

TRAINING IN GODLINESS
The Doctrine of Sanctification

LESSON ONE

I. INTRODUCTION

Exhaustive notes/resources on website.
Each lesson builds upon the previous lesson.
Each lesson will conclude with a Q&A time.

II. WHY THIS STUDY?

- Why is it imperative that every Christian grows in their understanding and personal pursuit of sanctification?

#1 Our sanctification is the very will of God!

- I Thessalonians 4:3, *“For this is the will of God, our sanctification.”*
- Romans 8:29, *“For those whom He (God) foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.”*

God in the gospel has purposed to glory Himself in the sanctification of a people that He saves from sin

- The secret will of God and the preceptive will of God.

#2 Our sanctification testifies to the truthfulness of the gospel to an unbelieving world.

- John 13:35, *“By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*
- The Lord God has one singular command that He says to His blood bought people that captures the essence of this entire study, “BE HOLY FOR I AM HOLY!”
- To be HOLY is an inflexible command and reality threaded through the old and new covenants!
- Holiness (i.e., sanctification) bears witness to the saving power of the gospel.

#3 Our individual sanctification advances the corporate sanctification of the church.

- Our personal pursuit in sanctification, our growth in godliness is for the benefit of the church.

- Ephesians 3:1-2, *“For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given... **to me... for you**”*
- If I neglect personal sanctification, I not only hurt myself, but I hurt the body to which I am membered.
- God has ordained that the health and growth of Christ’s body will be in proportion to every members sanctification.
- To the degree that sanctification is misunderstood, minimized, or tragically neglected in our lives personally, will be to the degree the local church collectively will be weakened and ineffective in the world.

III. SANCTIFICATION DEFINED

- The word “sanctification”, or “sanctify”, means very simply to “set apart”.
- Holy in OT and in NT, both mean “to set apart”; which is where we get the terminology sanctify/sanctified or sanctification...to set apart. And this is important.
- Sanctification is where we are set apart from sin and set apart to God.
- “Sanctification” and “holy” are interchangeable words conveying the same concept or reality. Sanctification is holiness!

“Sanctification is the believers becoming in experience what grace has purposed him to be. Sanctification is living in the reality of gospel grace.”

Joel Beeke & Michael Barret

Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith

“As the all-sufficient Savior, Christ also sanctifies his people, cleansing them from the impurity of sin and setting them apart for God and his service. The renewing work of the Holy Spirit breaks their bondage to sin and Satan and raises them to new life, enabling believers to put sin to death and grow in likeness to Christ. Sanctification is therefore both a definitive act of God and a progressive work of the Spirit. Believers must persevere in faith and obedience in order to be saved. Yet this perseverance is also a gift of God in Christ, who preserves his own and keeps them safe forever. The ultimate goal of sanctification is our full conformity to Christ’s image, which will finally come when believers are raised physically with Christ in glory, freed from sin and exulting in the presence of God forever.”

London Baptist Confession of Faith (LBCF) Chapter 13 of Sanctification

Section one: 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. The dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the various evil desires that arise from it are more and more weakened and put to death. At the same time, those called and regenerated are more and more enlivened and strengthened in all saving graces so that they practice true holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

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

Section three: In this war, the remaining corruption may greatly prevail for a time. Yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part overcomes. 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.

- Sanctification occurs under three phases or aspects:

“Definitive”, “Progressive” and “Climactic”

1st heading is Definitive

- Definitive sanctification (or sometimes known as initial sanctification or sanctification begun) is a radical breach with the dominion of sin.
- Definitive sanctification has to do with that precise moment in time when we are instantaneously brought out of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God.
- Definitive sanctification is when God the Holy Spirit sets us apart “positionally” in Jesus Christ.
- Definitive sanctification is a one-time unrepeatable act. It is describing that glorious moment when we are **set apart** from sin and death and **set apart** to God, through union with Christ!
- When the God all of grace comes to us in the gospel it finds us not only in need of deliverance from the pardon of sin, but it finds us in need of deliverance from the pollution and power of sin. It takes a whole gospel to save the whole sinner!
- I 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.

