

## The Doctrines of Salvation: Sanctification

from *Great Doctrines of the Bible* by William Evans

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### SANCTIFICATION.

If Regeneration has to do with our nature, Justification with our standing, and Adoption with our position, then Sanctification has to do with our character and conduct. In Justification we are declared righteous in order that, in Sanctification, we may become righteous. Justification is what God does for us, while Sanctification is what God does in us. Justification puts us into a right relationship with God, while Sanctification exhibits the fruit of that relationship—a life separated from a sinful world and dedicated unto God.

### I. THE MEANING OF SANCTIFICATION.

Two thoughts are prominent in this definition: separation from evil, and dedication unto God and His service.

#### 1. SEPARATION FROM EVIL.

2 Chron. 29:5, 15-18—"Sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God ... and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy places ... And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness ... Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the Lord." 1 Thess. 4:3—"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." See also Heb. 9:3; Exod. 19:20-22; Lev. 11:44.

It is evident from these scriptures that sanctification has to do with the turning away from all that is sinful and that is defiling to both soul and body.

#### 2. SEPARATION OR DEDICATION UNTO GOD.

In this sense whatever is set apart from a profane to a sacred use, whatever is devoted exclusively to the service of God, is sanctified. So it follows that a man may "sanctify his house to be holy unto the Lord," or he may "sanctify unto the Lord some part of a field of his possession" (Lev. 27:14, 16). So also the first-born of all the children were sanctified unto the Lord (Num. 8:17). Even the Son of God Himself, in so far as He was set apart by the Father and sent into the world to do God's will, was sanctified (John 10:36). Whenever a thing or person is separated from the common relations of life in order to be

devoted to the sacred, such is said to be sanctified.

### **3. IT IS USED OF GOD.**

Whenever the sacred writers desire to show that the Lord is absolutely removed from all that is sinful and unholy, and that He is absolutely holy in Himself they speak of Him as being sanctified: "When I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" (Ezek. 36:23).

## **II. THE TIME OF SANCTIFICATION.**

Sanctification may be viewed as past, present, and future; or instantaneous, progressive, and complete.

### **1. INSTANTANEOUS SANCTIFICATION.**

1 Cor. 6:11—"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Heb. 10:10, 14—"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ... For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." By the death of Jesus Christ the sanctification of the believer takes place at once. The very moment a man believes in Christ he is sanctified, that is, in this first sense: he is separated from sin and separated unto God. For this reason all through the New Testament believers are called saints (1 Cor. 1:2, R.V.; Rom. 1:7, R.V.). If a man is not a saint he is not a Christian; if he is a Christian he is a saint. In some quarters people are canonized after they are dead; the New Testament canonizes believers while they are alive. Note how that in 1 Cor. 6:11 "sanctified" is put before "justified." The believer grows *in* sanctification rather than *into* sanctification out of something else. By a simple act of faith in Christ the believer is at once put into a state of sanctification. Every Christian is a sanctified man. The same act that ushers him into the state of justification admits him at once into the state of sanctification, in which he is to grow until he reaches the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ.

### **2. PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION.**

Justification differs from Sanctification thus: the former is an instantaneous act with no progression; while the latter is a crisis with a view to a process—an act, which is instantaneous and which at the same time carries with it the idea of growth unto completion.

2 Pet. 3:18—"But grow in (the) grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 3:18—We "are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the

Spirit." The tense is interesting here: We are being transformed from one degree of character, or glory, to another. It is because sanctification is progressive, a growth, that we are exhorted to "increase and abound" (1 Thess. 3:12), and to "abound more and more" (4:1, 10) in the graces of the Christian life. The fact that there is always danger of contracting defilement by contact with a sinful world, and that there is, in the life of the true Christian, an ever increasing sense of duty and an ever-deepening consciousness of sin, necessitates a continual growth and development in the graces and virtues of the believer's life. There is such a thing as "perfecting holiness" (2 Cor. 7:1). God's gift to the church of pastors and teachers is for the purpose of the perfecting of the saints in the likeness of Christ *until*, at last, they attain unto the fulness of the divine standard, even Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:11-15). Holiness is not a mushroom growth; it is not the thing of an hour; it grows as the coral reef grows: little by little, degree by degree. See also Phil. 3:10-15.

### **3. COMPLETE AND FINAL SANCTIFICATION.**

1 Thess. 5:23, R.V.—"And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Wholly" means complete in every part, perfect in every respect, whether it refers to the Church as a whole, or to the individual believer. Some day the believer is to be complete in all departments of Christian character —no Christian grace missing. Complete in the "spirit" which links him with heaven; in the "body" which links him with earth; in the "soul" as being that on which heaven and earth play. Maturity in each separate element of Christian character: body, soul, and spirit.

