

SANCTIFICATION

INTRODUCTION

- As believers, we love the doctrine of justification...the teaching that sinners are justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone
- That truth is precious to us...it is a key Reformation truth...it lies at the heart of the Gospel of God's grace
- It reminds us that our only hope is to be declared righteous on the ground of Christ's perfect righteousness

- We also love the doctrine of glorification...we look forward to the day when our struggle with sin will be over...when our faith will be sight
- We anticipate the day when we will finally see our Lord and Savior face to face...when we finally discover what it means to have unhindered fellowship and communion with Christ
- Glorification is the radical transformation of both the body and the soul of believers, perfecting them in holiness, and thereby fitting them for eternal life on the new earth in perfect communion with the triune God

- But sometimes the doctrine of sanctification doesn't fill us with the same sense of wonder and appreciation
- Although the NT prioritizes the holiness of God's people and includes many practical exhortations to personal holiness, the church seems to have lost some of the focus that once characterized this doctrine
- "[I]n the past, the uncompromising evangelical quest for holiness was awesome in its intensity. Yet that which was formerly a priority and a passion has become a secondary matter for us who bear the evangelical name today."¹
- This may be because sanctification is a slow process...or that it requires hard work and effort...or that it reminds us that we have not arrived yet
- Or it may be because many are confused about the process of sanctification...they don't know how to fight sin and overcome temptation and grow in holiness
- But perhaps this is because of the many assaults that are leveled against believers in their fight for holiness:²
 1. Lethargy – "Lethargy is the silent assassin of sanctification. The cares of this world and the exertion of spiritual discipline tend to dampen the church's enthusiasm for sanctification. In many churches, personal growth is the exception rather than the rule...Apathy toward the things of the Lord is a slow-release poison to spiritual growth. The Laodicean problem has become an epidemic in the contemporary church; when it comes to sanctification, we are nauseatingly lukewarm."³
 2. Licentiousness – the love of comfort, the lust of the flesh, the prospect of instant gratification, and the quest for personal pleasure all serve as obstacles in the pursuit of holiness
 3. Legalism – although the temptation to rely on human effort to produce spiritual fruit will always be there, it is a perennial enemy of a robust life of sanctification. "Why worry about the tediously humble and, at times, imperceptible process of heart change, when an easily white-washed tomb seems to get the job done? Additionally, growth by bare human effort feeds our pride...We would rather do it ourselves or die trying."⁴
 4. Libertinism – also known as antinomianism, this attitude fosters the conviction that a person can be a Christian and be free from the lordship and authority of Christ.

¹ J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God*, 83.

² Adapted from Paul Shirley, *Expository Sanctification*, 2-6.

³ Ibid., 2.

⁴ Ibid., 3.

5. Lingering sin – the ongoing influence of remaining sinful patterns, thoughts, and desires continue to dog us in our daily lives, tempting us to return to the ways we used to live prior to our salvation

- All of these factors make sanctification a difficult reality for many believers...but this is not a doctrine that we can afford to be confused about because this is where we live...between justification and glorification
- We live in the present...where we are to be pursuing Christ-like holiness...so, we need to get this right!

ORDO SALUTIS



5

THE NATURE OF SANCTIFICATION

- Sanctification involves being set apart from sin to holiness not only in position but in practice
- Holiness embodies the very essence of Christianity...holiness ought to define who we are since God has saved sinners to be a holy people...we ought to increasingly become in practice what we are in position
- “Holiness is not something we are called upon to do in order that we may become something; it is something we are to do because of what we already are.”⁶
- “What does the Bible mean when it speaks of a ‘sanctified’ man? Sanctification is that inward spiritual work which the Lord Jesus Christ works in a man by the Holy Ghost, when He calls him to be a true believer. He not only washes him from his sins in His own blood, but He also separates him from his natural love of sin and the world, puts a new principle in his heart, and makes him practically godly in life.”⁷
- The Scriptures speak of three distinct expressions of holiness:⁸

Intrinsic Holiness

- Intrinsic holiness is that which God himself possesses naturally in his very nature
- He is holy and everything he is and does is marked by and permeated by his perfect holiness
- He is transcendentally holy and uniquely separate from the defilement of imperfection

Exodus 3:14 ~ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ”

Exodus 15:11 ~ “Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?”

