

SALVATION AND SANCTIFICATION

The word “sanctification” is a very Biblical word, but it has become an emotional word among professing Christians. Sanctification is placed in the same category as words such as “blood,” “saved,” “baptism” or “brother.” These words offend some people because often they have been terribly abused by radical Christian groups who are better known for their emotionalism than for their Bible understanding. Sanctification has become associated with the unbiblical teachings of sinless perfectionism, eradication of sin and the higher life. However, sanctification is a Biblical term and a precious concept. Without an understanding of it we will never really grasp what our salvation is all about.

In its broadest sense, sanctification deals with how a Christian can overcome sin in his life. Sanctification teaches a person how to effectively handle anger, hate, temper, bad habits, envy, jealousy, sexual lust, gluttony, laziness and any other sin that a Christian may be guilty of experiencing. We will not have an intelligent Biblical basis to deal with these problems until we understand the meaning of sanctification.

MEANING OF SANCTIFICATION

The primary meaning of sanctification is separation and connotes the idea of to set apart or consecration. Jesus Christ, who is perfect moral holiness, is said to sanctify Himself. *“And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth”* (John 17:19). Christ set Himself apart to die on the cross for sinful men. In the Old Testament, when something was set apart, it would then become holy or sanctified.

The secondary meaning of sanctification involves the idea of moral or ethical holiness as seen in such Biblical words as “renewal,” “sanctification,” “cleansing,” and “transforming.” Therefore we conclude that sanctification has the idea of being made holy or righteous. *“It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality”* (includes premarital and extramarital sex)” (1 Thess. 4:3).

The Biblical words “sanctification,” “holy,” and “saint,” all come from the same root in the Greek so they all mean basically the same thing. The context must determine whether they are being spoken of in their primary sense of set apart to holiness or their secondary sense of being made holy.

GENERAL DEFINITION OF SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is a work of God whereby, through the death of Christ, He sets apart the Christian for divine possession, worship and service.

SANCTIFICATION AS RELATED TO SALVATION [See CHART #1]

Salvation is the word that describes the totality of our spiritual lives. Salvation means to deliver and Christians are delivered from sin through Christ. Salvation, then, is an all inclusive term, and sanctification is one aspect or phase of salvation.

Salvation has three basic aspects to it. It is past, present and future; that is, we have been saved, we are being saved and we will be saved in eternity. As Christians, we have been delivered from the guilt and penalty of sin the moment we were touched by God’s grace and believed in Christ. Christians have been saved because Christ died for their sins in a positional sense.

“Who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time” (2 Tim. 1:9).

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

This positional salvation deals with our justification, for now the Christian has a new standing before God as one who is declared righteous in God’s sight from all his sins because Christ died for his sins.

There is another aspect of salvation which is present salvation. While our position is perfect before God through the death of Christ, as Christians we still have sin in our lives and need deliverance from it. We are being delivered from the power of sin in our daily experience.

“For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.” (2 Cor. 2:15).

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 1:6).

This experiential salvation deals with our sanctification. God is at work in the life of every Christian, and the Christian not only needs to lay hold of Christ by faith for deliverance from past sins but deliverance from present sins.

So often I have heard people stand up to give their testimonies and spend all their time on when God initially saved them, and nothing is said about God’s present work of salvation. We needed a Savior then to give us a position and standing before God, but we need a Savior now to deliver us from the power of sin. We need to emphasize what God is doing in our life now.

Still another aspect of salvation is future salvation. There is a day coming, not in this life but in the next, that every Christian will be totally delivered from the presence of sin. His body, soul and spirit will be perfect. *“Who (Christians) through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:5).* In that future day, we shall experience total freedom from sin. Oh, what a day that will be! No more sin, nor inward struggling and conflicts; no more suffering, nor tears or grief; no more self life, nor rebellion or pride. This total salvation deals with our glorification.

TYPES OF SANCTIFICATION [See CHART #2]

By taking the word “sanctification” and seeing how it is used in context, we conclude that there are four basic types of sanctification mentioned in the Bible, and they are very closely related to the phases of salvation.

1. Preparatory Sanctification. **This is a pre-Cross work whereby the Holy Spirit sets apart a person to believe in Christ.** *“Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood” (1 Pet. 1:2).*

“But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.” (2 Thess. 2:13).

God works in the heart of every person before he or she is saved. This setting apart to believe in Christ can be seen in circumstances that happened previous to salvation that made us think about our

responsibility to God. We all experienced the convicting work of the Spirit whereby we saw our sin and lostness before a holy God.

Preparatory sanctification is connected with God's sovereign purposes in salvation. God chose a person in eternity to believe. *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."* (Eph. 1:4). He sets him apart in time to believe. The work of God draws upon the sinner and the sinner believes in Christ. *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day."* (John 6:44). Each Christian can look back and see how God worked in his life before conversion. Even children born into a Christian home have been set apart in a special way to the gospel through parents who instruct them in the truth.

2. Positional Sanctification. This is a work of God based on the Cross that is a past work, a finished work and a positional work.

"To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:2).

"And that is what some of you were. 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." (1 Cor. 6:11).

The moment a person believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior he is positionally set apart unto God. This is an eternal and unchanging position. *"And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. . . because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."* (Heb. 10:10, 14).

All Christians are saints. They do not become saints but they are made saints by God at the moment of conversion. The word "saint" merely implies that one is set apart to God. Positionally the Christian is already sanctified in Christ in God's eyes but in experience much sin is still present in his life. Positional sanctification is related to past salvation. *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith"* (Eph. 2:8).

We hear of great men in church history and they are referred to as Saint Paul, Saint Peter, Saint Augustine, but the Bible teaches that every Christian is a saint and separated unto God. So it is legitimate to speak of Saint Jack, Saint Suzie, Saint Joe and Saint Betty. Sainthood is something we are and not something we become. However, those who are saints are to live saint-like.

3. Progressive Sanctification. This is a work of God based on the Cross in which a Christian is continually, gradually and progressively set apart, by means of the Holy Spirit, whereby he is being delivered from the power of sin in his daily life and enabled to live unto righteousness.

"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17)

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." (2 Cor. 7:1).

"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14).

God is at work to produce moral and ethical holiness in every Christian. God's method in progressive sanctification is to make the Christian in his experience what he already is positionally in Christ. This, however, is a lifetime process. God is sanctifying every child of God. Through every experience of life God is making the Christian holy and Christ-like. Christians have their ups and downs spiritually but they are always moving towards the goal of total sanctification. Progressive sanctification is related to present salvation because one is being delivered from the power of sin in his experience. Remember, present salvation is an experiential reality but an unfinished work.

4. Prospective Sanctification. **This is a finished work of God in bringing Christians into the exact likeness of Christ at His coming or at the time a believer dies physically.** *“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”* (1 Thess. 5:23-24). At this time there will be an eradication (removal) of the sin nature and complete separation unto God for eternal service. *“May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.”* (1 Thess. 3:13).

Prospective sanctification is related to future salvation in that one will be saved completely from the presence of sin. Future salvation is a complete reality and a final act.