This blessing of entire and complete sanctification is to take place when Christ comes: 1 Thess. 3:13—"To the end that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." It is when we shall see Him that we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2). How explicitly Paul puts the matter in Phil. 3:12-14, R.V.—"Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

### **III. THE MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION.**

How are men sanctified? What means are used, and what agencies employed to make men holy and conform them into the likeness of Christ? The agencies and means are both divine and human: both God and man contributing and co-operating towards this desired end.

## **1. FROM THE DIVINE SIDE: IT IS THE WORK OF THE TRIUNE GOD.**

### **a) God the Father.**

1 Thess. 5:23, 24, R.V.—"And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly ... Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it." God's work is here contrasted with human efforts to achieve the preceding injunctions. Just as in Hebrews 12:2, and Philippians 1:6, the Beginner of faith is also the Finisher; so is it here; consequently the end and aim of every exhortation is but to strengthen faith in God who is able to accomplish these things for us. Of course there is a sense in which the believer is responsible for his progress in the Christian life (Phil. 3:12, 13), yet it is nevertheless true that, after all, it is the divine grace which works all in him (Phil. 2:12, 13). We cannot purify ourselves, but we can yield to God and then the purity will come. The "God of peace," He who reconciles us—is the One who sanctifies us. It is as if the apostle said: "God, by His mighty power will do for you what I, by my admonitions, and you by your own efforts, cannot do." See also John 17:17—"Sanctify them through thy truth." Christ addresses God as the One who is to sanctify the disciples.

### **b) Jesus Christ the Son.**

Heb. 10:10, R.V.—"By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The death of Jesus Christ separates the believer from sin and the world, and sets him apart as redeemed and dedicated to the service of God. This same truth, namely, the sanctification of the church as based on the sacrificial death of Christ, is set forth in Eph. 5:25, 27—"Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it." Christ is "made unto us ... sanctification" (1 Cor. 1:30). See also Heb. 13:12, R.V.

### **c) The Holy Spirit Sanctifies.**

1 Pet. 1:2—"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit." 2 Thess. 2:13—" ... Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." The Holy Spirit seals, attests, and confirms the work of grace in the soul by producing the fruits of

righteousness therein. It is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus who gives us freedom from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). He is called the *Holy Spirit*, not only because He is absolutely holy Himself, but also because he produces that quality of soul-character in the believer. The Spirit is the executive of the God-head for this very purpose. It is the Spirit's work to war against the lusts of the flesh and enable us to bring forth fruit unto holiness (Gal. 5:17-22). How wonderfully this truth is set forth in the contrast between the seventh and eighth chapters of Romans. Note the unsuccessful struggle of the former, and the victory of the latter. Note also that there is no mention of the Holy Spirit in the seventh, while He is mentioned about sixteen times in the eighth chapter. Herein lies the secret of failure and victory, sin and holiness.

## **2. FROM THE HUMAN SIDE.**

### **a) Faith in the Redemptive Work of Jesus Christ.**

1 Cor. 1:30, R.V.—"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Christ is indeed all these things to us, but, in reality, He becomes such only as we appropriate Him for ourselves. Only as the believer, daily, yea, even momentarily, takes by faith the holiness of Jesus, His faith, His patience, His love, His grace, to be his own for the need of that very moment, can Christ, who by His death was made unto him sanctification in the instantaneous sense, become unto him sanctification in the progressive sense—producing in the believer His own life moment by moment. Herein lies the secret of a holy life—the momentarily appropriation of Jesus Christ in all the riches of His grace for every need as it arises. The degree of our sanctification is the proportion of our appropriation of Christ. See also Acts 26:18.

### **b) The Study of the Scriptures and Obedience Thereto.**

John 17:17—"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Eph. 5:26—"That he might sanctify and cleanse it (i.e., the Church) with the washing of water by the word." John 15:3—"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Our sanctification is limited by our limitation in the knowledge of and our lack of obedience to the Word of God. How does the Word of God sanctify? By revealing sin; by awakening conscience; by revealing the character of Christ; by showing the example of Christ; by offering the influences and powers of the Holy Spirit, and by setting forth spiritual motives and ideals. There is no power like that of the Word of God for detaching a man from the world, the flesh and the devil.

### **c) Various Other Agencies.**

Heb. 12:14, R.V.—"Follow after ... the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord." To "follow after" means to pursue, to persecute, as Saul of Tarsus pursued and followed the early Christians. One cannot become a saint in his sleep. Holiness must be the object of his pursuit. The lazy man will not be the holy man.

Heb. 12:10, 11: God chastens us "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Chastisement ofttimes is intended to "produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

Rom. 6:19-32; 2 Cor. 6:17, 7:1. Sanctification is brought about in the life of the believer by his separating himself deliberately from all that is unclean and unholy, and by presenting, continually and constantly, the members of his body as holy instruments unto God for the accomplishment of His holy purposes. Thus by these single acts of surrender unto holiness, sanctification soon becomes the habit of the life.

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