⁵ https://www.slideserve.com/veta/soteriology-powerpoint-ppt-presentation#google_vignette

⁶ Martyn Lloyd-Jones

⁷ J.C. Ryle

⁸ Shirley, *Expository Sanctification*, 10-14.

Isaiah 6:3 ~ And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.”

Jeremiah 10:6 ~ There is none like You, O LORD; You are great, and great is Your name in might.

Consecrated Holiness

- This describes objects and individuals that have been set apart to the service of God, a separateness, something dedicated for the purpose of worship of the one true and living God:

Genesis 2:3 ~ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Leviticus 22:32 ~ You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be sanctified among the sons of Israel; I am the Lord who sanctifies you,

Joel 2:16 ~ Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her bridal chamber.

Exodus 29:35-37 ~ Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you; you shall ordain them through seven days. 36 Each day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement, and you shall purify the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to consecrate it. 37 For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it; then the altar shall be most holy, and whatever touches the altar shall be holy.

Exodus 30:26-29 ~ With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, 27 and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, 28 and the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the laver and its stand. 29 “You shall also consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them shall be holy.

- The NT frequently speaks of believers as those whom God has set apart from sin to holiness and who must therefore pursue holiness...we have been saved to be holy...we have been cleansed through the work of Christ so that we can serve the Lord through a life of worship

Romans 12:1-2 ~ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- “Holiness is not an optional addendum to gospel grace, it is at the heart of God’s redemptive work. God saves us from our sins and declares us righteous so that He can make us holy. From election (Eph 1:4) to glorification (Eph 5:27), God’s sanctifying purpose is the holiness of His people.”⁹

Ephesians 1:4 ~ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

Hebrews 12:14 ~ Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

1 Peter 2:9 ~ But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

- Believers are those who, by God’s gracious salvation, have been set apart to him to live holy, consecrated lives

⁹ Ibid., 9.

Reflective Holiness

- This describes the morally upright and godly behavior of God's people who reflect his holiness by obediently living according to his righteous and holy standards

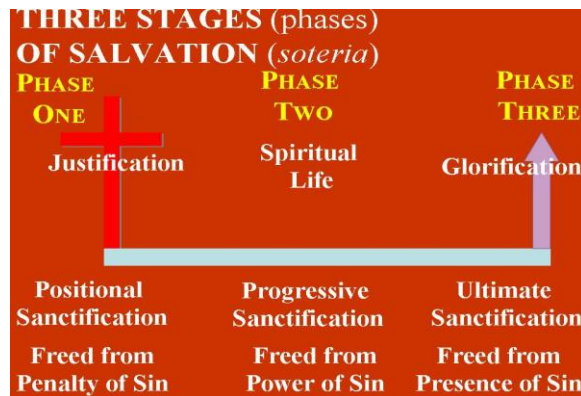
Deuteronomy 28:9 ~ The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways.

Matthew 5:27-29 ~ You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; 28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

1 Corinthians 7:34 ~ and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

1 Peter 1:14-16 ~ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

- "As Spirit-born, blood-bought, children of God, we are finally able to do what we were created to do – bear the image of the holy God. Believers, who have been separated unto God through the Gospel, are required to live an increasingly righteous life to reflect that separation."¹⁰
- There are three stages of sanctification:



- Stage 1 – Positional Sanctification: occurs at the moment of justification, the moment a believer is separated from the penalty of sin
- Stage 2 – Progressive Sanctification: occurs between regeneration and glorification and results in believers being separated from the power of sin
- This refers to the outworking of our positional sanctification...the on-going transformation of becoming that which we already are (holy)
- It is the process of becoming increasingly conformed to the image of Christ...the process of growth and spiritual maturity...the activity of gaining victory over sin and becoming more like Jesus in godliness

¹⁰ Ibid., 14.

