

## JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH PRODUCES SANCTIFICATION

Prof. Adolph Harstad  
Evangelical Lutheran Synod (USA)

### Introduction

The number of papers assigned for this CELC convention is seven, the “holy number.” Seven, starting with creation week in the Bible’s first chapter, is associated with the holy and gracious work of God. Both justification and sanctification are certainly that: God’s gracious and holy work. Six of the seven papers deal with God’s work of justification, his act of declaring sinners innocent and holy because sinless Jesus served as their substitute and paid the penalty for all sins himself as the Holy Lamb. One of the seven papers deals now with sanctification, likewise a gracious work of our holy God in which he accomplishes renewal and holy living within those who know their justification.

The author of both justification and sanctification is the same holy and gracious God, as the seven papers are showing. But as this presentation continues, we will be reminded of some of the distinctions between these two doctrines whose holy Author is the same. A glance at the titles of the six papers on justification already suggests some of those differences. Notice especially the titles of papers #2, #3, and #7. We can not substitute the word “sanctification” for “justification” in those three titles and claim the name “Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference.”

### 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 *vdq 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.”

### 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 “justification through faith.” The presenters of the other six papers were therefore also writing on a part of sanctification. 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; 1 Pe 1:2.) Luther at times uses the term sanctification in this 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 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. The narrower sense of the term is seen in Scripture in 1 Th 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; 2 Co 7:1; 1 Th 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 "antecedent and consequent" 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's 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 assigned title of the paper has directed, 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; and 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 mountain tops 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. Our previous five papers have certainly established on the basis of Scripture this wonderful truth. 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. 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; and then he will find himself in some sort of acceptable condition.

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 manmade theology is explainable simply through the question of order. What comes first, justification or sanctification? 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 who 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.

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” (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 (1 Co 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 a 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. Where there is justification through faith, there is also sanctification. They are not mingled, but they are inseparably linked. 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. Previous papers have cited the Scriptures that reveal faith to be the gift of God, particularly of the Spirit (Mt 10:16,17; 1 Co 12:3; Ro 5:5), worked in us through the means of grace (2 Th 2:13,14; Ro 10:17; 2 Ti 3:15). And he 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. Oh, 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 may be such a thing as "dead orthodoxy," that is, people knowing intellectually 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 cannot be such a thing as "dead justifying faith." That is impossible, a contradiction. "Every good tree bears good fruit" (Mt 7:17). A "good tree" is a person who 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).

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 either stands or falls.

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 on a clear day in Puerto Rico: "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 3:25, and He 11:31.

The New Testament examples that we could cite of justifying faith obviously producing sanctification are legion (Zacchaeus, Mary anointing 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 are 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). These 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 Is a Continuing Process

Paper #2 emphasized that "justification is complete." At this point a glaring difference is apparent between justification and sanctification. God does not justify or forgive sins liter by liter and barrel by barrel. 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, is a continuing activity, is an ongoing process of the Spirit in us, 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" (1 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 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 teach: "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).

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. But the question is certainly 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!" (Ro 7:25; cf. also 1 Co 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*, vol. I, p. 237).

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

- It prevents arrogance and pride in ourselves, preserving Christian humility in us, as Luther's words above remind us.
- It comforts us, preserving us from despair. Some of the devil's strongest arguments start 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 the basis 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).

I have served in three churches represented here. Membership in none of those three CELC bodies has caused me to be perfectly sanctified. (I can almost hear a chorus from several nations, tribes, and languages 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. 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 are not exempt from the sins of the flesh. Sins, yes, shocking sins of weakness from Christians, will continue to come to light. During the days when the writing of this paper was in production, several disappointing examples of weakness in sanctification came to light in the case of fellow confessional Lutherans. 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” (1 Jn 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 (Hebrews 10:26-27; 1 Timothy 1:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9ff). Willful sin can strangle our faith and cause us 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” (2 Co 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).

#### 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:

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. "For 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 by 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 "third use of the law"-directed sanctification can be seen in Romans 12: "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. . . . 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 . . . Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths. . . . Be kind and compassionate to one another. . . ." Or 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 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 neglect of needed law preaching.

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, it is true that we would not need the law at all. We would know instinctively God’s will and follow it perfectly. But we are not 100% new. Our new self “is being renewed” (Col 3:10).

Luther wrote powerful words about the necessity of preaching the law 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. 122ff.).

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 had better 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 third use of the law, 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, v. 3)

#### The Value of Works of Sanctification

Works of sanctification do not contribute to salvation, which is “the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph 2:8,9). Furthermore, none of our works are completely holy, but are tainted by the sin of our old self that is mingled with them. What then is their value in addition to their obvious worth to someone helped through Christian kindness?

1. Works of sanctification have value because God wants them, paid a great price to produce them, and accepts them for Christ’s sake.

Paul says: “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified” (1 Th 4:3). The justified child of God will certainly not think little of what his gracious Father desires.

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” (2 Co 5:15). “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). 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” (1 Pe 2:24).

Furthermore, “although they are still imperfect and impure, (works of sanctification) are acceptable to God through Christ” (FC. SD. VI, 23. Triglot, p. 969). Peter says that Christians are “offering sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ” (1 Pe 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.

2. 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, v. 2)

3. 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 us, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40).

4. 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?” (1 Pe 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.

5. 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 thy neighbor and make known  
The faith that lives within thee.

(Hymnary, 205, v. 10)

Acts of love that reflect justification are thus something of great value. They point to that great "doctrine by which the church either stands or falls," which is the topic of the seventh and final paper of our conference.