

SOTERIOLOGY: The Glorious Doctrine of God's Great Salvation

Lesson 8: Sanctification

¹² 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, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

I. What do we mean by "Sanctification"?

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."
(Westminster Shorter Catechism)

The New Hampshire Confession, X: Of Sanctification

We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means, – especially the word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness and prayer.

Sanctification is closely and inseparably related to _____.

In justification, God declares repentant sinners righteous. In sanctification, His Spirit actually makes us so. In justification, we are holy in _____. That is, we are *positionally* sanctified by God's grace. In sanctification, God makes us holy and godly in _____. That is, we are *experientially* sanctified in our words and deeds.

And sanctification is as _____ as every other component of our salvation:

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he **foreknew** he also **predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also **called**, and those whom he called he also **justified**, and those whom he justified he also **glorified**. (Rom. 8:28-30)

In his book, *A Body of Divinity*, Thomas Watson gives six reasons for the necessity of sanctification:

1. God has _____ us to it.

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence ... (2 Pet 1:3)

³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification ... ⁷ For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. (1 Thess 4:3,7)

2. Without sanctification there is no evidencing our _____.

... 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. (1 Cor 6:11)

3. Without sanctification we have no title to the _____.

²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." (Ezek 36:26-27)

4. There is no _____ without sanctification.

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14)

This same thing is explicitly taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith:

They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

(Westminster Confession of Faith 13.1)

5. Without sanctification all our holy things are _____.

He writes, "A foul stomach turns the best food into ill humours [i.e. indigestion or illness]; so an unsanctified heart pollutes prayers, alms, sacraments" (p.245).

²¹ *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 'Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, in Your name did we not prophesy, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name do many miracles?' 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' (Matt 7:21-23)*

6. Without sanctification we have no _____ of our election.

¹³ *But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. (2 Thess 2:13)*

"Election is the cause of our salvation, sanctification is our evidence. Sanctification is the earmark of Christ's elect sheep." (p.245).

II. Important Questions About Sanctification

Was Martin Luther correct that we are "simul justus et peccator" and that justification and sanctification are essentially the same?

What about John Wesley? Was he right that Christians should aim for perfection or "entire sanctification"? Is his doctrine of "the second blessing" consistent with Scripture?

And what of Keswick theology? Is sanctification passive? Do we simply "let go and let God"?

Is Pentecostal theology correct? Is a "baptism in the Spirit" (subsequent to our salvation) necessary for successful Christian living?

Is sanctification entirely a work of God, primarily a work of our own human will, or a joint effort involving both?

If I am responsible (in full or in part), what is my role?

What is God's role?

Is sanctification instantaneous or through a lengthy process?

Can sanctification be brought to completion in this life?

When will we be "fully sanctified"?

III. Categories of Sanctification

_____ or Initial Sanctification

By definitive sanctification we mean that believers stand before God as holy and perfect; as completely clean because of what God has done for them in Christ.

³⁰And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Cor 1:30-31)

¹¹And 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. (1 Cor 6:11)

All three of those terms, (washed, sanctified, and justified), refer to the new status that we have as believers in Christ.

¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. (Heb 10:10, 14)

_____ Sanctification

Progressive sanctification is that process whereby believers grow gradually into the lightness of Christ.

¹¹And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. (John 17:11-20)

... as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy. (1 Pet 1:15-16)

⁵For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (1 Pet 1:5-11)

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Rom 12:1)

¹Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (2 Cor 7:1)

A majority of New Testament texts are about our sanctification.

_____ Sanctification

Believers are initially and definitively sanctified in Christ when they are converted, but at the same time they pursue progressive sanctification. We should grow in holiness throughout our lives and become more like Christ.

But there is a final sanctification, or the *eschatological* perfection of the believer. When we say eschatological, we mean that our sanctification will only become a reality at the _____.

² *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.* ³ *And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1 John 3:2-23)*

¹¹ *Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you,* ¹² *and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,* ¹³ *so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. (1 Thess 3:11-13)*

²³ *Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ²⁴ *He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. (1 Thess 5:23-24)*

When Jesus comes for his bride... the one he will celebrate with for all eternity, he purifies her completely. Currently we still have spots and wrinkles and flaws, but the day will come when there will be no imperfections, no blemishes, no disfigurements. The work of sanctification will be completed, and the Church will be the sinless bride of Christ.

²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* ²⁶ *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* ²⁷ *so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Eph 5:25-27)*

²¹ *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,* ²² *he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him (Col 1:21-22)*

IV. Sanctification - A Summary

Union With Christ

Because we are *in* Christ, we are fundamentally changed. The old life is gone... It is _____.

²⁴ *And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Gal 5:24)*

How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* ⁴ *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.* ⁶ *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. (Rom 6:2-6)*

A new life ... a _____ life has emerged. This new life drives our sanctification:

¹¹ *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 body, to make you obey its passions. (Rom 6:11-12)*

Our Role

The Holy Spirit is the primary cause of our sanctification. By the grace of God, He has set us apart from sin and death and delivered us into His Kingdom and granted us eternal life. Our initial sanctification is all because of him. He will also confirm us in final and entire sanctification when the Lord Jesus returns. He is the major player in progressive Saints' vacation as well. But he's not the only player.

We are participants in our own growth.

J.I. Packer:

Sanctification is synergistic—it is an ongoing cooperative process in which regenerate persons, alive to God and freed from sin's dominion (Rom. 6:11, 14–18), are required to exert themselves in sustained obedience. God's method of sanctification is neither activism (self-reliant activity) nor apathy (God-reliant passivity), but God-dependent effort (2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 3:10–14; Heb. 12:14).

Repeatedly in the New Testament, we are urged to grow in holiness. (John 15:4; Rom 12:1; James 2:1; Heb 3:12; 2 Peter 3:10-11; 3 John 11; Rev 22:10-11)

¹² 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, ¹³ for it is **God who works in you, both to will and to work** for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

The Church's Role

Sanctification is both an individual and a communal matter. God makes each of his people holy. And he wants us to be holy not only individually, but as a church corporately.

³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God (1 Thess 4:3-5)

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb 10:24-25)

¹ Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear **lest any of you** should seem to have failed to reach it. (Heb 4:1)

¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, **so that no one** may fall by the same sort of disobedience. (Heb 4:11)

Sanctification and Time

Sanctification is a clear example of the “already and not yet” aspects of our salvation. *We have been sanctified.* The work of the Holy Spirit has moved us once and for all from the dominion of darkness to the dominion of light. *We are being sanctified.* The Holy Spirit is building practical holiness into us progressively. *We will be sanctified.* That Christ's second coming God will confirm His Saints and deliver us into glory.

When we understand our sanctification this way, God is glorified, and we can be encouraged. Though we face difficulties, struggles, and occasional failures, we can rest certainly in God's promise that **we will be sanctified.**

Next week: Preservation and Perseverance