

Sanctification

- The issue
 - Apart from salvation, we are children of wrath by nature, enslaved to sin (Rom 6:6, 19; Eph 2:1-3).
 - At the moment of our new birth/regeneration, we are saved, but we are babes in Christ.
 - The moment we place faith in Christ, we are justified, with the result that we are declared perfectly righteous in our standing. However, we are not perfectly righteous in our practice.
 - Sanctification begins the process of making us progressively righteous in practice. In other words, sanctification begins to match our *practice* with our *position*.
- Definition
 - Consequent of regeneration, the believer is progressively conformed in thought, worship, motivation, and deed by the work of the Spirit, making the believer holy in his practice.
 - “Sanctification negatively signifies the mortification of the old nature...Positively sanctification implies the vivification of the new nature.”¹
- Scripture
 - Sanctification is both the work of God and the regenerate

Philippians 2:12-13 So then, my beloved...work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and

¹ Demarest, 409.

to work for His good pleasure.

- Sanctification is a guarantee of all who are justified

Romans 8:29-30 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (cf. Matt. 13:23)

Hebrews 12:14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

- Sanctification occurs in those united to Christ

John 15:5-6 “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.”

- Sanctification occurs through the means of grace

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Various means of grace by which the Holy Spirit furthers our sanctification:

- Scripture (biblical preaching, meditating) (John 17:17, 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- Prayer (Matt. 26:41, Phil. 4:6-7)
- Accountability with and meaningful involvement in the local church (Heb. 3:12-14, 10:24-25)
- God’s providence in our lives, such as suffering (Rom. 8:28-29, Heb. 12:10, Jas. 1:2-4, 1 Pet. 1:3-7)
- Obedience to Christ (John 14:15, 15:10)

- Sanctification involves being Spirit-led to put our sin to death

Romans 8:12-14 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 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. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Sanctification occurs through seeing, loathing, confessing, and turning from sinful idols, “I-must-haves” of the heart, and self-preferring motivations: sanctification is of the heart. It is not learning what to say and not say, or what to do and not do, so as to solicit the proper response from others. Rather, sanctification is a genuine transformation of the heart into humble Christlikeness.

- Sanctification will be completed in the regenerate’s life by God

Philippians 1:6 *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

- Timing

- When does sanctification occur in the believer’s life?
- Sanctification begins the moment of regeneration and is completed upon death/glorification.

- Described

- Demarest: “The close relation between justification and sanctification means that God not only declares repentant sinners righteous but that through the Spirit’s graces he actually makes them so. The God who re-creates sinners via the new birth (1 Pet. 1:3, 23) faithfully renews them into the image of his Son.”²
- Murray: “An all-important consideration derived from the priority of calling and regeneration is that sin is dethroned in every person who is effectually called and regenerated.”³

² Demarest, 386.

³ Murray, 150.

- Calvin: “Christ justified no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify.” “No one can be an heir of heaven who has not first been conformed to the only begotten Son of God.”⁴
 - Sanctification is inevitable for the regenerate person.
 - Every regenerate person will experience sanctification. Sanctification is the consequence of regeneration.
 - Romans 8:29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son
 - John Owen: “Let not men deceive themselves, sanctification is a qualification indispensably necessary unto those who will be under the conduct of the Lord Christ unto salvation. He leads none to heaven but whom he sanctifies on the earth. This living Head will not admit of dead members.”
 - Calvin: “Christ justified no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify.”⁵

“No one can be an heir of heaven who has not first been conformed to the only begotten Son of God.”⁶
 - This does not mean that the prerequisite for entrance into heaven is perfect conformity in character to Jesus Christ. Eternal life is received as a gift by faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16). However, it does mean that justification/saving faith will result in a transformation.
- James 2:14–20 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. ¹⁸

⁴ John Calvin, Book 3, Chapter 16, Section 1 and *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, David W. and Thomas F. Torrance, eds., (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1961), 181.

⁵ Quoted in Demarest, 403.

⁶ Ibid., 403.

But someone may *well* say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” ¹⁹ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰ But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

- Sanctification involves a battle for the regenerate person.
 - Sanctification is not an easy process.
 - It involves a battle of the heart and desires. The battle only begins at regeneration. This battle is the norm for God’s children because upon regeneration, the Spirit enters their heart and, for the first time, fights previously unrestrained sinful thoughts, motivations, and desires.

Galatians 5:16–17 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

- J.C. Ryle: “A true Christian is one who has not only peace of conscience, but war within. He may be known by his warfare as well as his peace.”⁷
- The sensing of a battle within one’s heart against sin should not be discouraging. On the contrary, it should be encouraging. Prior to regeneration, there was no real battle, only succumbing to sin.
- Thus, the presence of the battle ought to encourage the believer that the Spirit of God is at work in sanctification.
- J.C. Ryle: “There is no holiness without a warfare. Saved souls will always be found to have fought a fight...We must either fight or be lost...All, from the Queen in her palace down to the pauper in the

⁷ J.C. Ryle, *Holiness* (Moscow, Id.: Charles Nolan Publishers, 2002), p. 26.

workhouse, all must fight, if they would be saved.”⁸

➤ Jenkyn: “The Pope’s calendar only makes saints of the dead, but Scripture requires sanctity in the living.”⁹

- Sanctification will not look the same in every believer
 - While every regenerate person experiences sanctification, not all experience the same measure.
 - Some experience 30-fold, some 60, and some 100 (cf. Matt 13:23).
 - Sinclair Ferguson has said that some believers have to travel further than others to get to similar points in the journey of walking with the Lord.
 - This should produce a demeanor of love and grace from believers towards one another in the Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 13:7).

- Recommended resources

- *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, John Murray, (Eerdmans, 2015), Chapter 7: Sanctification.
- *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Biblical Truth*, eds. John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, pp. 359-379, (Crossway, 2017).
- *The Cross and Salvation*, Bruce Demarest, (Crossway, 1997), Chapter 10: The Doctrine of Sanctification.

⁸ Ryle, 67, 68.

⁹ Quoted in J.C. Ryle, *Holiness*, 57.