

Systematic Theology 2, SS, Sanctification

7/16/23

[This presentation follows Wayne Grudem's chapter on "Sanctification" in Bible Doctrine.]

INTRODUCTION: Sanctification is sometimes translated as "HOLINESS".

*"Strive for peace with everyone, and for **the holiness** without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).*

Sanctification is the noun form of the verb, "to sanctify or make holy". Its basic meaning is to "set apart from what is common or unclean, consecrating unto God".

The word is used for the first time in the Bible in **Genesis 2:3**: *So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.* In itself, the 7th day was no different from the previous six ones. Like them, it simply referred to a definite unit of time, a period of 24 hours. But the Lord *"made (the 7th day) HOLY"*. He set it apart from the other six days, consecrating it to himself in a special way.

God has called his people to *"be holy, even as he is holy" (1Pe 1:15)*. We have been set apart from all the other people in the world; we have been consecrated to God. We are, "the holy ones", which is the literal meaning of the word, **"SAINTS"**.

But sanctification, while our calling, is, more fundamentally, the gift of God, a vital part of his gift of salvation. Those whom God justifies and adopts, he also

sanctifies. Our 1689 Confession of Faith devotes an entire chapter, Ch. 13, to this subject. The chapter has 3 short paragraphs. It begins as follows.

Those who are united to Christ and effectually called and regenerated have a new heart and a new spirit created in them through the power of Christ's death and resurrection. They are also further sanctified, really and personally, through the same power, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them.

I. Differences Between Justification and Sanctification

1. The Difference in their Sphere of Operation

- 1) Justification occurs in the courtroom of heaven. It concerns our legal standing before the Judge of heaven and earth. It is an external act concerning those who believe.
- 2) Sanctification occurs in the hearts and lives of Christ's people. It concerns our experiential condition in relation to the Lord. It is an internal act wrought in those who are born again.

2. The Difference in the Timing of their Operation

- 1) Justification happens at one particular point in time and is never repeated. It is once for all time.
- 2) Sanctification is continuous throughout the earthly lives of those who are in Christ.

3. The Difference in the Primary Actors in their Operation- Actor can be defined as, *“a participant in an action or process”*. Who are the key participants?

- 1) Justification is entirely God’s work. God alone justifies. Through faith in Christ, we receive God’s gift of justification.
- 2) Sanctification, while ultimately a gift from God alone, is a process in which we participate. It is true to confess, *“Tis Thine to cleanse the heart, to sanctify the soul, to pour fresh life in every part and new create the whole!”* But it is likewise true to confess: *“I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith”* (2Ti 4:7).

4. The Difference in the Present Quality of their Operation

- 1) Justification is perfect, from the moment it occurs. The most mature saint is no more justified than the least mature saint. David was as justified when he committed adultery with Bathsheba as he was when he defeated Goliath with great faith.
- 2) Sanctification is never perfect in this life. David was far more holy in spirit when he looked upon the Philistine giant than when he looked upon the wife of Uriah. Yet, even when he faced Goliath, his sanctification was not perfect.

5. The Difference in the Degree of their Operation

- 1) Justification is the same in all Christians. Lot and Samson were justified as perfectly as the Apostle Paul was justified.
- 2) Sanctification is greater in some than in others. And it's greater in our lives at some points than it is at other points. There are degrees of sanctification.

APPLICATION QUESTION: What are some practical implications of the differences between justification and sanctification?

- The devil, “the accuser of the brethren”, wants to focus our attention on ourselves. He can use sanctification as a club to beat Christ’s followers, accusing them of their many imperfections. Understanding justification is huge in the believer’s assurance. *“Arise, my soul, arise! Shake off thy guilty fears! The bleeding sacrifice in my behalf appears! Before the throne my surety stands... my name is written on his hands!”*
- The devil also tempts us to think that since we are forgiven and justified, it’s okay to sin. We can simply “confess” it afterwards and move on.

