

Introduction to Sanctification

We could start with a simple question. What is **sanctification**? Then, we may hope for a simple answer but thought the question is short (3 words) the answer is multifaceted and complex. Is it an unchanging position or a progressive practice of holy conduct? Is it absolute or relative? Is it something that is done to us or something we do? ...etc...

We could go on with these questions but sometimes we arrive at the wrong conclusions because we have not asked the right question. By addressing the above questions from different passages of Scripture I could *prove* any of them correct. This would then appear to disprove the second half of the either/or question. This kind of study and teaching can be quite convincing to many people, yet if one continues to search the Scriptures they will begin to find texts that don't fit with their accepted position. Shrewd teachers may find a way to explain away passages that differ from their committed position but instead we should try to understand what the text teaches and how it agrees or disagrees with other passages.

Imagine if we had to choose either/or rather than sometimes one, sometimes the other (or sometimes both).

Are the references to light and darkness in scripture physical or ethical/moral?

Is God one or three?

Is Christ God or man?

Is death physical or spiritual?

Is God in heaven, on earth, within believers or everywhere?

Or consider the faulty conclusions some draw from a superficial and selected understanding of a text.

Because it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me – I will never sin again. (WRONG)

Christ lived in perfect obedience for me so it does not matter at all if I obey or not. (WRONG)

Have we been redeemed or are we waiting for our future redemption? Are we adopted or awaiting adoption?

Ephesians 1:7 ⁷ In him [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

Ephesians 4:30 ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Romans 8:15 ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

Romans 8:23 ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Since the Bible uses the word that we translate as sanctified/sanctification in very important and distinctive ways we need to recognize each so as not to confuse or confound them.

I enjoy alliteration so here is how we'll proceed. (there will likely be expansion as we progress).

1. Definitive Sanctification
 - a. Positional – IN CHRIST (1 Cor. 6:11)
 - b. Passive
 - c. Possessional [new word]
 - d. Permanent
2. Dynamic Sanctification
 - a. Progressive – UNTO CHRIST LIKENESS (Eph. 4:24)
 - b. Practical
 - c. Proactive
 - i. Personal
 - ii. Pervasive
 - iii. Persevering
 - iv. Percievable
3. Done Sanctification
 - a. Perfected – LIKE CHRIST (1 John 3:2)
 - i. Our spirits in death
 - ii. Our bodies in resurrection
 - b. Presented – glorified

PART 1

1. DEFINITIVE SANCTIFICATION

- a. **Positional** – Once for all. a New Domain
- b. **Passive** – All of God. You are sanctified in Christ by the Spirit.
- c. **Possessional** – [new word] a New Identity
- d. **Permanent**

Acts 20:32 ³² 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 26:18 ¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

1 Corinthians 1:2 ² To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus...

1 Corinthians 1:30 He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

1 Corinthians 6:11 ¹¹ 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.

Hebrews 2:11 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,

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

"We have been sanctified." It is that radical cleavage (break) with the dominion of sin. This break with sin's dominion takes place upon our faith-union with Jesus Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit.

This aspect of "Sanctification" is like that of regeneration/born again/new creation it has no human requirements or participation and does not need repetition.

This form of Sanctification assures us of a "holy and blameless" standing before God much like justification assures us of "righteousness". These are granted us IN CHRIST. Justification imputes to us the perfect righteousness of Christ and this facet of sanctification guarantees the possession of holy standing or position in Christ. Further this position involves an impartation.

In this sense and only in this since we could say "'I'll never be more sanctified than I am now in Christ" and "I'll never be more holy than I am now in Christ". YET, these statements refer to our present position in Christ not our present condition in Christlikeness! So we can also say "I need to be sanctified more and more unto Christ" and "I need to be more and more holy in my conduct like Christ." If these two truths are not carefully maintained that confusion can result.

Colossians 1:13 ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:9 ⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Romans 1:6 ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,
Galatians 3:29 ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 2:20 ²⁰ It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Romans 8:38-39 ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Do a search and study on the rich concept and frequent use of the phrase “in Christ” in God’s Word. As you do you will be greatly encourage as you consider the glorious gifts and promised that are our in Him.

WARNING

There are *two extremes* to which many go: quietism or pietism.

- **Quietism** is the passive approach to sanctification. You’ll recognize this overemphasis on definitive/positional sanctification with its catchphrases “*Let go and let God do it.*”, “*Try less trust more*” This views “effort” negatively. It believes that progress is made by simply “surrendering”. It sees all changes as living by faith. Faith and striving are set against each other. It posits that activity on our part will not work anyway and simply gets in the way of God’s working. There is a misunderstanding of the carnal flesh and the spirit and the old man and the new man teachings of Scripture. Positively - there is a proper recognition of our helplessness apart from Christ and of Christ’s all-sufficiency, but it is wrong to place faith and effort as mutually exclusive or opposed where growth in grace is concerned.
- **Pietism** places its emphasis on practical diligence and effort. This will often result in expressions of legalism. This leads to adding to the commands of the scripture with our

own cultural application. Further leading to either self-condemnation as we fail to achieve sinless perfections and commit many of the same sins over and over again or self-righteousness as we esteem ourselves relative to others obedience to both the scripture and our “Christian” norms. Positively they try to live godly lives but put so much emphasis on rules of conduct that the centrality of Christ in us and God working in us is missed.

*“Christians in the early stage of their religious experience are . . . apt to fall into one or other of the extremes of leaving God to do all, or attempting to do all themselves. The most common error is the latter. Full of the ardor of first love, they make resolutions, lay down plans, enter upon a course of action . . . They soon meet with [difficulties] and defeats. Their resolutions are broken, their plans frustrated, and their course impeded . . . Disheartened and discouraged, they are ready to give up, and walk the ways of God no more. Let them rather learn the lesson of the great apostle who said, ‘When I am weak then am I strong,’ or that other lesson, ‘Yet not I, but the grace of God in me.’ ‘Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.’ You cannot be too active as regards your own efforts; you cannot be too dependent as regards divine grace. Do everything as if God did nothing; depend on God as if He did everything” (John Angell James, *Christian Progress*, 88).*

C. **The Biblical Balance.** Phil. 2:12-12.

As John Murray observes, “No text set forth more succinctly and clearly the relation of God’s working to our working.” This is what he observes from this text. “God’s working in us is not suspended because we work, nor our working suspended because God works. Neither is the relation strictly one of cooperation as if God did His part and we did ours so the conjunction or coordination of both produced the required result. God works in us and we also work. But the relation is that because God works we work. All working out of salvation on our part is the effect of God’s working in us . . . both the willing and the doing . . . What the apostle is urging is the necessity of working out our own salvation, and the encouragement he supplies is the assurance that it is God himself who works in us. The more persistently active we are in working, the more persuaded we may be that all the energizing grace and power is of God” (Murray, *Redemption Accomplish and Applied*, 148-149).

The great Puritan theologian and preacher, John Owen wrote similarly: “God works in and with us, not against us or without us; so that His assistance is an encouragement as to the facilitating of the work, and no occasion of neglect as to the work itself” (John Owen, VI, 20).

Indeed, as one has observed with respect to the commands that God gives us, every duty is but a demand upon His own grace!

Sanctified IN Christ Jesus for Sanctification UNTO Christ Jesus.