

LETTER FROM THE PASTOR – JUNE 2024

Encouragement for Reluctant Saints

MAY 27, 2024, Stephen Jones, The Gospel Coalition Canada

I know there are some faithful Christian brothers and sisters out there who breeze through life making it all look very easy, and I love them dearly for it. But for my part, the hardest part of being a Christian is *living* as a Christian in the context of this fallen world.

From the moment of conversion when God removes the scales from our eyes, and we see the world as it is, fallen, our hope shifts from being tied to worldly things to being anchored in our eternal reward. We have been saved, we have been justified by faith, we long for eternity, and yet here we are with our mortal, failing bodies in this fallen world full of angry neighbours, mean bosses and crooked politicians. What is the purpose of prolonging our lives past the point of conversion?

I believe that the key to answering that question can be found in God's design of salvation through both justification *and* sanctification.

Justification *And* Sanctification.

And if we are going to take an honest look at God's design of salvation, then let's start by admitting that, as Christians, we are all big fans of *justification*. We're all completely onboard with justification, no notes, no complaints. But *sanctification*—well that's when many of us start to squirm a little, maybe even get a little defensive.

During his sermons, my now retired Pastor used to habitually invite non-Christians in attendance to observe us, to see how Christians live differently. And I would always slump slightly in my pew, cringe a little, and pray *please Lord, don't let them look too closely*.

I think that most of us squirm at the notion of being observed for our faithfulness, because we have a hard time thinking of ourselves as "faithful saints," rather we are more comfortable with the moniker of "broken sinner redeemed by grace."

Even in our self-identification we lean more towards our salvation through justification than our salvation through sanctification, and that often correlates with how we relate to Christ: Is He our saviour or our Lord? Obviously, the correct answer is both, but do we live that truth out?

Reconciliation And the Ministry of Reconciliation

In his second letter to the church in Corinth, Paul writes: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” ([2 Corinthians 5:17-18](#)).

The way Paul describes salvation depicts Christians receiving twin gifts, *reconciliation* and *the ministry of reconciliation*. We should receive and cherish both these gifts of grace just as eagerly!

You’ve been reconciled. Congratulations you’re now part of the ministry of reconciliation!

Paul goes on to explain what this ministry involves: “We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us” ([2 Corinthians 5:20](#)).

There is no diminishing the importance of God’s own appeal to the world! We have been adopted into God’s own Kingdom, and we are now representatives of this foreign power. To point others to the one we follow. Amidst the drought, it is up to us to point this dried-up spiritual wasteland of a world to the source of living water, as ambassadors for Christ.

Ambassadors for Christ

My professional background is in marketing, so when I recently preached a sermon on this passage, I tried to compare the call to be an ambassador for Christ with the marketing role of a *brand ambassador*. I was treated to an audible groan from the congregation in response to this term, and I understand why. Brand ambassadors are disingenuous, and they often backfire.

Hertz, the car rental company, for example experienced this backfire in the mid-90’s with their brand ambassador, OJ Simpson. Same goes for Subway with their ambassador Jared, or Adidas with Kanye West, or Nike with Tiger Woods.

But the comparison I was trying to draw out was with the only kind of brand ambassadors that actually work. The ones you don’t have to pay because they genuinely love your product so much, and they do exist!

Think about Harley Davidson. How do you know someone is a Harley guy? It's pretty easy, because every item of clothing they own has the logo on it, because they literally have the Harley logo tattooed on their arm, and simply because they're a large bearded middle-aged man who talks about riding their Harley all day long.

That's much closer to what Paul is talking about. That's much more in line with the kind of ambassador we are called to be. Everything about us should scream who you are an ambassador for. Everything we do, everywhere we go and everything you watch and read and talk about. God and his glorious work of reconciliation demands a little more than a T-Shirt.

And if we are ambassadors for Christ, his emissaries, then it falls to us to provide a glimpse of His Kingdom to this world by following the example of our Lord.

Jesus is the template for our life; it is outlined in the Bible for us. And when we read our Bible, we read about Jesus spending time in the word and time in prayer and teaching, healing, cleansing, giving, feeding, fellowshiping, grieving, comforting, serving, and loving. During his earthly ministry, Jesus embodied a picture of heaven in the way he lived to tell the world of the Kingdom of God.

Purpose of Sanctification

And therein lies the purpose of Sanctification. The reason why we do not get raptured the second we come to faith, is because if that was the case who would tell of His Kingdom?

Sanctification is the call that Jesus, our Lord, places on our life to allow the spirit of God that is at work in us to eradicate anything that signals that our allegiance is not 100% to Christ! The Holy Spirit helps us to eradicate anything that would sow the seed of doubt in the mind of the world that we are anything, but an ambassador for Christ. And even more importantly, since the ambassador has no authority to alter the message of the one he represents, we are to flee from anything that may signal that Christ – who is our Lord – is anyone else other than who the Bible says He is: That is the pure righteousness of God.

