

Watch Out!

Mark 7:24-8:21

Your heart not only produces its own corruption, it gets help from the outside. So watch out for the leaven of legalism.

“Justification is a judicial act of God pardoning sinners, accepting them as just, and so putting permanently right their previously estranged relationship with himself.”¹

“Sanctification is the work of God's free grace by which our whole person is made new in the image of God, and we are made more and more able to become dead to sin and alive to righteousness.”²

¹ J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, p. 165.

² Westminster Catechism, Q. 35.

“There are few of us who know and understand this article [of justification], and I treat it again because I greatly fear that after we have laid our head to rest, it will soon be forgotten and will again disappear...And indeed we cannot grasp or exhaust Christ, the eternal Righteousness, with one sermon or thought; for to learn to appreciate Him is an everlasting lesson which we shall not be able to finish either in this or in yonder life.”³

“The article of justification, which is our only protection, not only against all the powers and plottings of men but also against the gates of hell, is this: by faith alone (*sola fide*) in Christ, without works, we are declared just (*pronuntiari iustos*) and saved.”⁴

Discussion/application questions

1. What is justification? How does it differ from sanctification?
2. How does legalism tend to creep in to your life through a misunderstanding of justification and sanctification?
3. Right now, are you more aware of your sin than you are of the cross?
4. Do you often lack joy? Why? What does this say to God about your view of justification?
5. Do you live with a vague sense of God's disapproval? Why? Are you often more aware of what you haven't done for God than what Christ finished for you?

Next week: They Saw the Light, Mark 8:22-9:13

³ Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says*, II:715.

⁴ Plass, II:701.