Sermon Series: What Does It Mean to Be Saved?
Sermon Title: Becoming Like Jesus

Text: **Romans 6:11-18 -- So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. 15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.**

Introduction: Once as the great preacher **Dr. Harry Ironside** was speaking before an assembly, he noticed a man in the crowd writing on a card, which he then handed to an usher to give to the speaker. The man was **Arthur Lewis**, an agnostic lecturer. On the card, he has issued a challenge to **Dr. Ironside** to publicly debate on the subject "***Agnosticism vs. Christianity***." He was so eager for the challenge to be accepted that he offered to pay all the expenses associated with it. Dr Ironside read the card aloud to the audience and then said, "***I accept your challenge on these two conditions: First, that you promise to bring with you on the platform one man who was an outcast, a slave to sinful habits, but who heard you (or some other unbeliever) lecture on agnosticism and was helped by it and cast away his sins and became a new man and is today a respected member of society all because of your unbelief! Second, that you agree to bring with you one woman who was lost to all purity and goodness, but who can now testify that agnosticism came to her rescue while deep in sin and implanted in her poor heart a hatred of impurity and a love of holiness, causing her to become chaste and upright. All because of her disbelief in the Bible. Now sir," he continued, "if you will agree, I promise to be there with one hundred such men and women, once just such lost souls, who heard the gospel of the grace of God, believed it and found new life and joy in Jesus Christ our Savior. Will you accept my terms***?" The crowd waited for **Arthur Lewis** to respond, but he gave no reply. He simply walked away in silence. **Apparently, it's hard to argue with the reality of the gospel when there are so many changed lives to which we can point as evidence of its transforming power**. Many of us sitting here this morning are living proof that God has not only saved us from the penalty of sin, but from its power as well. We are different because of God's work in us and we know it!

We are now in the ninth week of a preaching series I've entitled "***What Does It Mean to Be Saved?***" During our eight previous messages, we've talked about the steps that we go through in becoming a Christian. These include election, the gospel call, regeneration, conversion, justification and adoption. In addition, we've studied God's common grace and the atonement. Today, I invite you to join me as we learn what the Bible has to say about SANCTIFICATION. The word **'sanctify'** means **to be set apart from sin to God.** It's mentioned in **Romans 6:19 -- For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification**. **Here's a definition of sanctification: It is a progressive work of God and man that makes believers more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives**. It involves a process that continues throughout the life of a believer and demands effort on our part if we're going to be conformed to the likeness of Christ which, of course, is the end goal of sanctification -- **Romans 8:29 -- For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Now, let's begin our study by looking at the timing of our sanctification**.

When are we sanctified?

- **The process of conforming to Christ starts when we're born again** (**1 Corinthians 6:11 -- And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God**). **In this verse, Paul uses three words to describe salvation**. We are WASHED (**cleansed of our sin**), SANCTIFIED (**set apart by God for holy living**), and JUSTIFIED (**proclaimed to be righteous**). Each has been accomplished by God and is meant to be contrasted with the former lifestyles of those same people. Listen to how Paul describes them before their conversation – **1 Corinthians 6:9-10--Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God**. This transformation began for each one the moment they were saved. **That's why Paul can refer to all Christians as 'those who were sanctified'**. From the moment of one's new birth in Christ, we begin a journey that brings us increasingly into a lifestyle characteristic of holy ones or saints. **PAUL REFERS TO IT AS REGARDING OURSELVES AS DEAD TO SIN AND ALIVE TO CHRIST**! UNDERSTANDING WHAT OUR LORD HAS ACCOMPLISHED FOR US ON THE CROSS OF CALVARY, WE NOW ASPIRE TO PRESENT OURSELVES TO GOD AS INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.
- **The process of conforming to Christ increases throughout our lives** (**Ephesians 4:22-24 -- … put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness**). **Sanctification has a definite beginning, but it is also viewed in the Bible as a process that continues in the lives of believers for as long as we walk the earth**. In fact, this is the common way the word is used most often today. **As we learn to *'lay aside (or strip off) the old self'* which is corrupted by deceitful desires** (i.e., those TEMPTATIONS that hold out the promise of good things, but never produce them—**Hebrews 3:12-13 –Take care brothers lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin**), **we are increasingly capable of 'putting on the new self'' created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness**. The Apostle Peter makes it plain when he says, "**Be holy yourselves in all your conduct—1 Peter 1:15**)."

  A. W. Tozer says, "***God is holy and holiness (is) the moral condition necessary to the health of his universe. ...Whatever is holy is healthy.***" **That's what the process of holiness is all about…making us holy!** I heard once of an Italian peasant woman who happened to bump into a monk who lived in a monastery high on a hill above her village. Since she bumped into him in the middle of the road, she said, "***Father, I've always wanted to ask somebody what you men of God do up there on the top of the mountain that looks to me to be so close to heaven. I've always wondered about the life of holiness that you lead up there***." And this old man, a wise and honest interpreter, said, "***What do we men of God do up there on the holy mountain? I'll tell you, my dear. We fall down; we get up. We fall down; we get up. We fall down; we get up***." That's a pretty good description of health and holiness. We fall down, but we get back up and continue in our walk with Christ once again. I CALL IT FAILING UPWARD.
- **The process of conforming to Christ is completed when we die or Christ returns** (**Philippians 3:12 -- Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own**). Because sin will always remain in our hearts, we will not achieve moral perfection until we are in the presence of Christ. **Though some teach that believers can reach a state of spiritual and moral perfection in this life, this passage refutes that view**. This doesn't mean that we should accept our sinful behaviors as simply part of what it means to be human, not when our Lord tells us in **Matthew 5:48 -- Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect**. WE JUST NEED TO REMEMBER THAT MORAL PERFECTION WILL NEVER BE POSSIBLE THIS SIDE OF HEAVEN. It is at the coming of Christ that we will receive resurrection bodies (**See 1 Corinthians 15:23**), and only then will we FULLY BEAR the image of the Man of heaven (**1 Corinthians 15:49** – (in speaking of the time when we receive our resurrected bodies) **Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of**

the man of heaven). (**Review: When are we sanctified? It starts when we're born again, increases throughout our lives and is completed when we're with the Lord**.)

