

APPLYING TRUTH TO LIFE

Grace Gatherings

THEOLOGY NIGHTS | JUNE 26, 2024

GRACE CHURCH
WILLIAMSBURG

Question 20

Explain the **synergistic** nature of sanctification being sure to describe the **relationship** between **God's grace** and **moral effort** in the Christian life.

Question 20

Sanctification (past and permanent):

- The basic meaning of sanctification is **separation** or to be **set apart from**.

Question 20

Sanctification (past and permanent):

- The **past** aspect of separation is sometimes referred to as **definitive** sanctification.
 - A believer **has experienced** (past tense) a **separation** from sin—a definitive (definite, decisive) **break with sin**—so that sin is no longer a ruling power in a believer's life.
 - Sin's dominion or rule over you **has been broken** through your spiritual union with Christ as God declared you righteous in His sight (justified you).
 - This aspect of your sanctification (being set apart **from** sin and **to** God **forever**) happened to you at the moment of your salvation.
 - Colossians 1:13-14; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Question 20

Sanctification (past and permanent):

- In this past-tense reality of God making you His child forever, you are His spiritual child who needs to **mature** in your relationship with Jesus Christ. That is the nature of your present, progressive sanctification—you are progressively being set apart from sin as you become more like Jesus; this is spiritual growth.

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

Q20: “Explain the **synergistic** nature of sanctification...”

prefix: **syn** = with

root: **erg** = a unit of work or energy

[*syn/with + erg/work = work with*]

Synergism is a **cooperative** venture, a **working together** of two or more parties.

Sanctification is the **process** of **growing in** our [knowledge], trust, and dependence on God especially in our suffering. (*Heath Lambert*)

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

- The synergistic nature of our sanctification is:
 - **God's** activity/energy/work **combined with** the activity/energy/work **of a believer** to accomplish that believer's **spiritual growth**.
- Our sanctification stresses both the **cooperative** and **progressive** aspects of our spiritual growth.

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

- **Progressive sanctification** is a **gradual process of becoming** more like Jesus in attitudes and actions, and whereby “the Spirit enables the believer both to **put off** sinful patterns of life and **replace** them with holy ones.” (*Jay Adams*)

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

- Our sanctification is a **progressively** motivating and empowering work of God where we **obediently cooperate** with the priority and work of the Holy Spirit for our **growth** in Christlikeness (holiness).
 - 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:29 – believers “...**are being** transformed...” and are “predestined **to become** conformed to the image of His Son.”
 - As believers who **have been** spiritually joined with Jesus Christ for all eternity, here and now we must **grow in** likeness to Jesus (into His image) in increasing, but varying, **degrees** throughout our lives.

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

Q20: “...being sure to describe the **relationship** between **God’s grace** and **moral effort** in the Christian life.”

- Peter jumpstarts us in our understanding of grace and moral effort:
 - 1 Peter 2:24 – The work that Jesus did for us on the cross, bearing our sins as our Substitute, was “so that **having died** to sin we **might live to righteousness...**”
 - 2 Peter 3:18 – “...but **grow in** the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

What is God's **grace**?

- “Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits on the underserving.” (*A.W. Tozer*)
- Grace is “the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit.” (*Louis Berkhof*)
- Grace is “the free and benevolent influence of a holy God operating sovereignly in the lives of undeserving sinners.” (*John MacArthur*)

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

At its center, God's grace is **His divine favor** worked in the hearts of undeserving people. Graciousness is an attribute of God, so that it is His nature to bestow grace.

- *“He is gracious and compassionate and righteous.”* (Ps. 112:4)

God works His grace in us; it is not something we can control, manipulate, or appropriate at our pleasure or discretion.

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

Grace "...is not some kind of ethereal blessing that lies idle until we appropriate it. Grace is **God's sovereign initiative** to sinners (Eph. 1:5-6). Grace is not a one-time event in the Christian experience. **We stand in grace** (Rom. 5:2). The **entire** Christian life is driven and empowered by grace: *'it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods. (Heb. 13:9)'* (John MacArthur)

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

What is **moral effort** in the Christian life?

- Moral effort refers to our work of living in obedience to God's commands.
- Apart from God's saving grace (favor, power, and lovingkindness) to include His gift of faith at work in our hearts, all our works or efforts at moral/right living would be as filthy rags to the Lord.
- God calls on us to show our love for and loyalty to Jesus as we strive, work out, and labor in holy living.
 - Colossians 1:9-12, 28-29; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Corinthians 10:13-14; Ephesians 5:6-10; James 4:6-10

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

Now notice the vital relationship between **God's Word** and personal holiness as we see it in the **four steps of personal change** outlined in **2 Timothy 3:16**:

1. **Teaching** – the comprehensive, sufficient **content** of the Bible. The Bible is our wealth of heavenly wisdom making us heavenly-minded.
2. **Reproof** – the work of God's Word in us to **expose** falsehood, sin, wrong thinking, disobedience, etc., **rightly and accurately**. What **not** to do!
3. **Correction** – the work of God's Word to make **positive provision** for those who accept Scripture's negative reproof. What **to** do!
4. **Training** – the work of God's Word to **instruct and build us up** in a spiritually disciplined life of righteousness—godly thinking/living.

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

And notice the basis, or the only **profitable source**, of this process of change:

- ***“All Scripture...”*** = God’s truth!

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

The **progressive nature** of our sanctification concerns our lives bearing the spiritual **fruit** of the spiritual **root** of our **union** with Jesus.

We are growing up into who we are in Christ—we are new spiritual creatures who are learning to love, honor, and please God in the **works** of our lives which He declares **good**.

- Romans 7:4; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 2:10

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

Satan schemes to use the systems of this world against us living holy lives which please the Lord, and psychology is a powerful weapon in Satan's arsenal.

Secular psychology and its various modalities **hijack** the sanctification process and **redefine** what it means to change and grow.

The psychologies of our day are **religious systems of belief** which apply those beliefs through pseudo-scientific therapies under the guise of a medical model.

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

At best, these religious strategies keep **self at the center** and train you to navigate the issues of life by a series of **coping strategies**. Change is measured by your ability to cope with your trials, challenges, fears, failures, and suffering.

“While the **Bible** diagnoses the problems of sin and evil as being **spiritual** and **personal**, the **world** misdiagnoses the same problems of sin and evil as **situational** and **societal**. The world locates sin and evil outside of us.

“That **misdiagnosis** compounds the issue of **self-deception** leading to a prideful pursuit of what’s right in their own eyes.”¹

Question 20

Sanctification (present and progressive):

The various methods, therapies, and diagnoses of psychology are **man-centered explanations and false cures** which support the world's views of what is fundamentally wrong with mankind.

As God's holy people, there is no need for us to mix **man-centered views** of change, based in idol worship, with **Christ-exalting truth** to help us grow in Christlikeness.

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