

The Doctrine of Sanctification

Selected Scriptures

I. Sanctification Promised: John 17:17

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IV. Sanctification and the Believer: vs. II Pet 3:18

The Doctrine of Sanctification

Phil 2:12-13; “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now 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 do for His good pleasure.”

Introduction:

- following directly behind **“The Doctrines of Grace”** is the **“Doctrine of Sanctification”**
- so, I begin by proposing this question; what is **“sanctification”** ???
- what does it mean to be **“sanctified”** ???
- the word **“sanctification”** comes from the Greek word **“hagiasmos”** which literally means; ‘a setting apart or a separation’
- the word implies the state of grace not inherent in its subject, **but the result of an outside action**
- therefore, the dominant idea of **“sanctification”** is separation from sin and the unredeemed world, and the setting apart for a sacred purpose by someone else
- thus, only those **“in Christ”** that are regenerated and born again are **“sanctified”**
- now, the words which are synonymous in Scripture with **“sanctification”** are **“sanctify, sanctified, holy, holiness, and consecrate”**
- these words are used interchangeably throughout the Scriptures carrying the same meaning as **“sanctification”** ‘a setting apart or a separation’
- and there are four aspects of **“sanctification”** that I’d like to present

I. Sanctification Promised: John 17:17

- John 17:17; “Sanctify them by Your word”
- “**sanctification**” is the continuing work of God in the life of a believer, making him or her actually “**holy**”
- by “**holy**” meaning; ‘bearing an actual likeness to Christ’
- being “**conformed**” to His image
- turn with me please to Rom 8:29; “For whom He (God) foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son”
- friends, that “**predestined conformity to His image**” is through the process of “**sanctification**”
- suffice it to say that “**sanctification**” is the process by which one’s moral condition is brought into “**conformity**” with that of Christ’s character
- it’s a continuation of what began in regeneration when a newness of life was wrought within the believer
- “**sanctification**” in this sense is something that occurs at the very beginning of the Christian life, at the point of being born again, and continues throughout the life of the believer
- in short, it’s the process of making the believer “**holy**”
- loved ones, God calls every Christian to mirror and reflect His “**holy**” character
- I Pet 1:15-16; “As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written; Be holy, for I am holy.”
- but the problem is, in and of ourselves we are not “**holy**”
- whether we like it or not, we are “**unholy**”
- yet, the Bible refers to us as “**saints**”
- the term “**saint**” means; ‘one who is holy, one who is sanctified’

- but since “holiness” is not found in us, we must be made “holy”
- and the One who works to make us “holy” and to conform us to the image of Christ, is the Holy Spirit
- it is the special work of the Holy Spirit to make us “saints” to “sanctify” us
- thus, to be “sanctified” is to made “holy”
- and that process begins at regeneration and ends at death
- now, when it comes to our regeneration, it’s the work of the Triune God **alone**
- “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works , lest anyone should boast.” Eph 2:8-9
- friends, we do not assist the Holy Spirit one iota in our regeneration
- in fact, we outright reject any notion of human effort in the regeneration of the believer
- but, on the other hand, “**sanctification**” is a different matter
- our “**sanctification**” is a cooperative venture
- the believer must work in conjunction with the Holy Spirit to grow in “**sanctification**”
- and the Apostle Paul expresses this idea most superbly in **Phil 2:12-13**
- turn with me please to **Phil 2:12-13**; “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now 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 do for His good pleasure.”
- so, in a sense we “**work out our (sanctification) with fear and trembling**” meaning; ‘with reverence’ coupled with God’s will
- and God’s agent, the Holy Spirit
- our “holiness” is a cooperative effort of the believer and God’s Spirit
- we call it “**sanctification**”

II. Sanctification by God: I Thes 5:23

- I Thes 5:23; “May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely”
- “**sanctification**” is a supernatural work of God
- thus, only those “**in Christ**” that are regenerated and born again are “**sanctified**”
- but, there are a number of significant differences between regeneration and “**sanctification**”
- regeneration is an instantaneous occurrence, complete in a moment
- “**sanctification**” is a process requiring an entire lifetime for completion
- in regeneration you are either regenerated or not
- with “**sanctification**” one may be more or less “**sanctified**”
- that is, there are degrees of “**sanctification**” but not with regeneration
- regeneration is an objective work of Someone else affecting our standing before God
- “**sanctification**” is a subjective work affecting our inner person before God
- turn with me please to I Cor 1:30, Col 1:21-22, II Thes 2:13, Heb 2:9-11, I Pet 1:2
- beloved, the aim of this divine working, is likeness to Christ Himself
- once again Rom 8:29; “For those whom (God) foreknew (God) also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son”