- Even though we have made a real, constitutional break from the power and dominion of sin, we are not completely conformed to the image of Christ yet
- Even though the penalty of sin is paid for and the power of sin has been broken, the presence of sin remains in our flesh
- So, we must be continually putting sin to death throughout our life...a gap exists between our position and practice...progressive sanctification is concerned with closing that gap
- Stage 3 – Perfect Sanctification: occurs when the believer is freed from the presence of sin
- This final stage refers to that moment when our sanctification is complete, when we go to be with the Lord and the presence of sin is removed entirely...an event that is still future

POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION

- Positional sanctification describes what God did to us when he saved us, at the time of our conversion
- At the point of salvation (once and for all time), God causes true believers to experience a relational change, a completely new position which they enjoy with Jesus
- At the new birth, the true believer is permanently separated from sin and set apart for God Himself
- In this sense, believers are dead to the ruling power of sin – the penalty and power of sin are removed with a promise that the presence of sin will also one day be removed...definitive sanctification

Acts 20:32 ~ 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.

1 Corinthians 1:2 ~ To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ~ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Hebrews 10:14 ~ For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

- When a person becomes a Christian, they are put on the other side of a gulf that separates them from God, no longer on the side of sin, but now on God's side, the side of holiness
- He actually considers believers holy and perfect in position
- But God even went beyond that...not only are believers set apart from sin to God, God implants in believers desires that were not there before: A desire to please God in all things
- Believers possess a new heart that wants to live separate from sin, gain control over sin, and eliminate sin
- This is why one of the most common terms used to refer to a believer in the New Testament is "saint" which simply means "saved and set apart"

Romans 1:7 ~ to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace...

2 Corinthians 1:1 ~ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia:

Ephesians 1:1 ~ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful...

Philippians 1:1 ~ Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi

Colossians 1:2 ~ To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

- Thus, positional sanctification is a divinely wrought character change freeing believers from sinful habits and forming in them Christ-like affections and character
- It involves a change in our standing before God and an internal change in our heart and its desires
- Thus, as believers, we have the ability (with the help of the Holy Spirit and the presence of Christ) to overcome sin

PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION

- Progressive sanctification refers to the outworking of the believer's positional sanctification...it is the process of becoming holy throughout the Christian life
- It refers to the on-going transformation of becoming (practically holy) that which we already are (positionally holy)
- This isn't a change in position but a change in behavior...the process of spiritual growth...the activity of gaining victory over sin and becoming more like Jesus

Faulty Approaches to Progressive Sanctification

Pietism

- This view emphasizes the believer's role to the exclusion of God's role
- It places a strong emphasis on Bible study, holy living, self-discipline, much of which is good; however, the danger of this extreme is that it stresses self-effort to the exclusion of God's power working in them
- It puts the results of sanctification primarily in the lap of the believer
- It tends to lead to legalism...to self-righteousness...to moralism...to human performance
- It can lead to a works-based Christianity and man-made religious practices...which often result in pride and hypocrisy
- "Though we all ought to wholeheartedly embrace and emphasize the importance of Christian piety, we must remember that piety is built on doctrine. Once doctrinal beliefs disappear, piety is emptied of the gospel and it becomes a form without content. So, we must distinguish between Piety and *Pietism*: The former is the result, consequence, outworking of one's union with the Lord Jesus Christ. The latter is usually used as a pretense of righteousness, erroneously thinking our work might earn merit before a holy God...*Pietism* is a movement within Christianity that attempts to be inwardly focused on individual holiness and a consistent Christian life, sometimes at the expense of focusing on what Christ has done for us."¹¹

Quietism

- This view swings the pendulum in the other direction...it views believers as passive in their sanctification
- It is known as higher life theology with its common mantra of "Let go and let God"
- It says: be completely surrendered to and dependent on God and let him make you what he wants you
- It presupposes that trying to strive against sin or to discipline yourself for the sake of holiness is futile, unspiritual, and counterproductive
- "Quietism is a system of religious mysticism with its roots in Hinduism and Buddhism but which has also been promoted at times by individuals within the Roman Catholic Church. Quietism teaches that spiritual peace and even perfection can be achieved through the contemplation of God and things divine. The practitioner of quietism seeks to subdue the will and become totally passive, spiritually...Quietism turns

¹¹ <https://www.monergism.com/topics/bad-theology/pietism>

one's spirituality inward, favoring silent contemplation, stillness, and passiveness over positive action...The aim of quietism is to 'quiet' the soul so that it can become one with God and eventually achieve a sinless state."¹²