Understanding sanctification is huge in the believer’s “enduring to the end”.

II. Three Stages of Sanctification

1. Sanctification has a definite beginning at regeneration.

A definite moral and spiritual change occurs in conversion. New birth involves a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting in relation to God. *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, new things have come” (2Co 5:17)!*

1Co 6:9-11 *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 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.*

Rom. 6:1-11 *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! 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. ⁷ *For one who has died has been set free from sin.* ⁸ *Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.* ⁹ *We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.* ¹⁰ *For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.* ¹¹ *So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

Being united to Jesus Christ by faith, from its very first moment, involves our being vitally joined to him in his death and resurrection. In a sense, Christ's followers were rescued when Jesus died and rose. They were tied to him, their representative head (just as we all sinned when Adam, our first representative head, sinned). But this emancipation from the reign of sin, while determined in eternity past and accomplished through Christ's death and resurrection 2,000 years ago, becomes our actual experience when we are joined to our Advocate by faith, which is the immediate fruit of our having been regenerated by God.

Those in Christ, from the outset of their union, are no longer under the dominion of sin. They are no longer ruled by it as they were before. They are no longer enslaved to it. They no longer love it. They can resist temptation. They can walk in new patterns of life. Sin and temptation still harass them, but no longer master them as once was the case.

APPLICATION QUESTION: What are the implications of this truth for someone who has struggled for years with a bad temper, discontentment, or sexual lusts?

- Giving up is not an option. We don't "have" to sin in the way that we once did.
- We must work at "possessing our possessions". You must "*CONSIDER YOURSELVES dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 6:11). You meditate, pray, seek fellowship, etc. with the conviction, "I am NOT the same person that I used to be. I am IN CHRIST!"
- If a given sin pattern is especially egregious and has not really changed, one's "conversion" must be questioned on some level. **Do not be deceived:** *neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God (1Co 6:9-10).*

2. Sanctification has an ongoing development in the believer's life in this world.

2Co 3:18 *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.*

Phil 3:13-14 *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

3. Sanctification is completed at death (for our souls) and when the Lord returns (for our bodies).

1) For our souls, at death.

Heb. 12:22-23 *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect...*

2) For our bodies, when Jesus comes back.

Phil. 3:20-21 *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

4. Sanctification is never completed in this life.

1Jo 1:8-9 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Matt 6:11-12 Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. [Cf. James 3:1-2; Rom. 7:21f]

APPLICATION QUESTION: Why do you think our gracious God ordained that sanctification would be a process, sometimes long and tedious, sometimes painful and frustrating, rather than a momentary event like justification?

ANSWER: Ultimately, it must serve “*the praise of the glory of his grace*” (*Eph. 1:6*). David understood grace better at the end of his life than when he was a teenager.

III. God and Man Cooperate in Sanctification

1. God’s Role in Sanctification

1Th 5:23 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.

Phil 2:12-13 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.

***Heb. 13:20-21** Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

***2Th 2:13** 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.*

APPLICATION QUESTION: A believer has been deeply disappointed and hurt by someone that they know they are called to love deeply. They are struggling to love that person well. They don't feel like loving that person well. How might that Christian apply passages like Ezek. 36:27 and Gal. 5:22-23 in their endeavor to pursue holiness in this arena of struggle?

***Ezek. 36:27** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*

***Gal. 5:22-23** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control;*

ANSWER: These passages are fodder for meditation and prayer. God has pledged his Spirit to his people. He swore that he would place his Spirit **INSIDE** his children. He vowed that the Spirit's presence would have the effect of **CAUSING THEM** to obey. The Spirit's fruit **IS** love and self-control. Those virtues appear where the Spirit is present. Those graces can increase through the Spirit's help. The Spirit is greater than my feelings!

2. Our Role in Sanctification

- 1) We must exercise faith in God's promised commitment to sanctify us, and we must pray in what he has said he would do.

