



“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).

Sanctification

Central Truth: The believer has been separated from the world and dedicated to God.

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Topic: Sanctification.

“I am sanctified.”

Is that statement a boast or a testimony? If you are saved by repentance from sin and personal faith in Jesus, it is a testimony. As a Christian, you are a sanctified person. Every believer is a saint, and every saint is sanctified.

Last week's study dealt with the subject of redemption. The term means, as you remember, to buyout of the possession of another so as to have for oneself. We studied the Bible teaching that Christ redeemed us (purchased us out of sin unto himself) and that we enter into the experience of it by personal faith in Him. At that point sanctification enters the picture.

As redeemed people, we belong to God. Having been purchased and set apart as the people of God, we are sanctified. The meaning of sanctify is “to set apart as holy.” That is what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. “I am sanctified” is not a boast, therefore, but a testimony of truth. If you are saved, you are sanctified to God. Think about that and live like a sanctified person.

I. THE MEANING OF SANCTIFICATION

The Old Testament speaks of sanctified persons and things. The priests were sanctified to the service of God. They were to serve Him only, having no land inheritance or secular business to demand their time. The articles of furniture in the tabernacle were sanctified, set apart for the use of God only.

The basic meaning of sanctification is evidently to set apart for God's purposes.

A. Sanctification means separation from evil. The ancient temple of the Jews was sanctified when anything which would defile it was removed from it. The Levites were sanctified when they cleansed their lives and dedicated them wholly to serve God in His temple (II Chronicles 29). A Christian is sanctified when he becomes a child of God. That is reflected as he abstains from things which displease God.

B. Sanctification means dedication to God. That is the positive meaning of the term. Sanctification means that one turns from sin to God. That was the sense in which the tabernacle and the persons who served there were sanctified (Leviticus 27:14-16; Numbers 8:17). Jesus said He was sanctified by the Father (John 10:36). That means He was set apart to do a special work for God. Total availability to God is the essence of sanctification. Jesus set the example for us.

II. THE ELEMENTS OF SANCTIFICATION

We speak of “positional sanctification” and “practical sanctification.” The former is what we are because we are in Christ. The latter is what we do because we are set apart in Christ. The former is our position; the latter is our practice.

A. Position — Sanctification is separation to God. It means we belong to God alone. Totally apart from conduct, a believer in Jesus is a child of God and is set apart as being uniquely His.

We are sanctified because we have a new nature, the very nature of God himself (II Peter 1:4). We have been joined to Jesus Christ so that we are members of His body and our physical bodies are members of His own body (I Corinthians 6:15). That sanctifies us. We are joined to God. We are sanctified because we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9) who lives and works in us. We are complete in Christ (Colossians 2:9, 10). A life of holiness is not only possible, but it is also expected because we are in Him (Romans 6:1-18). That is our position — in Christ.

B. Practice — Sanctification is holy living before God. We are to “*put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Ephesians 4:24). That is the practice which agrees with our position in Christ.

As sanctified people, we must walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). That means we must follow His control, pursuing what He approves and fleeing what He rejects. “*Walk*” indicates lifestyle. How tragic it is for one to walk

in such a way that the Holy Spirit is grieved. We are saints. We are sanctified (set apart as the people of God). We must live like people who belong to God.

As sanctified people, we must grow in holiness. When we “put on” the new man, that means we follow his lifestyle. As we follow the lifestyle approved by the Holy Spirit, we will grow increasingly like our Lord. It is God's purpose to conform us to the image of His dear Son (Romans 8:29). What a privilege it is to grow in the knowledge of Him and in the imitation of Him. By following that goal, we are changed into the image of Jesus, point by point and “*from glory to glory*” (II Corinthians 3:18). That is a goal worthy of our most diligent efforts.

As sanctified people, we must discipline the flesh. Even so great a saint as the apostle Paul testified that he had to keep guard over his body lest he be involved in sin (I Corinthians 9:27). It is possible for a Christian to live after the demands of his flesh nature, but he will pay the consequences of it (Romans 8:13). How much better it is to “*put. . . on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*” (Romans 13:14).