- This movement began with Wesleyan Perfectionism and the Holiness movement under John Wesley (1703-1791) who taught that there is a separation between the time a person is saved and the time sanctification begins
- He taught Christian perfectionism...the belief that Christians can (as a result of some second work of grace via the baptism of the HS) reach the point of sinlessness in this life
- By that he didn't mean that a believer could become entirely free of sin, but that they could reach a point of never sinning intentionally
- Wesley's Christian perfectionism taught that you could arrive at a state of perfectly loving God with your whole being and perfectly loving fellow humans
- This paved the way for the higher life movement...or the Victorious Life movement...which culminated in the early Keswick movement (1875-1920)
- At the heart of this movement was the belief that justification was separated from sanctification in that a person would become saved and then, at some later point in their life, would get serious
- The way to "get serious" was to "let go and let God"...to play a passive role in your spiritual development and rely upon God who will do all that is necessary for sanctification
- Step 1 is "letting go" which involves giving yourself completely to Jesus and surrendering to God every habit, ambition, hope, loved one, and possession
- "Any victory over the power of any sin whatsoever in your life that you have to get by working for it is counterfeit. Any victory that you have to get by trying for it is counterfeit. If you have to work for your victory, it is not the real thing; it is not the things that God offers you. It is not by straining and struggling that this blessed condition is brought about; it comes by a very real dedication of ourselves to God for this very purpose, and with this as the special end and aim in view. Just lie quietly before Him. Open all the avenues of your being, and let Him come in and take possession of every chamber. Especially give Him your heart – the very seat of your desires, the throne of your affections. Yield all up to Him, and the Lord will enter, bringing with Him all the riches of His grace and glory, turning your life of duty into a life of liberty and love."¹³
- Step 2 is "letting God" which involves simply believing that Jesus has done it all...victory comes by a simple act of faith...and victory is maintained in the Christian life by the attitude of faith
- The key to holiness is resting (not struggling) and trusting (not trying)
- "If any of you are making the mistake of trying to live the victorious life, you are cheating yourself out of it, for the victory you get by trying for it is a counterfeit victory. You must substitute another word; not try, but trust, and you cannot try and trust at the same time. Trying is what we do, and trusting is what we let the Lord do...The counterfeit victory means a struggle; whatever we do, we do by our efforts...In real victory, He does it all. We do not dare to help. We realize that the battle is His."¹⁴
- A contemporary version of this approach to sanctification is the "Gospel-Centered" movement
- It is also known as monergistic sanctification or the free grace model of sanctification by its supporters

¹² <https://www.gotquestions.org/quietism.html>

¹³ Evan Hopkins, quoted in Andy Naselli, *No Quick Fix: Where Higher Life Theology Came From, What It Is, and Why It's Harmful*, 39-40.

¹⁴ Charles Trumbull, quoted in Naselli, *No Quick Fix*, 40-41.

- Some of their emphases have been good reminders: the Christian life isn't mere moralism...dangers of legalism...nothing we can do to increase God's love for us
- However, it has largely dismissed efforts to obey God, seeing them as counterproductive and futile
- It focuses attention almost exclusively on the finished work of Christ and virtually eliminates active efforts to grow in holiness
- It majors on the indicatives (what Christ has done) and ignores or minimizes the imperatives (what we are commanded to do)
- We are told to cease our struggle to obey commands and simply to cling to grace alone as we contemplate the Gospel
- In this view, then, sanctification is essentially nothing more than contemplation...the assumption is that if we merely think about our justification we will somehow feel like obeying and will therefore be holy
- One proponent described progressive sanctification as "the daily hard work of going back to the reality of our justification."¹⁵
- "Many Christians have simply given up on sanctification. I frequently hear from believers who doubt that holiness is even possible...The pursuit of holiness is just bound to make us feel guilty. So we figure all we can really do is cling to Christ. We are loved because of the imputed righteousness of Christ, but personal obedience that pleases God is simply not possible. The truly super-spiritual do not 'pursue holiness;' they celebrate their failures as opportunities to magnify the grace of God."¹⁶
- "Among conservative Christians there is sometimes the mistaken notion that if we are truly gospel-centered we won't talk about rules or imperatives or moral exertion. We are so eager not to confuse indicatives (what God has done) and imperatives (what we should do) that we get leery of letting biblical commands lead uncomfortably to conviction of sin. We're scared of words like diligence, effort and duty. Pastors don't know how to preach the good news in sermons and still strongly exhort churchgoers to cleanse themselves from every defilement of body and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1). We know legalism (salvation by law keeping) and antinomianism (salvation without the need for law keeping) are both wrong, but antinomianism feels like a much safer danger."¹⁷
- This sadly results in a justification without sanctification
- "There is something seductive about this view of sanctification. It magnifies the gloriously true doctrine of justification and at the same time gets us off the hook from doing the hard work of sanctification. Theologically, it is as close as you can get to having your cake and eating it too. There is just one little problem: this is not how the Bible speaks of our sanctification. The Bible uses verbs like strive, work, battle, and kill to speak of our role in sanctification."¹⁸
- Although God is ultimately responsible for our growth in sanctification, he does not automatically mature us
- He uses means to grow us into conformity with Christ and one of those means is our active participation in the pursuit of holiness
- We are responsible to strive for ever-increasing sanctification by using the means God puts at our disposal