How are we sanctified? We grow in holiness as we cooperate with God in being conformed to the image of Christ.

- **We grow in holiness as God's Spirit works within us** (**Romans 15:16 – (Paul said he was) a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit**). **Listen to how all three persons of the Trinity are involved in our sanctification**. **God the Father sanctifies us through His son Jesus Christ** (**1 Corinthians 1:30 – He (God) is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption**.) **Then, lest we be confused about what it looks like to live a holy life, Jesus even models it for us** (**1 John 2:6 -- whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked**). **Now, it is the Holy Spirit that empowers us to be holy** (**Romans 8:13- For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live**). And so, we are called to walk by the Spirit so that we do not carry out the desires of the sinful nature—**Galatians 5:16**. THIS REQUIRES THAT WE ROUTINELY CONFESS AND REPENT OF OUR SIN AND SURRENDER THE CONTROL OF OUR LIVES TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- **We grow in holiness as God's Word remains in us** (**John 17:17 -- Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth**). **In the Gospel of John, we're told that the Holy Spirit plays an important role in our lives when it comes to our sanctification** (**John 16:13 -- When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth**). So, far we've determined that ***it is the HOLY SPIRIT who uses GOD'S HOLY WORD to instruct us in HOLY LIVING***!! The Psalmist says: **How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy Word. Thy Word I have hidden in my heart that I may not sin against Thee** (**Psalm 119:9, 11**). I have a question for you, this morning? **What are you doing to get and keep the Word in your life?**
- **We grow in holiness as God's people rub shoulders with us** (**1 John 1:7 -- But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin**). If we want to walk in the light, we must fellowship with others who aspire to the same thing. NOW, LET ME PUT IT ALL TOGETHER FOR YOU: **THE ONLY WAY TO OVERCOME SIN AND TO GROW IN HOLINESS IS TO WALK BY THE SPIRIT IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD AND IN FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS**.

  This reminds me of **two mountain boys** who spotted a bobcat up a tree and decided to have some fun with it. One said, "***I'll shinny up the tree and chase him down. You put him in the sack.***" The other agreed, and the first fellow climbed up the tree. When he reached the right limb, he started shaking and the cat came tumbling down. The other fellow grabbed the animal by the back of the neck and tried to put him in the sack. This caused a terrible commotion. Dust, fir, and skin were flying in all directions! The fellow in the tree called down, "***What's the matter, you need help catching one little ol' bobcat***?" "***No***," replied his friend. "***I don't need help catchin' him. I need help turning him loose***." LISTEN: BECAUSE OF OUR FALLEN, SINFUL NATURE, WE DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM FIGURING OUT HOW TO LAY HOLD OF SIN. WE'RE PRETTY GOOD AT THAT. OUR CHALLENGE IS TURNING IT LOOSE. ***The Bible teaches that the only way we can succeed is by the SPIRIT OF GOD, THE WORD OF GOD AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD***. (**Review: When are we sanctified? It starts when we're born again, increases throughout our lives and is completed when we're with the Lord**. **How are we sanctified? By God's Spirit, God's Word and God's People**)

What are the results of being sanctified?

- **We believe as Christ believed** (**2 Corinthians 10:5 -- We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ**)**.** The imagery here is of a battle. Rather than depend upon worldly weapons such as arguments and lofty ideas to gain the victory in this life (*which elsewhere, Paul warns will never lead us to God*—**See 1 Corinthians 1:21a**)), we tear down

these strongholds and take them captive (**a military term referring to taking a prisoner of war***)* to Christ. That's when we receive new marching orders from Him that transform our approach to life. **Remember this: Just because someone in authority says it's true, doesn't mean it is. We must take every thought captive to Christ and align ourselves with the truth as He reveals it.**

- **We obey as Christ obeyed** (**Romans 6:17-18 -- But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness**)**.** Just as Jesus always obeyed His Father, so we too are called to 'obey from the heart' the teaching to which we were delivered, i.e., God's Word.

Conclusion: **By way of review**, sanctification occurs when we're born again; it increases throughout life, and it is completed when we die or Christ returns. We grow in holiness as God's Spirit works within us; as God's Word remains in us; and as God's people rub shoulders with us. And finally, sanctification changes us so that we believe as Christ believed and obey as Christ obeyed.

Albert Schweitzer once said, "***A man does not have to be an angel to be a saint***." While we all know this to be true (**God makes us saints based on Christ's atonement for our sin**), it is not uncommon in our society to refer to people who are attempting to do what is right as '***angels***.' With this thought in mind, consider then a story that has been circulated about **Michelangelo**, the great sculptor and painter. It seems that he was pushing a heavy rock up a small incline to his work area so that he could do some sculpting. A neighbor watched him for over an hour as he worked to get this rock in place. Finally, the man asked, '***Michelangelo, why do you labor so hard over that ugly, heavy piece of rock***?" Michelangelo said, "***Because there is an angel inside that wants to come out***.'" **That seems to be an accurate description of every true believer**. **Having experienced a new birth and conversion, we are now followers of Christ**. **God has set in motion a process whereby we are transformed from hard-hearted, unappealing people into those who bear the image of Christ as they love God and others**. Where are you in this process? What, if anything, is hindering you from taking the next step? Would you be willing to bring that issue before God today so that you can get back on track?