



Links Players

On Sandwiches, Snap-Hooks, and Sanctification

You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court . . . “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:21-22, 48, NASB)

A few years ago, I was in Palm Springs on a golf trip with a friend. Our tee time was noon, so I ordered a cheeseburger to go from the snack bar and followed it with a great drive off the first tee.

As we drove down the first fairway, I took the first bite of the burger. I immediately knew it didn't taste right. Sure enough, it was barely cooked, so I threw it away. I hit my second shot to the right of the green, making a bad chip and a bogey.

The second hole is a dogleg right, and the tee box is not level on the left side, but I'm still thinking about the \$10.00 I just wasted on the burger tartare. So, I tee up on the left side and snap-hook it out of bounds. Inside, I'm starting to boil, but I reload and hit the second ball in the fairway.

We head down the fairway, and the woman paired with us gets to the balls first and hits hers in the water. I walk to the other ball and see it's a scuffed-up ProStaff. I asked her what ball she had just hit. She says, "Titleist 3," my brand new \$4.00 Pro V1x Titleist 3.

Now, I've not finished two holes, I'm hungry, I'm out \$18.00, and I'm about to be three over par. The woman quickly apologized and said she owed me a ball, and as I reached into my bag for another ball, I mumbled, "Don't worry about it."

Inside, though, I'm fuming, thinking, "How can you not tell the difference between a scuffed-up ProStaff and a brand-new Titleist Pro V1x?"

In retrospect, I could have responded three ways. First, I could have said what I was really thinking, which would have been rude. Second, I could have covered what I felt by saying what I didn't mean, or third, I could have felt rightly about the situation and extended grace. I chose door No. 2, which was better than door No. 1 but not as good as door No. 3.

These three responses indicate three stages of sanctification. The first is where we act out the unrighteous thoughts in our hearts. There is a congruence between our inward thoughts and outward

conduct, but both are unrighteous. The second is where what's in our heart is unrighteous, but we cover it with incongruous conduct that is outwardly righteous.

The third is where our inward thoughts are righteous, and we act accordingly. There is congruity, but unlike the first stage, it's a congruity of righteousness. I think this is what Jesus meant when He said we were to be perfect or "complete" like the Lord.

There is no incongruity in God. He acts out of who He is because He is good to the core. It was where Jesus lived. It's where I want to live, where what I say is not a cover for what I feel but a righteous expression of it. It's not a matter of my salvation, but it is a matter of my sanctification.

I know I'm not there, but I'm closer than when I began as a Christian, and by the grace of God, I'll be closer tomorrow. I wish I could be as confident about my golf game.

Prayer: Lord, create in me a clean heart. Amen.

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