Ps 119:27-32 *Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works. ²⁸ My soul melts away for sorrow; **strengthen me according to your word!***

*²⁹ Put false ways far from me and graciously **teach me your law!** ³⁰ I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me. ³¹ I cling to your testimonies, O LORD; **let me not be put to shame!** ³² I will run in the way of your commandments **when you enlarge my heart!***

- 2) We must take active, practical steps in the pursuit of holiness.

Rom. 8:13 *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

Phil 2:12 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,

1Th 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;

2Pe 1:5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,

In our practical pursuit of holiness, nothing is more basic than the regular disciplines of meditation, prayer, and authentic fellowship.

Ps 119:9-11 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!

¹¹ I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Heb. 3:12-13 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

IV. Sanctification Affects the Whole Person

2Co 7:1 Since 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.

Rom. 6:13 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.

V. Motives for Obedience to God in the Christian Life

1. Pleasing God and showing our love for him.

John 14:15; 21 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments... ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.

Ps 40:8 I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”

2. Keeping a clear conscience before God.

Rom. 13:5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

1Ti 1:5 The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

3. Wanting to have increased usefulness.

2Ti 2:20-21 Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

4. Wanting to influence unbelievers to follow Christ.

1Pe 3:1-2 Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ² when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

5. Wanting present blessings from God.

1Pe 3:9-12 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, **that you may obtain a blessing.** ¹⁰ For **“Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; ¹¹ let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.**

¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Eph. 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

6. Wanting to avoid God’s displeasure and discipline.

The children of God cannot avoid some measure of discipline, for all of us have need of correction and the formation of holy character. But we can provoke our Father’s chastening through our transgressions. Examples: 1) Moses forfeited the privilege of entering into the Land of Promise; 2) Samson was imprisoned and had his eyes put out; 3) David suffered violence in his family; and 4) In the Corinthian church, many became ill and even died. [Cf. Christ’s messages to the 7 churches in Asia Minor, Rev. 2-3.]

*1Co 11:27-30 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ **That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.***

7. Wanting greater heavenly reward.

Luke 19:17-19 And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’ ¹⁸ And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made five minas.’ ¹⁹ And he said to him, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’

8. Wanting a deeper walk with God.

John 14:21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him **and manifest myself to him.**”

9. Wanting angels to glorify God for our obedience.

1Ti 5:19-21 Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. ²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus **and of the elect angels** I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

10. Wanting peace and joy.

Phil 4:9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Heb. 12:1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

1689 (Modern Version): Chapter 13: Sanctification

1. *Those who are united to Christ and effectually called and regenerated have a new heart and a new spirit created in them through the power of Christ's death and resurrection. They are also further sanctified, really and personally,¹ through the same power, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them.² The dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed,³ and the various evil desires that arise from it are more and more weakened and put to death.⁴ At the same time, those called and regenerated are more and more enlivened and strengthened in all saving graces⁵ so that they practice true holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.⁶*

1) Acts 20:32; Romans 6:5, 6.

2) John 17:17; Ephesians 3:16-19; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-23.

3) Romans 6:14.

4) Galatians 5:24.

5) Colossians 1:11.

6) 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14.

2. *This sanctification extends throughout the whole person,⁷ though it is never completed in this life. Some corruption remains in every part.⁸ From this arises a continual and irreconcilable war, with the desires of the flesh against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.⁹*

7) 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

8) Romans 7:18, 23.

9) Galatians 5:17; 1 Peter 2:11.

3. *In this war, the remaining corruption may greatly prevail for a time.¹⁰ Yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ,*

the regenerate part overcomes.¹¹ So the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. They pursue a heavenly life, in gospel obedience to all the commands that Christ as Head and King has given them in his Word.¹²

10) *Romans 7:23.*

11) *Romans 6:14.*

12) *Ephesians 4:15, 16; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 7:1.*