidence that everyone who shipwrecks their faith are unbelievers. It is possible they are failed disciples. (There will be serious consequences for them which we will discuss in the next lesson.)

B. It is possible that they were never Christians.

There are many possibilities why we believe our loved ones were Christians. Perhaps:

- they were raised in a Christian home or community
- they attended church
- they responded to an altar call or said the sinner's prayer
- they were only behaving like a Christian for various reasons (for example, the person they liked is a Christian who refused to go out with them unless they were one also; they liked the social aspect of "church"; being a Christian got them certain community benefits, etc.)

However if they never understood the gospel and never believed, even they could have tricked themselves into believing they were Christians. This is because they were basing it entirely on the wrong things. They had no idea what being a Christian really meant.

Faith in Christ is necessary for justification and not anything else. So it is possible that our loved ones were never believers.

So, are our loved ones failed Christians? Or are they complete unbelievers? Most of us will never know. However, we must never let this “not knowing” shipwreck our faith. We must never blame God for their choice of rejecting Him. We must not get mad with God for not telling us what we want to know, which is the state of their heart.

Remember the Creator-creature distinction: God is sovereign and people have free will.

We should pray for God to have mercy on our loved ones, that He might lead them on a journey to Him, regardless of their current state. And here is how to work with God on this.

1. **Pray** that God will cause them to be open to Him and His Word (Romans 10:1; Acts 26:18). We don't need to do this alone. Get the help of fellow believers like a small group, prayer chain, church leaders or other believing friends and family.
2. Be a **good testimony** for God by how we live and treat them but also **be prepared to be persecuted** by them for our faith (Matthew 5:16; 2 Corinthians 2:15–16). Again, get the help of believing friends and family to also be good testimonies.
3. **Study our Bible well** and **practise sharing our faith** while we **pray for opportunities** to talk to them about God (1 Peter 3:15–16).
4. Ask God to **direct other believers into their lives**. If our loved ones are resistant to us sharing about God, perhaps other believers can speak into their lives.
5. **Trust** in God. Do not let what we see in their life make a shipwreck of our faith.

Read Scripture Carefully

When we see “saved” or “salvation” in Scripture, we need to be aware that the Bible has several meanings for those words. We need to check the topic and context of the passage we are reading to figure out which meaning is being used. If we are not careful, we might end up misunderstanding God's Word and come up with ideas that the Bible doesn't teach.

In this lesson, we have learnt about justification and sanctification. We will explore glorification in the next lesson.



Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions as a group or use them for personal reflection.

1. Can you accept that justification is a one-time event, secured by Yahweh forever? What are the implications for our lives if we believe or don't believe this?
2. Why do you think God has not made sanctification instantaneous like He did with justification? Why do we as believers continue to struggle with various kinds of sin?
3. As a believer, describe how your sanctification journey has been. In what ways has the Holy Spirit changed you and in what areas of your life is the Holy Spirit currently working on? (If sharing in a group, share as much as you're comfortable. The point is to help other believers see what sanctification looks like. Your testimony may encourage others who are struggling and they can also pray for you in your areas of struggle. If doing personal reflection, take the opportunity to assess yourself and write down where the Holy Spirit has worked in your life and thank Him for that. And humble yourself in obedience in areas where the Holy Spirit is currently working on.)
4. **Exercise:** Look up verses with the phrase "in Christ" and see what God has given to us because we belong to Christ. Keep this list handy to remind yourself just what God put in us and what He did for us because we are now joined to Christ permanently.



Pre-reading for next lesson: Matthew 19:16–20:16; Luke 19:11–27; 1 Corinthians 3:1–4:5; 2 Corinthians 3:1–5:21