



“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (I Corinthians 6:11).

The Sanctification of the Spirit

Central Truth: The Holy Spirit works in the Christian to make him more and more like Christ.

L401. Date: February 1983. **Text:** I Peter 1:2; I Corinthians 6:9-11, 15-20.
Topic: Holy Spirit; Sanctification.

Do you feel like a saint? You are a saint if you are saved. Every saved person is a saint because he has been sanctified.

Sanctification is that act by which God makes holy the repenting and trusting sinner, separating him from the world and consecrating him to God. The noun sanctification does not appear in the Old Testament; it occurs only ten times in the New Testament. But words built on the same stem are very frequent, appearing as *holy, hallow, hallowed, holiness, consecrate, saint, sanctify*.

Sanctification is viewed in two ways in the Bible: formal and ethical. In its formal sense, to sanctify anything is to declare that it belongs to God. Such a usage may refer to days and seasons, to places, to objects used in worship, and even to persons. In its ethical sense, sanctification means to be made pure and holy because of an act of God in the spirit of man. Such holiness within results in a lifestyle which is pure before God and man. Both the formal and the ethical elements are present in the Christian doctrine of sanctification.

This week's study is built around this central truth: "The Holy Spirit works in the Christian to make him more and more like Christ."

I. POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (I Peter 1:2).

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: hut ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (I Corinthians 9-11).

“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (II Thessalonians 2:13).

The Holy Spirit is the divine agent through whom the sanctification is effected. *“Sanctification of the Spirit”* means “the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit does a work in the human spirit which sets him apart unto God as one who bears inwardly the nature of God himself.

What does the Spirit do that brings such sanctification? At conversion, when one is *“born of the Spirit”* (John 3:5, 6), he is set apart as belonging to God. What makes him belong to God is that he is placed “in Christ” and Christ comes to dwell “in” him. The result is that a person becomes *“a new creature”* (II Corinthians 5:17). He is never the same again for he has been “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (I Corinthians 1:2).

Positional sanctification makes wonderful changes in one who believes in Jesus. Consider this list.

A. The believer receives a new nature by the Spirit. He receives *“the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”* (II Peter 1:4). That is how he has “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).

B. The believer enters into personal union with Christ by the Spirit. He is joined to Christ spiritually as the limb is joined to the trunk of a tree organically (John 15:1-8). His identification with Christ in the waters of Christian baptism testifies to his actual union with Christ in the work of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26, 27).

C. The believer is joined to the body of Christ by the Spirit. *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”* (I Corinthians 12:13). That union is personal and intimate.

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?” (I Corinthians

6:15). That is the birthright of every believer, not just a few unique saints of exceptional holiness. The Holy Spirit makes it so!

D. The believer is indwelt by the Spirit. The Spirit comes within the human spirit at his conversion, and He remains there. One who “drinks” of the “water” (Holy Spirit) which Jesus gives finds a spring of water gushing up within him and rivers of water flowing forth from him (John 4:13, 14; 7:37-39). To be without the Spirit within is to be unsaved (Romans 8:9).

E. The believer is called a “saint” because he has been sanctified by the Spirit. The title “disciple” occurs in the Gospels to describe believers. “Saint” occurs only one time in the Gospels, but sixty times in the rest of the New Testament. It is the common name for Christians in the epistles. They have been “*washed,...sanctified,...justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*” (I Corinthians 6:11). “*Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin*” (Romans 6:6).

All that has happened to every Christian. It happened the instant he was saved. That placed him in the position of one who is “*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*” (I Peter 1:2).

II. PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (I Corinthians 6:15-20).

Observe that the “*sanctification of the Spirit*” effected in the believer has a distinct and practical purpose: “*unto obedience*” (I Peter 1:2). That obedience which follows sanctification is the essence of Christian conduct. We call it “practical sanctification,”

A. God and man work together in practical sanctification. How does a man cleanse his life so that it reflects the nature of God who lives in him? That question is answered in I Corinthians 6:9-11. Those who were “*fornicators,...idolaters,...adulterers,...effeminate,... abusers of themselves*

with mankind,...thieves,...covetous,...drunkards,...revilers,...extortioners” are now citizens of the kingdom of heaven. How could such a change come? Three things happen which effect the change from sinner to saint: “ye are washed,...ye are sanctified,... ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

The washing, sanctifying, and justifying of the sinner are effected by the authority of the atoning deed of Jesus Christ and by the regenerating work of the Spirit of God. However, their order in actual occurrence is exactly reverse from the order listed here. Justification precedes sanctification and they both precede washing. They are listed as they are because they are listed from man's viewpoint.

Man sees a person living a holy life and asks, “Why?” The answer is, “He is washed.” “But what washed him?” “He is sanctified” “How did he get sanctified?” “He was justified before God.” Men are led to a knowledge of sanctification and justification by seeing a cleansed life.

God approaches the matter from the opposite side. He justifies a man before Him. That sets the man apart as one sanctified for the Master's use. In turn, such a sanctified man is cleansed and made fit for his Master's service.

But there is something more here. The justifying and sanctifying are passive voice, indicating they are God's work on man's behalf. But the washing is middle voice, indicating it is something man does to himself. It is not the “*washing of regeneration*” (Titus 3:5) to which reference is made. It is the cleansing daily of defilement of the world (I John 1:7) that one may live in fellowship with the Lord and as a witness of Jesus Christ.

The man who is justified before God and sanctified as God's own will purify himself even as God is pure (I John 3:3). “*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*” (II Corinthians 7:1). “*What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness*” (II Peter 3:11). That is practical sanctification, the working out in conduct what is in the heart.

B. Union with Christ is the key to holy living. Paul writes of that union in these words: “*Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?*” (I Corinthians 6:15). The term *member* means “limb,” like an arm of the physical body. The Christian lives a holy life because he is joined to Christ as a member of His body.

The Spirit of Christ within the Christian controls the actions of the body. “*He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit*” (I Corinthians 6:17). As members of your physical body (arm, hand, foot) obey the human spirit which is in them, so members of Christ's spiritual body obey the divine

Spirit which is in each of them. And you are a “member” (limb) of that spiritual body! That is the reason for holy conduct by the Christian.

C. The Holy Spirit indwells each Christian. The life of God himself is lived in the physical body of a believer in Jesus. The Holy Spirit lives in him as Sustainer, Transformer, Renewer. He brings holiness to its full fruition. The transformation He effects in the believer comes from inside.

The “flesh” nature still lives in the believer also. It is the seat of sin and the basis of all Satan's attack on the spiritual life of the Christian. But God never intended that a Christian should live after the dictates of that flesh nature (Romans 8:5-13). *“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”* (II Corinthians 3:17).

The basis for spiritual victory was laid at the cross. The triumph of Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection makes possible our victory through Him. *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death”* (Romans 8:2).

Through the Holy Spirit, the flesh can be kept in subjection. *“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh....If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”* (Galatians 5:16, 25). That is why the Bible commands us, *“Be filled with the Spirit”* (Ephesians 5:18).

Sanctification effected at salvation is to be worked out in the whole of the human frame. *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it”* (I Thessalonians 5:23, 24).

The purpose of God's sanctifying work is to produce a Christ-like character in each believer. The *“works of the flesh”* are what the flesh normally works “at” and normally works “out.” God's purpose is that the “body of sin” in the believer might be “put out of work.”

How wonderful to grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18). Here is sanctification In its practical application: *“But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (II Corinthians 3:18).

Questions

1. What is “sanctification” in its two elements?
2. How is the Spirit related to our sanctification?
3. How is one “sanctified in Christ Jesus”?

4. What does Ephesians 5:30 say of your union with Christ?
5. Why is the believer in Jesus a “saint”?
6. What does Romans 6:6 mean in practical application?
7. What does it mean that we are “elect unto obedience”?
8. What does it mean to be justified, sanctified, and washed?
9. What is man's part in practical sanctification?
10. What does I Thessalonians 5:28, 24 mean in this study?