This is the process by which our role as ambassador to Christ influences more and more aspects of our lives through the transforming power of the Spirit of God that dwells within us.

We often speak of the power of the Gospel, and what do we mean by that? We say that the Gospel is more powerful than our sin. Amen, it is the power of grace to forgive us our trespasses. But we should not stop there. We should not cap the power of the Gospel at the power to forgive sins. It is not only restorative, it is transformative.

Yes it is the power to forgive, I'm not diminishing that! That's justification. From object of wrath to child of grace. But the power of the Gospel is also the power to transform! It is not only more powerful than our sin, it is more powerful than our *sinful state*, it is powerful enough to change us from sinful to holy. From one degree of glory to the next.

When we spend time in our Bibles every day, when we spend time in prayer every day, and when we surround ourselves with brothers and sisters in Christ within the context of a local church, then the Holy Spirit will convict us of changes we should make. We will feel ourselves desiring more and more to grow in certain areas, we will feel ourselves loosening our grip on the things that through the lens of the flesh were once very important and pleasing, those desires will dull over time and the things we most desire and derive the most pleasure from will increasingly be the same things that are pleasing to God.

More and more details of who we are, more and more characteristics and traits that make up our identity are commandeered and reassigned to the mission that has been set before us to be ambassadors for Christ, and this process will continue until we are the embodiment of our message, until we embody the Gospel by our very lives. We will continue to be transformed by the Spirit of God from the inside out into the very righteousness of God.

Don't slump in your pew! Let the world see you wherever you are in the process of sanctification.

We know that sanctification is not immediate. Justification happens all at once and once for all, but sanctification happens day-by-day, hour-by-hour, year-by-year.

Don't lose heart, sanctification will come to be complete. Its completion is no less assured than any of God's promises, because this promise of sanctification is locked in by your justification.

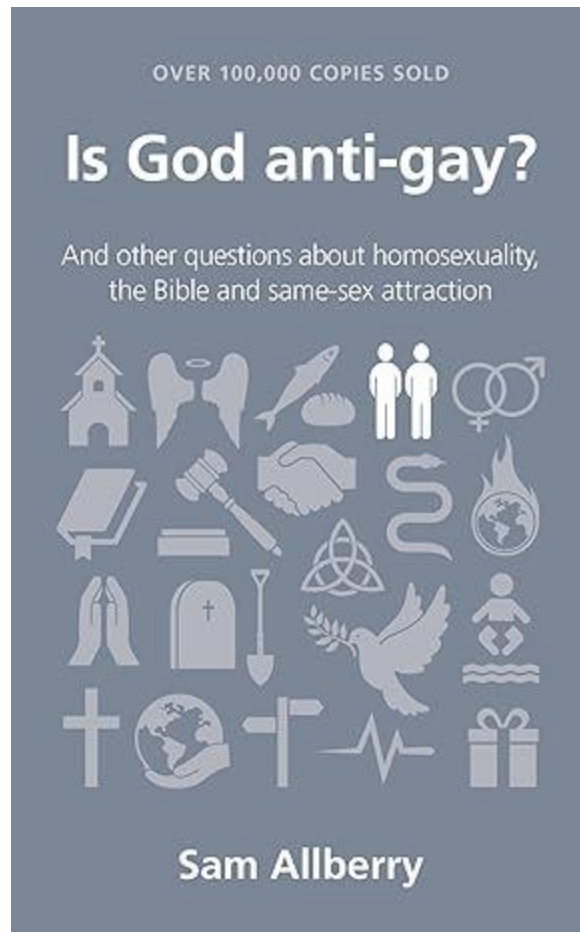
ANNOUNCEMENTS: WHAT'S HAPPENING AT LBC

Ladie's Community Drop In – The next event takes place on Tuesday, June 18th at 9:30-10:30am. It continues to be held at the church. This is an opportunity to have a coffee and get to know ladies from the community, as well as the congregation.

Men's Breakfast – There will not be a men's breakfast in June. We will resume in September.

Church Outdoor Potluck – Once again, we will be gathering at Rodney and Sharon Stead's (128 Roger Rd) on June 12 for an outdoor potluck. The event starts at 4:30. Please bring a chair, bug spray and an item for the potluck. The rain date for this event will be June 13.

Book of the Month – This month we are featuring Sam Allberry's short work entitled 'IS GOD ANTI – GAY?'



Christians, the church and the Bible seem to be out of step with modern attitudes towards homosexuality and there is growing hostility towards those who hold a different view to the culture's.

So is God homophobic? And how do we relate to both Christians and non-Christians who experience same-sex attraction?

In this short, simple book, Sam Allberry wants to help Christians understand what God has said about these questions in the scriptures. Drawing on his own experience, he offers a positive and liberating way forward through the debate.

Food Bank Sunday – Please remember to bring something for the Food bank on June 30th. A list of items needed are posted on the food bank box in the Chatback room.

Evening Service– This month's evening service will be held on Sunday June 30th at 7pm. As always, our time will consist of singing, study, and corporate prayer.