Implication: Definitive sanctification is **NOT** *progressive*, it is *positional*!

2nd heading is Progressive

- Progressive or continuous sanctification is a gradual process of purification from sin and of increasing conformity to the likeness of Christ.
- Although sin no longer reigns (Definitive Sanctification) it does remain (and therefore necessitates Progressive Sanctification).
- Progressive sanctification has to do with lifelong obedience and growth.
- Romans 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.*”
- Progressive sanctification is where all the joys, challenges, advances, set-backs, encouragements, and discouragements occur.
- Progressive sanctification is spiritual warfare!

3rd heading is Climactic

- Climactic sanctification (or final sanctification or sanctification completed) is that 3rd and final aspect of our sanctification by which we experience **final** deliverance from the very presence of sin, and we are perfected in the image of Christ!
- Climactic sanctification is identical to definitive sanctification in that it also occurs in a moment of time. It is instantaneous. It occurs at the moment we die and leave this earth and go to be with the Lord.
- Hebrews 12:23, “*The spirit of the just made perfect.*”
- It is only when Christ comes again and raises our body to immortality that we will then experience the totality of our salvation.

IV. THE NECESSITY OF SANCTIFICATION

- Sin makes sanctification absolutely necessary!

“He that wishes to attain right views about Christian holiness (sanctification) must begin by examining the vast and solemn subject of sin.”

“Dim or indistinct views of sin are the origin of most of the errors, heresies, and false doctrines of the present day. If a man does not realize the dangerous nature of his soul’s disease, you cannot wonder if he is content with false or imperfect remedies.”

J.C. Ryle

- If we have a low view of God and a low view of sin... then repenting, taking up our cross daily, working out our salvation with fear and trembling and diligently obeying all the imperatives in the NT, will be minimized at best, or it will be ignored at worst.
- If we have a high view of God, a biblical view of His holiness and majesty and beauty, then we will take sanctification seriously b/c sanctification is the lifelong fight to kill remaining sin and to become more like God.
- We must pursue sanctification (battling sin) as Scripture prescribes.
- We need a biblically realistic perspective on what we can and cannot achieve in this battle. We need biblically realistic objectives.

But sanctification is also necessary b/c... **Holiness is true beauty.**

- I Chronicles 16:29, *“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering and come before Him! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.”*
- Psalms 27:4, *“One thing I have asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple.”*
- Psalms 29:2, *“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.”*
- Psalms 96:2, *“Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before Him all the earth.”*
- This splendor or beauty is amplified under the NT as we read of the frequent admonition to be cleansed, to be washed in the water of the word, and perhaps most emphatically, we are to put on...the Lord Jesus Christ!
- Christ is the epitome of beauty, of splendor and of holiness!
- Revelation 21 v.2, *“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.’”*
- The last great act of God in salvation is to consummate the marriage of His Son to the people He chose out of the world to give to his Son.
- The bride of Christ makes herself ready through a faithful pursuit of righteousness!

- The bride while she is on earth is in the betrothal phase. She has made vows to commit herself to single hearted devotion to Christ by faith. This is the engagement period. But the wedding is still future.
- The bride's whole duty while she is in this body on earth... is sanctification.

WHY all this fuss??

- The bride is preparing herself and making herself beautiful for Christ so that she can worship Him forever and glorify Him forever in the very beauty and splendor of looking just like Him!

V. TWO CLOSING AND CONVICTING STATEMENTS

#1 there is no biblical salvation without sanctification as an indispensable part of that salvation.

- Hebrews 12:14, *“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”*
- Sanctification is not optional. Grace always involves the real change.
- We must always be aware of any presentation of the gospel that makes sanctification unnecessary or optional.

2nd there is no sanctification outside of Christ.

- Any attempt to become like Christ apart from feeding upon our blessed and secure identity in Christ will lead to great angst and great discouragement.
- Sanctification must constantly be rooted in our unchangeable status as justified sinners and the irreversible nature of our adoption as sons and daughters of God.