

APPLYING TRUTH TO LIFE

Grace Gatherings

THEOLOGY NIGHTS | JUNE 19, 2024

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Q18: Describe the doctrine of **Union with Christ explaining its biblical basis and implications for Christian living**

Q19: Explain the biblical categories of past, present, and future **sanctification.**

These two questions concern a Christian's **nature**; they help us answer **who** and **what** we are in our relationship to God as our Creator, Savior, and as our Father.

We are helped to zero in on our Christian **identity** when we reflect on how the Bible describes us as **unholy unbelievers**:

- Galatians 3:10
- Ephesians 2:1-3, 11-12; 4:17-19
 - That describes who we **were**.

Our **spiritual identity change** from unholy to holy concerns the **past aspect** of our sanctification.

- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 *“And such **were** some of you; **but...**”*
 - you were **“washed”** = regenerated, cleansed, purified
 - you were **“sanctified”** = set apart to God, made holy
 - you were **“justified”** = declared righteous, put in right standing with

“Sanctification...is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are **renewed** in the whole man after the image of God, and are **enabled** more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.” *(J.I. Packer)*

“Sanctification...

being made holy

is the work of God’s free grace,

God working in us His undeserved, unconditional, saving favor

whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God,

a one-time, once-for-all, past-tense aspect of being made like God in holiness in our whole person

and are enabled more and more to die unto sin,

daily repentance and self-denial and the killing of our unholy desires waging war in our hearts

and live unto righteousness.”

daily replacing by striving to obey and please Jesus in keeping with our new nature as His holy ones

“The concept is **not** of sin being totally **eradicated** (that is to claim too much) or merely **counteracted** (that is to say too little), but of a **divinely wrought character change freeing** us from sinful habits and **forming** in us Christlike affections, dispositions, and virtues.”

(J.I. Packer quoting from Question #35 of the Westminster Confession)

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.

These last few questions have been bringing us to a biblical/theological understanding of how God **makes** us holy in our spiritual union with Jesus Christ, and now, by that union, how it is that God **matures** us as His holy people into greater and greater likeness to Jesus Christ in our daily living.

Question 20

Our spiritual **union** with Jesus **establishes** us in **continual** spiritual **communion** with Jesus.

We are **positioned** in spiritual **union** with Jesus, so that we can **progress** in our spiritual **communion** with Jesus.

God positions us in Christ, and that **positional** sanctification (holiness) **never changes or waivers**.

But our communion and sense of closeness to Jesus does change and can waiver.

Question 20

This is because... **we are not in heaven yet!** That is the primary reason we need to **progressively grow into** greater Christlikeness. Another reason concerns...

1. Our **world** (the who, what, and why of how the world works to affect us)
2. Our **fleshly desires** (worldly, selfish, prideful habit patterns, perceptions, and desires)
3. Our **spiritual adversary** (the devil)

All work to disrupt, distort, discourage, and deceive us in these truths related to our identity in Jesus and regarding our walk with Jesus (2 Cor. 11:3).

Question 20

What is **monergism** and **synergism** as they apply to our sanctification?

These theological labels help us make **distinctions** in God's work of sanctifying us—making us holy and growing us in His holiness.

Monergism or monergy:

prefix: **mono** = that which is single or alone

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

Monergism is something that **operates by itself** or **works alone** as the **sole active party**.

Question 20

Monergism is the **opposite** of synergism (common root, different prefix)

Synergism or synergy:

prefix: **syn** = with, or work with

root: **ergy** = 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.

Question 20

There are both monergistic and synergistic aspects of your salvation/sanctification.

God's **monergistic** works are those which **God alone works** or accomplishes in you and for you at the moment you are born again (become a Christian).

- **Calling**: God **calls on all** to repent. His call to His **elect effectively** brings them to repentance (effectual call).
- **Regeneration**: God gives us **new spiritual life**—a new heart to know, love, and obey Him.
- **Justification**: God **declares** us to be in **right legal standing** before Him because he credits us with the perfect righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ.
- **Adoption**: God acts to make us **members of His family**.

Question 20

Considering **this** lesson, we can also add two additional aspects of our salvation which refer to a **synergistic** (cooperative) work regarding our salvation, holiness, or our spiritual growth in likeness to Jesus:

- Conversion
- Sanctification

Question 20

- Conversion:

By God's gift of faith, we **repent** of sins and **trust** Christ for our salvation. **God moves** in us first, bringing us from death to life (regeneration) through faith in Christ. He gives us the gifts of faith and repentance, and **we must respond to God** in that faith (in Christ) to repent of or **to turn away from our sins** and **turn to trust in Jesus**. We must become **active** in **response** to God.

God does not do our believing for us; God does not choose for us. Our believing and choosing (our belief and confession—confession being an act of the will) are **responding** to God's gracious gifts for all that we need to trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

We trust, believe, confess, repent, and obey from the new heart God gives us.
(Luke 6:45; Rom. 10:9-10)

Question 20

- Sanctification (present and progressive):

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

We know, grow, trust, depend on, and obey Christ in a **progressive, dynamic, cooperative** relationship.

Jesus created the spiritual **priority** and **privilege** for this cooperative effort.

- John 17:16-19, 20-26

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