

**SANCTIFICATION - The ROOTS and GROWTH of holiness in believers.**

This is the first of *three parts* on sanctification. We will study first the *meaning*, then the *scope*, and finally, the *method* of sanctification.

- 1) **SANCTIFICATION HAS TO DO WITH HOLINESS** - In fact, the words *sanctification* and *holiness* are identical in the Greek language. *Justification* has to do with being *declared* holy by God. *Sanctification* has to do with our being *made holy* in every area of our lives. Of course, there are many passages that quickly point out that these two cannot be separated in genuine Christian experience - **Titus 2:11-14** - "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."
  
- 2) **THE MAIN IDEAS BEHIND THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION** - Two related truths stand out in Scripture:
  - a) **SEPARATION or APARTNESS** - **Deuteronomy 7:6** - "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

The dominant idea is not merely being *called*, but being called "*out of all the peoples.*" Even in the calling of Israel, the idea was that they would become *exclusively God's possession*. They were to be *unlike* any other people.

This idea is carried over in speaking of the Church in the New Testament - **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." We have been *set apart for God's own possession and use*. We are to be *specifically God's possession in a way that overrides all other commitments*.
  - b) **PURITY and MORAL CLEANNESS** - This follows from the previous point. To be "*called out*" by a *holy* God requires *moral cleanness* - **Exodus 19:10-11** - "The Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments [11] and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people."

This kind of spiritual purity is initially illustrated and taught in the Old Testament in terms of *ritual or ceremonial cleanness* (ie. washings, ceremonial clothing, special utensils for worship, clean and unclean foods, etc.). We know from N.T. teaching that foods are not clean or unclean in and of themselves. But these were the early propts and teaching tools of the Old Covenant.

In the New Testament the idea of *ritual cleanness* is totally eclipsed. See Jesus' words in **Mark 7:18-19** - "And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, [19] since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.)"

Jesus goes on to rebuke the idea that outward cleansing was ever enough to please God - **Matthew 23:25** - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Only the *pure in heart* would ever see God (**Matthew 5:8**).
  
- 3) **THE BEGINNING OF SANCTIFICATION** - At the most foundational level the Scriptures frequently present the believer's sanctification is *an accomplished fact through the cross of Jesus Christ*. At times the word is almost used synonymously with *justification*: **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** - "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."
  

See also Paul's words in **1 Corinthians 1:2** - "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours...."

In other words, Christ's death not only deals with the *guilt* of our sin (justification), but also *provides cleansing for the pollution and effects of our sin* (sanctification).

This does not mean (as we shall see) that we are totally sinless. But rather, the *source* or *fountain* of inner pollution has finally found its remedy. *The remedy is not in our own selves*. God has provided strength for victory through the death of His Son.

  
- 4) **THE CONTINUATION OF SANCTIFICATION** - Perhaps a key verse here is **Hebrews 10:14** - "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." Here there seems to be a *blending of accomplished sanctification in Christ with persistent*

*striving for maturity in holiness.*

There is more on this theme in **2 Corinthians 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." Sanctification is *entire* in the sense of potential. There is no excuse for continuation in sin - "Well, I'm only human, you know..." See also **Hebrews 12:14** - "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." We can strive for holiness with expectation and confidence that it is *not* a fruitless pursuit.

It seems that the root of holiness accomplished in and through Christ's death must be worked out or "*perfected*" in constant daily practise. The bottom line seems to be I can accomplish nothing in my own strength apart from Christ. Yet, He will accomplish nothing in my life apart from my persistent willingness to follow and obey.

- 5) **THE GOAL OF SANCTIFICATION** - The goal of the Christian walk is *total Christlikeness*. John teaches that this goal will finally be reached when Jesus come again - **1 John 3:2** - "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." Jude says Jesus will present us "*blameless*" before His glorious throne - **Jude 24** - "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you *blameless* before the presence of his glory with great joy..." And Paul teaches that the sanctifying process will leave us "*blameless*" when Jesus comes again - "**1 Thessalonians 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."

Until Jesus comes again *God* will faithfully keep working in our lives - **Philippians 1:6** - "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." And *we* will keep purifying our hearts - **1 John 3:3** - "And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

- 6) **THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF "PERFECTION" DESCRIBED IN THE SCRIPTURES** - The Bible teaches that there is a *perfection of character and intention* that we are to strive for in this life. *Job* (**Job 1:1**), *Noah* (**Genesis 6:9**), and *Daniel* (**Ezekiel 14:14, 20**) are all called "*perfect*" (or "*just*" or "*righteous*") in this sense. Titus says that elders are to be "*blameless*" (**Titus 1:5-6**).

But in these passages "*perfect*" means *mature or solid in heart and intentions and thinking*. This kind of perfection is seen in Paul's words in **Philippians 3:15** - "[15] Let those of us who are mature (or "perfect") think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you." This is perfection in terms of "*pressing on to the goal*" and *not being side-tracked*. None of us will be absolutely sinless in this earthly life (see **1 John 1:8**).