

We are on the third message on this little teaching from Jesus Christ in Matthew 7:6. I'll ask a question to help us begin, and that is this, what is the importance of identity? Let's pretend that you have an illness and go to the doctor, and on their wall hangs a piece of paper that says, "Graduate of Youtube medical seminars." There is no medical degree on the wall. There is no military medic certificate to be posted. This "doctor" is a bonafide imposter! Identity is important to all aspects of life, not the least of which is my personhood. Who am I and what does that mean in society? Identity is a massive aspect of life in any culture. Team associations, credentialing for employment, social circles, and the list goes on. Theologically, God is very concerned not just that we understand our identity, but understand it in relationship to Him and the consequential life pattern that should manifest from that identity. So this message is concerned with considering the foundation that informs my identity as a Christian. As it has been a couple of weeks since we've considered this passage, I begin with a brief review of our text.

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**.I. Review.** **Matthew 7:1-6** is a very familiar passage. It is a familiar passage because we are quick to produce the teaching of Jesus when someone is annoying us with what we perceive as judging us. Stop judging me! Have you ever heard that? Certainly we have, but what is Jesus saying to us? Is He saying that we are to absorb everything that people say and do, or are we to apply this directly to ourselves and assume, as some, that I don't even need to be judicious about my own actions? In other words, we can take this teaching from Jesus and simply say, see, God lets me be who I want to be. He is not judging. The problem with that view is that it ignores the sermon from which Jesus is teaching this. **Matthew 5:17**, He has not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. So essentially, Jesus Christ upholds all the teaching of the O.T., including the teaching that **calls out** actions that are contrary to the revealed person of God. As we saw in our last message, it does not preclude identifying the sin of our culture, but it is urgently committed to dealing with sin within our own lives, and then in a gracious way, within the Christian community. Jesus Christ is calling us to be **judicious** about our lives before God, and in helping those around us live honorably as God gives us capacity, but we are **not to be judgmental**.

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**So how do identity and judiciousness in dealing with sin relate? .II. The Theology of Identity.** We need to begin with what God says **about us** to understand the details of what He **has done to us**. Here is a survey of what the Bible reveals is part of the Christian identity. We are children of God. We are born of God. (**John 1**) We are privileged to serve God. (*Serving God may not seem like a great part of our identity, but we get it if we press the idea to another field. For example, being a staffer for a great leader is a privilege that will have consequence for us, or doing an internship for a prestigious organization is a great opportunity and opens up many doors. This is the sense that is involved in being a servant of God.*) (**Romans 1**) We are called by God and loved by God. We are the blessed of God. We are the chosen of God. We are the predestined and adopted ones of God. We are the redeemed. (**Ephesians 1**) We belong to God. (**Hebrews 2:11**) Since these are true descriptors of the Christian life, one of the most common identifications given to God's people is that **we are saints**. The present tense is very important. We are not waiting to be made saints, we are saints. **Chronicles, Psalms, Proverbs, Daniel, Matthew, Acts, Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Hebrews, Jude, Revelation**, all these books make a direct connection between those who are trusting in God through Christ, and the identity of being a saint before God. Oh how we need to linger on that for our own soul's sake. Christian, do you feel broken from the verbal assaults from those that are supposed to love you? Do you feel like nothing because you know you are not pretty enough, smart enough, athletic enough, able enough to succeed as society wants us to succeed? If you are in Christ God calls you His saint. We cannot bear a better, more glorious, or higher identity than this.

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God in Christ has made us more than we could ever dream we could be, but how? How did God make us more than we ever dream we could be, and how can I square this with the reality that sometimes I don't feel very saintly. More often than not I reveal the not so saintly part of my life. How does this sainthood work?

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**.III. Understanding Terms.** To answer that question, we need to understand two very important terms in scripture. These may very well be the most important terms of the Christian life, and they are **justification and sanctification**. What is justification? **First**, it is a **theological term** that is present **in both Old and New Testaments**. In the Old Testament it is distinguished as we understand it in the N.T. very early on, and very clearly, through the story of Abraham. **Genesis 15** tells us that reached out to Abraham to create a covenant and to promise blessing upon Abraham and his descendants. Abraham believed God and His promises, and God counted that belief as righteousness **TO** Abraham. Righteousness was an **imparting** of standing because of belief, **not a reflection of innate right-ness** in Abraham. The Hebrew word for righteous and righteousness is **tsedaqah**. Regarding identity with God it is **always seen in relationship to what God does to us based upon belief**. So **obedience to the**

**Law** in the O.T. was *not efficacious* if it was *not first undergirded by belief in God*. I obeyed the Law of God to reflect, not earn standing before God. More can be said about this for sure, but for sake of time I submit what I have just presented. God did something to Abraham that *effected* and *affected* Abraham's relationship with God. In the New Testament Paul looks back to this idea and term in **Genesis 15** to explain to us the salvation that we have received from God as Christians. We are made righteous. (*dikaiois*) These terms have to do with *our standing before God*, and *describe a legal transaction that takes place when we repent of our sins*. The **synopsis** of justification is this, that *God accounts the right standing of Christ to our account*. **1 Peter 3:18**, "Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit." **Romans 5:19**, "For as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."