III. THE PERSONS IN SANCTIFICATION

A. Sanctification is the work of God. In fact, all three persons of Holy Trinity are involved in sanctifying you.

(1) Sanctification is the work of God the Father. His plan is reflected in a prayer offered by Paul in behalf of believers in Thessalonica: “*The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (I Thessalonians 5:23). Who will sanctify you? “*The very God of peace*” is a name for God the Father. He sanctifies you. “*It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13). The Word of God, applied to your heart by the illuminating ministry of the Spirit of God, will sanctify you more and more (John 17:17). Thank God that He is at work in us.

(2) Sanctification is the work of God the Son. The Bible makes it quite clear that “*we are sanctified through the offering of the Christ the body of Jesus Christ once for all*” (Hebrews 10:10). Ephesians 5:25-27 describes his work of causing us to behave according to what we are in Christ. He is sanctifying, cleansing, and washing us by the Word. He is making us glorious, removing spots and wrinkles, that we can be holy and without blemish before Him in love. He gives us what He is and He is “*wisdom, and*

righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (I Corinthians 1:30). This work which Jesus does is no small thing. He made it possible when he suffered on the cross, for sanctification is only through His blood (Hebrews 13:12). Jesus did much more than die for you two millennia ago. He lives and works in you now to make practical sanctification your daily lifestyle. Oh, how much He loves you!

(3) Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. What God the Father planned and God the Son perfected, God the Spirit performs in our lives. He is the immediate agent by whom God works in us to create the desire and execute the performance of what pleases Him. Peter wrote of the *“sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience”* (I Peter 1:2). His goal is to *“stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints”* (I Thessalonians 3:13). His control of your life delivers you from obedience to the demands of sin. (Romans 8:2). Please do not grieve the Holy Spirit by quenching His divine ministry in you. Follow Him and know the thrill of practical sanctification.

B. Sanctification is mankind’s responsibility. Understand that sanctification is not something which God does apart from our personal involvement. He says, “This is the way,” but it is up to us to walk in it. He does do so for us what we can do for ourselves, not even in this holy work.

We must believe on Christ for salvation and daily living. We must study the Bible for ourselves, trusting the Holy Spirit to open our minds to understand what we read. We must pray, offering petitions, and thanksgiving to God. We must be filled with the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. We must voluntarily yield to God by an act of our own wills, not expecting Him to work a miracle to cause us to become committed. We must discipline our lives to be pure from sin.

Fleeing the lusts of the flesh is one way we can be pure (II Timothy 2:22). It is possible for us to be totally sanctified in practice as well as in position. The goal is that our whole spirit and soul and body will be blameless before God. Does that standard seem too high? If so, it is only because the provision of the Father and the work of the Spirit are not considered. God is able to present us faultless before His presence with exceeding joy. And He will, when the work of sanctification is completed.

IV. THE TIME OF SANCTIFICATION

The Bible seems to speak of sanctification in three tenses: past, present, and future. Those three tenses relate to the spirit, soul, and body.

In relation to the past, sanctification is instantaneous. When you trusted Jesus, you were saved and sanctified in the same instant. The Holy Spirit moved within your human spirit, and you were uniquely set apart as God's own

In relation to the present, sanctification is progressive. We are sanctified as we grow up in Christ, learning more of Him and living more like Him. This is practical sanctification, the working out of that which Jesus put within.

In relation to the future, sanctification is complete. God will so purify us at the end that not even the slightest blemish will remain. That is purposed in the divine sovereignty of God and is as certain of fulfillment as if it had already been done.

God's work in you has been done, is being done, and is yet to be done. Keep on being available to Him. God is not finished with you yet!

The appeal of the Bible is that you sanctify (set apart) Christ as Lord in your own heart (I Peter 3:15), that you live in peace and harmony with your peers (Philippians 2:15), and that you make yourself totally available to God that He may work His good will in you (Philippians 2:13). That is sanctification in its most practical expression.

You are a saint of God because you are trusting Jesus. Be what you have become. *"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. . . . Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation"* (I Thessalonians 5:5-8). That is what sanctification means. That is what redemption makes possible.

Questions

1. What does sanctify mean?
2. In what sense are you sanctified?
3. How is a life of holiness related to sanctification?
4. How is personal faith in Jesus related to sanctification?
5. How is Romans 13:14 related to personal sanctification?
6. What is the work of the Father and Son in your sanctification?
7. What is the work of the Holy Spirit in your sanctification?
8. Where does your self-discipline enter into sanctification?
9. How are positional and practical sanctification distinguished?
10. What difference will sanctification make in your life this week?