III. Sanctification Implied: Heb 13:20-21

- Heb13:20-21; “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead make you complete in every good work to do His will”
- Scripture also clearly implies the process of “**sanctification**” in the daily life of the believer in numerous places
- turn with me please to I Cor 3:17-18, Gal 5:16
- loved ones, one of the strongest passages of scripture that implies the process of “**sanctification**” is Romans 8:1-27
- Paul says much in this epistle about the “**sanctified**” life
- Christians walk according to the Spirit, vs. 4
- they set their minds on the things of the Spirit, vs. 5
- they’re in the Spirit and the Spirit dwells in them, vs. 9
- by the Spirit they put to death the deeds of the body, vs. 13
- their led by the Spirit, vs. 14
- the Spirit bears witness that they are children of God, vs. 16
- the Spirit intercedes for them, vs. 26-27
- in summation, it is the Spirit who is at work in the believer, bringing about a likeness to Christ
- now, one might conclude from all the preceding that “**sanctification**” is completely a passive matter on the part of the believer
- **but nothing could be further from the truth**
- the believer is constantly exhorted to work and to grow in the matters pertaining to their salvation

IV. Sanctification and the Believer: II Pet 3:18

- II Pet 3:18; “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”
- I need to stress and make it clear, that we are not saved **by** works, we are saved **for** works
- Eph 2:10; “For we are (God’s) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”
- beloved, the power of God is not only at work in Christ **for** us but is also “the power at work in us” Eph 3:20
- throughout the N.T. Scripture speaks of this “**sanctification**” as an ongoing work within the believer, that renews them inwardly and conforms them gradually to the image of Christ
- but despite our inherent weaknesses, Christ’s energies are at work **within** us by the power of His Spirit
- yet, believers are called to pursue purity, to pursue loveliness, and to meditate on these things Phil 4:8
- and the process of “**sanctification**” is just that, a progressive separation from the deeds of the flesh and the pursuit of the fruit of the Spirit
- Paul urges both, the avoidance of evils and the pursuit of godly virtues
- and that process is a cooperative work of both the believer and the work of the Holy Spirit
- turn with me please to Rom 12:1-2, Rom 12:9-17, II Cor 7:1, Eph 4:20-24, Col 3:5, II Thes 4:3-4, 7
- lastly the “**sanctified**” life in the believer is a crucified life
- Gal 2:20; “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

In Closing:

- one major issue over which there has been disagreement throughout church history is whether the process of “**sanctification**” is ever completed within the earthly life of the believer
- do we come to a point where we no longer sin ? ? ?
- there are sharp differences of opinion upon this matter
- those who answer that question in the affirmative, the perfectionists, hold that it is possible to come to a state where the believer does not sin
- one of their supporting text is in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says to His listeners; “**You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect**” Matt 5:48
- no less earnest regarding their convictions are those who maintain that perfection is an ideal which will **never** be attained within this life
- they maintain that as much as we should desire and strive after complete deliverance from sin, sinlessness is simply not a realistic goal for this life
- one of their supporting text is, I John 1:8-10; “**If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.**”
- another supporting passage is **Romans 7** where Paul describes his own experience
- and this passage appears to be a vivid and forceful testimony to the effect that the believer is not free from sin
- Paul states it powerfully; “**For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.**” Rom 7:18-19
- loved ones, these words came from one of the greatest of all Christians
- and he confessed his failure of continuing to sin
- now, back to **Matt 5:48**; “**You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**”

- the word “perfect” comes from the Greek word “teleioi” which does not mean ‘flawless or spotless’ but literally means; ‘complete’
- the word here “perfect” was really a poor rendering of the original Greek word
- so then, it is quite plausible to be “complete” without being entirely free from sin
- that is, we can possess the ‘fullness and completeness’ of Jesus Christ that Paul spoke of in Eph 4:13; “to a mature man which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”
- for that matter, we can possess the “fullness” of the fruit of the Spirit Gal 5:22-23
- friends, the commands to strive by the grace of God for “holiness and blamelessness” are to numerous in Scripture to ignore
- and though sinlessness is **not** experienced in this life, **it still must be our aim**
- read attached