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**But God is not satisfied in just setting us in a right standing. God wants to make us worthy of the salvation that He has given us.** So we have the terms sanctification, or holiness. **Sanctification** is the term under which we find the scope of our concern. So first, what is sanctification? Again, let's start with the word as it is presented to us in scripture. **In the O.T.** the word **sanctification and holy are the same Hebrew word**. It is the word "**qadash**." The term for sanctification in the Greek N.T. is "**hagiasmos**," or "**hagiadzo**," depending on its usage as a noun or verb. It is a derivative from the same word from word we translate as holy. So, "hagiasmos," or "hagiadzo" is the common form of sanctify, and "hagios" is the common form for holy. It helps me to see what is taking place if I **stretch the English**. When **something is sanctified** I can literally say that it is "**holified**," which is really what the Greek renders. When I make that connection between sanctification and holiness, a massive amount of scripture should flood our mind. Entire books are focused upon the God's demand for holiness. It is seen as internal transformation and external distinction. In **1 Corinthians 6:11** Paul described this work that God does to us in justification and sanctification after he lists a whole series of sins that distinguished the Corinthian church before salvation. He says in **1 Cor. 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."

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Here is the greatest difference between justification and sanctification. In the N.T. sanctification is both **something God does to me, and something that I participate in**, whereas *justification is something only God can do to me*. Justification has to do with my spiritual birth, I am regenerated to understand the truth, producing repentance from sin, and then a transfer from spiritual darkness to light, John 3 and Ephesians 2. Justification has to do with my birth as a Christian. Sanctification has to do with God's power in me to accomplish the transformation of grace, **AND** my responsibility to mature in Christ. **Colossians 1:27-28**, *Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone, teaching everyone, with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*

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**.III. Questions.** So let me try to answer two questions now, in light of our study in Matthew, and this teaching in the O.T. and N.T. The two questions are this, **why do we commit to sanctification, and how do we submit to sanctification?** These two questions are really catalysts for your own study. There is too much to cover in the time that we have. But let's consider the first question now, why do we commit to sanctification? Well, the most blaring answer is that we are in relationship with God, and that because of Christ's great sacrifice. But perhaps this illustration will illumine the motivational structures in our hearts with a little more clarity. I perform weddings as part of my responsibilities here as a pastor. In every wedding there are vows and oaths. Imagine if in my officiating I presented this as something to repeat, "do you \_\_\_so and so\_\_\_, take \_\_\_so and so\_\_\_ to be your wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold, and forsaking all others, unless an old girlfriend, or boyfriend drops in for a ride down memory lane, please say I do." I'm not sure it would be a good wedding experience for me, and if the groom said I do, well pull out the cameras, there's going to be a show. We all recognize that there are some relationships that engage our person on such a deep level that the relationship rightly demands singularity in focus and commitment. How much more so with God? <sup>ESV</sup> **Titus 3:4-7** <sup>4</sup> *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,* <sup>5</sup> *he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,* <sup>6</sup> *whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,* <sup>7</sup> *so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

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The next question is, how do we submit to sanctification? This gets to the teaching of Jesus regarding the heart in **Matthew 5**. If I am led to sin with something, I eradicate it out of my life lest I prove through the judgement of God upon me that I am not His child. Further, I count it joy and with patience endure when God chastises me as a son. (**Hebrews 12:5-6, James 1**) I don't enjoy the chastisement, but I know that God is transforming me, and I know if I am chastised that I belong to God. God is a good Father. He does not chastise children that are not His. In that instance He stands as judge. "**And who can stand before His indignation. Who can endure the heat of His anger?**" (**Nahum 1:6**) So I discern those areas in my life that are areas in which I have failure, and I urgently commit to changing that. Further, as we have seen in previous messages, James, and Galatians, and

Philippians, and Hebrews, and a score of other passages, all teach us of the blessing of Christian community both to help me in my struggle against sin, but also to bring me the blessing of society, the society of God's people who are being redeemed.

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So loved one, how committed are you to your sanctification? Are you concerned with the things that you participate in passively and actively so much so that you question if it is helping or hurting your commitment to holy living? These are the questions every Christian, me included, must ask if we are truly trying to live this Christian life soberly and respectfully of the beauty of Christ. God has given us incomparable identity. Let's live like it! Amen.