

This Great Salvation

Session 6—Sanctification

I. Introduction

- As a result of sin, mankind is both guilty and polluted. **Justification** is the act of God that deals with the *guilt* of sin. It brings man a new status, transferring him from a state of condemnation into a state of acceptance with God. **Sanctification** deals with the *pollution* of sin. Sin's pollution is in the process of being removed from the life of the believer.
- Sanctification is the “work of God’s free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and we are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.”¹
- The ultimate goal of sanctification is God’s glory (Ephesians 1.4-5, 6, 12, 14; Philippians 1.9-11). The proximate goal is the perfection of God’s people (I John 3.2; Romans 8.29).
- A corollary effect of regeneration is the implanting of desires in the human heart that previously were not there—desires for God, for His honor, for holiness, for prayer, loving others, etc.²
- The words *sanctification* and *holiness* come from the same root. To be holy is to be set apart to God. This includes being set apart from all that is sinful and opposed to God. Holiness is God’s goal for his people, and the Christian life involves the process of reaching this goal. The NT is full of words that describe this process: transforming, renewing, conforming, maturing and growing. Although we will never reach perfection in this life, we are called to make every effort to live a holy life for the glory of God. ... *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’* (I Peter 1.15-16).

¹ Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 35.

² J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, Tyndale House, Wheaton, 1993, p. 170.

II. Definitive Sanctification

A. Sanctification begins at the point of regeneration

1. *And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.* (Acts 20.32)
2. *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.* (I Corinthians 6.11; cf. 1.2)
3. The three underlined verbs in the preceding verse are grammatically coordinate, each in the aorist tense (like a snapshot or showing instantaneous action occurring at a point in time).³

B. In definitive sanctification there is a break with sin and the beginning of a moral change so that we are no longer under the dominion of sin (Romans 6.6, 11, 14, 18). Now our primary love is for God and for the things of God (Romans 6.10-13, 17-22).

III. Progressive Sanctification

A. This is the primary way that we encounter sanctification in the NT. “All the moral exhortations and commands in the New Testament apply here, because they all exhort believers to one aspect or another of greater sanctification in their lives.”⁴

B. *And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* (II Corinthians 3.18)

³ Simon Kistemaker, *I Corinthians, New Testament Commentary*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1993, p. 190. In this context Paul is not explaining the distinction between sanctification and justification but is writing a discourse against unrighteousness.

⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1999, p. 328.

- C. *Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 3.13-14)
- D. This process is completed at death (for our souls) and at Christ's return (for our bodies). (Hebrews 12.23; Philippians 3.21)

IV. Sanctification is Cooperative

- A. *Therefore my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* (Philippians 2.12-13)

1. It is primarily a work of God. Jesus prayed to the **Father**, *Sanctify them in the truth ...* (John 17.17). We are sanctified in union with **Christ** (Romans 6). And we are sanctified by the **Spirit** (Galatians 5.16, 22-23).
2. We have a role that is both *passive* (Romans 6.13, 19; I Corinthians 3.18) and *active*. ... *but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* (Romans 8.13).

- B. Christian growth and the battle for holiness –Romans 6.

1) *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

5) *For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We*

know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 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. 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. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. Romans 6.1-14

- “We died to sin” is an indicative statement of fact, not an imperative (command). In Christian growth/change, the indicative always precedes the imperative. To put it another way, what God has done for us in Christ enables us to obey his commands.
- In union with Christ, we have died to sin’s penalty and sin’s power (reign/dominion), but not to its presence.
- There has been a change in masters, from sin to God.
- We must **know** the truth (6.3, 6, 9), **consider** it to be so (6.10-11), and **present** ourselves and our members to God (6.13).

V. The Means Used in Sanctification

- A. Remember, all of salvation is effected through our union with Christ.
- B. The truth (John 17.17).
- C. By faith (Acts 26.18). It by faith that we grasp our union with Christ, believe that sin no longer enslaves us, receive and experience the Holy Spirit’s power, are shielded from Satan’s fiery darts and generally do everything that is pleasing to God. “... for we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5.7).
- D. Fellowship (Hebrews 3.12-13; 12.14 ff.)

VI. Sanctification and Justification

A. We must distinguish between these two, but never separate them.

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness. WSC (Q. 35)

[Justification is] an act of God's free grace, by which he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only because of the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone. WSC (Q. 33)

1. In the Bible, justification is contrasted with condemnation. "Who will bring any charge against God's elect. It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn?" (Romans 8.33-34a)
2. To condemn is to declare a person guilty.
3. To justify is to declare/pronounce a person righteous.
4. Though guilty sinners, due to Christ's righteousness, we are declared righteous in God's sight!
5. In regeneration we are born from above spiritually.
6. In sanctification we grow spiritually.
7. Everyone who is justified is also sanctified and will progress in sanctification.
8. To be justified is to be *declared* righteous.
9. To be sanctified is to be *made* righteous.
10. Justification is the *gift* of righteousness.
11. Sanctification (in the progressive sense) is the *practice* of righteousness. It is a process.
12. Sanctification is an internal change in our nature resulting from regeneration.
13. Justification comes through the instrument of faith and is attributable to God alone.
14. Sanctification is also through faith, but involves our cooperation with God, our obedience, our effort. This is not opposed to grace.