Romans 8:13 ~ for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are **putting to death the deeds of the body**, you will live.

1 Corinthians 9:24 ~ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? **Run in such a way that you may win.**

¹⁵ Tullian Tchividjian, *Jesus + Nothing = Everything*, 95.

¹⁶ Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness*, 20.

¹⁷ Ibid., 19.

¹⁸ Shirley, *Expository Sanctification*, 5.

2 Corinthians 7:1 ~ Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Philippians 3:13-14 ~ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:10 ~ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Titus 2:7, 14 ~ in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified...14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Hebrews 12:4 ~ You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

2 Peter 1:5 ~ Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge,

2 Peter 3:17-18 ~ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

1 John 3:3 ~ And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

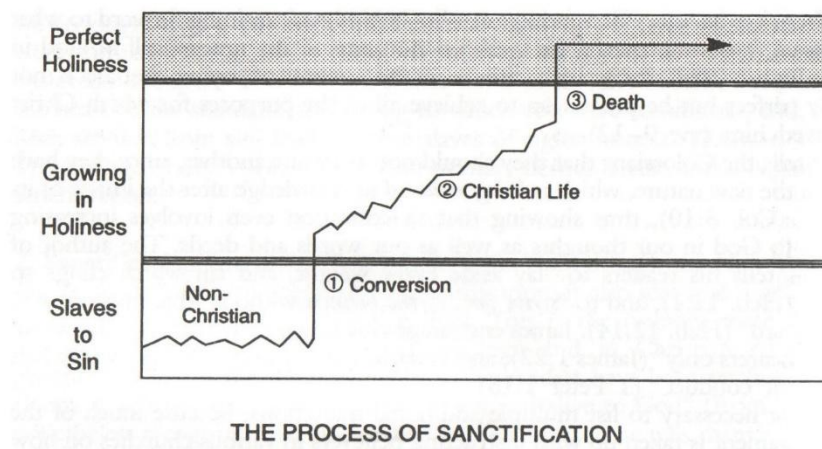
- All of this effort is employed in turning from sin and turning to righteousness
- There is always a negative and a positive element to sanctification...that's why many of the commands in the NT contain both negative and positive sides:

Colossians 3:8, 12 ~ But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth...So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

1 Timothy 6:11 ~ But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

2 Timothy 2:22 ~ Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace

- Sanctification includes both battling against sin and pursuing godliness



¹⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 750.

Progressive Sanctification Always Follows Positional Sanctification

- Where there is justification and positional sanctification, there will be progressive sanctification
- All those whom God justifies, he also sanctifies...there is no such thing as a person who has been justified who will not also be sanctified
- Justification never occurs alone in God's plan...it is always accompanied by sanctification
- "If Christ justifies you, He will sanctify you! He will not save you and leave you in your sins."²⁰
- Although justification and sanctification are closely connected, they are vastly different²¹

JUSTIFICATION	SANCTIFICATION
Legal standing	Internal condition
Once for all time	Continuous throughout life
Entirely God's work	We cooperate
Perfect in this life	Not perfect in this life
The same in all Christians	Greater in some than in others

1 Corinthians 1:30 ~ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

- To be "in Christ" is also to be being sanctified

Hebrews 12:14 ~ Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord

- No sanctification means no salvation

Titus 2:11-12, 14 ~ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age... 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

- God's grace not only brings salvation, it also produces sanctification and godliness because Christ redeemed us for the purpose of purifying us

This Process is Never Complete in This Life

- Sanctification does not mean sin is totally eradicated in this life...this is obvious from Paul's own experience

Romans 7

Philippians 3:12-14 ~ Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- At the same time, the fact that we do not achieve perfection in this life should not serve as an excuse to not pursue holiness and righteousness

²⁰ Robert Murray M'Cheyne

²¹ Chart adapted from Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 746.

Sanctification Involves God's Work and Our Effort

- God is the One who brings about our sanctification, but we also must work for it
- It is both a sovereign work of God and something we are exhorted to pursue
- We cannot over-emphasize or under-emphasize either of these twin pillars
- “On the one hand, if we over-emphasize God’s role to work in us and under-emphasize what we are supposed to work out, we flirt with a kind of complacency and apathy that the Apostles knew nothing about. On the other hand, if we emphasize the command for us to work out our salvation such that we under-emphasize or downplay the reality that it is God who works in us, we flirt with the kind of moralistic externalism and willpower religion that Jesus and the Apostles condemned.”²²

Philippians 2:12-13 ~ So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

- Thus, sanctification is synergistic...we work out because God works in
- No spiritual transformation is possible without the supernatural work of God...yet we are called personally to work out our salvation, indicating that spiritual progress also depends on our Spirit-empowered efforts
- Both are necessary...it takes diligent effort and divine energy
- Progressive sanctification then is the Christian’s pursuit of God-given holiness
- “Our sanctification is like an airplane. It takes both wings to fly. On one wing you have discipline. On the other wing you have dependence on God. Airplanes are designed to fly on one engine, but airplanes are not designed to fly on one wing. Both wings are absolutely necessary.”²³
- This is where the spiritual disciplines come in
- “Sanctification, again, is a thing which depends greatly on a diligent use of Scriptural means. When I speak of ‘means’, I have in view Bible-reading, private prayer, regular attendance on public worship, regular hearing of God’s Word, and regular reception of the Lord’s Supper. I lay it down as a simple matter of fact that no one who is careless about such things must ever expect to make much progress in sanctification. I can find no record of any eminent saint who ever neglected them. They are the appointed channels through which the Holy Spirit conveys fresh supplies of grace to the soul, and strengthens the work which He has begun in the inward man. Let men call this legal doctrine if they please, but I will never shrink from declaring my belief that there are no ‘spiritual gains without pains.’ I should as soon expect a farmer to prosper in business who contented himself with sowing his fields and never looking at them till harvest, as expect a believer to attain much holiness who was not diligent about his Bible-reading, his prayers, and the use of his Sundays. Our God is a God who works by means, and he will never bless the soul of that man who pretends to be so high and spiritual that he can get on without them.”²⁴
- Our responsibility can be summarized in three terms:²⁵
 1. Meditation – the disciplined contemplation of spiritual things informed by God’s truth
 2. Mortification – the intentional killing of the sinful inclinations that plague us within
 3. Vivification – the purposeful walking in newness of life that is ours in Christ
- The failure to intensely pursue sanctification explains why some believers do not mature much in holiness:

²² <http://thecripplegate.com/sanctification-monergistic-or-synergistic/>

²³ Jerry Bridges

²⁴ J.C. Ryle

²⁵ Shirley, *Expository Sanctification*, 24-26.

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 ~ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly

1 Corinthians 3:15 ~ If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire

Hebrews 5:12-14 ~ For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

PERFECT SANCTIFICATION

- Our sanctification is complete when we die and go to be with the Lord...when the presence of sin is removed entirely
- "What definite sanctification secures, and progressive sanctification refines, perfected sanctification will one day attain."²⁶

1 Corinthians 15:49 ~ Just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

Philippians 3:21 ~ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

1 John 3:2 ~ Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

- Thus, we look forward with great anticipation to the glorification that awaits us, the redemption of our bodies

Romans 8:23 ~ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

²⁶ Ibid., 27.