

Salvation "Sanctification" Romans 6:12-23

Introduction

- [Slide #1] One of the purposes of doing this series on salvation is to change the culture of this church. Why? How? Because our salvation, from first to last, is about grace. And a culture of grace is a culture of healing and of revival because Jesus himself is present through the truths that most closely and clearly express who he is. [Slide #2]
- For instance, the doctrine of election creates a culture of love. He chose us because he loved us. So we become loving. The doctrine of regeneration creates a culture of humility. We all were once dead but he made us alive. The doctrine of conversion creates a culture of transformation. We are a changed people. The doctrine of justification creates a culture of inclusion. Jews, Gentiles, slaves, free, male, female, jock, nerd, techie, yuppie, black, white, poor, rich, redneck, are all justified by faith in Jesus Christ. The doctrine of adoption creates a culture of unity. All these different groups become one family.
- And now today, the doctrine of sanctification. [Slide #3] The doctrine of sanctification creates a culture of freedom and life. Part of what God does when he saves is...

Big Idea

- **Make the Christian believer more free from the power of sin and more like Christ**
- And that brings freedom and life to a church. Sanctification is the process of growing in holiness. It's the process by which God brings a person's moral condition into conformity with their legal status.¹ We are justified, made righteous through faith in Christ at conversion. But God's justifying grace cannot be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. Practically speaking, we are still works in process. Sanctification says God, right now, is hard at work saving you.
- If you were to graph the Christian life it would look like this. [Slide #4] The squiggly line, the arrow moving forward, that's your life. BC, before Christ, pre Christ we are slaves to sin. Sanctification begins at regeneration. There's a big jump up because moving from death to life is radical shift in holiness. But we are not instantly made perfect when we turn from sin and place our trust in Christ. Holiness is a

¹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 968.

process. Up and down. Two steps forward three back. Five forward one back. Three forward then at some point death and then perfect holiness. **Philippians 1:6**. *He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* The end of sanctification, death or Christ's return, results in perfect holiness.

- **Ruth Bell Graham**, wife of Billy Graham, once said this. "I saw a sign on a strip of highway once that I would like to have copied on my gravestone. It said, "End of construction. Thank you for your patience."² Sanctification says that while we are alive we are still under construction.
- And what God is constructing in you is the life of Jesus. Sanctification is the actual ongoing transformation of the character and condition of a person to be like Jesus. When God thinks about saving you, the aim of His sanctifying work is your Christlikeness.
- Which is the exact opposite of the whole WWJD, what would Jesus do fad. The Christian life is not trying to think of what Jesus would do in a situation and then doing that thing. The Christian life is God, by the power of his Holy Spirit, from the inside out, making you like Jesus. **2 Corinthians 3:18**. *We are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.* You can ape Jesus without any inward transformation taking place at all. Follow me?
- Sanctification is different than the other aspects of our salvation because sanctification is a process, a supernatural Holy Spirit driven process. Not a one time event like election or regeneration or justification or conversion or adoption. Process. Process. Process. Process. Process.
- God is in the process of saving all of who you are. Not just a part of you. Sanctification means that intellectually God is renewing your mind so that you grow, increase in the knowledge of God, **Romans 12:2** and **Colossians 1:10**. Sanctification means that God is in the process of transforming your emotions. Many of the fruits produced by the Spirit in our lives, **Galatians 5**, are emotional in nature. Sanctification means that God is at work saving your physical body and your spirit, **2 Corinthians 7:1**. And in the grand scheme, this process in all these different areas of your life is progressive; always moving up, ever increasing glory in the believer's life.

² Ruth Bell Graham, *A Hearing Heart*; submitted to www.preachingtoday.com by Dave Bartlett, Rochester, Minnesota.

- It bugs me to no end when I hear believers say stuff like “I’m saved.” Past tense. As if the only saving work God has done in their life was at the moment of conversion. If that’s how you see the Christian life, only in the past, you may in fact not be saved. The doctrine of sanctification helps us to remember that God, right now, is at work saving me. Instead, say this. Say “I am in the process of being saved.” *Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*³ It’s not just semantics; there’s a big difference.
- [Slide #5] Sanctification is God making the Christian more free from the power of sin and more like Christ. It is “the gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which he delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works.”⁴

Transition

On to application...

Organizational Sentence

- **Five applications to the doctrine of sanctification**

Transition

Application #1. [Slide #6]

Main Points

1. Sanctification means that, over time, sin should have less and less of a grip on you.
 - **Romans 6:11**. *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.* We are dead to sin. Sanctification “involves a definite break from the ruling power and love of sin, so that the believer is no longer ruled or dominated by sin and no longer loves to sin.”⁵ In Christ we are freed from slavery to sin.
 - If you visit the **Checkpoint Charlie** museum by the old Berlin wall you can read story after story of those who sought to escape from East Berlin to the freedom of the West. There is not a single example of anyone trying to climb the wall from West to East!⁶ If you really are a Christian believer, over the course of your life, sin should not dominate your life. Your love for it should grow less and less.

³ 2 Corinthians 4:16

⁴ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 532.

⁵ Grudem, p. 747.

⁶ Christopher Ash, *Teaching Romans*, p. 240.

- Wayne Grudem says this about being dead to the ruling power of sin in our lives. I think what he says is helpful. “To be dead to the ruling power of sin means that we as Christians, by virtue of the power of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection life of Christ within us, have the power to overcome the temptations and enticements of sin. Sin will no longer be our master, as once it was before we became Christians. In practical terms, this means that we must affirm two things to be true. On the one hand, we will never be able to say, ‘I am completely free from sin,’ because our sanctification is never completed. But on the other hand, a Christian should never say, ‘this sin has defeated me. I give up. I have had a bad temper for thirty-seven years, and I will have one until the day I die, and people are just going to have to put up with me the way I am.’”⁷
- No. That kind of statement flat out denies the doctrine of sanctification. You’re free. So with the Spirit’s help, shoot for holiness and perfection. Start living sanctified lives.

Transition

Application #2. [Slide #7]

2. Sanctification happens best in community

- **Hebrews 10:24-25**. *Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.* **1 Peter 2:5**. *You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.*
- God can sanctify a person in isolation from other believers but frequently God’s sanctifying work is slower among the Lone Ranger Christian types. Commitments to people, to relationships, to a loving community are absolutely essential for God to grow in holiness. Staying put in the community of believers God has placed you, as a life practice, allows God’s grace to work on the unsanded surfaces of your inner life.⁸
- So many of the commands in the New Testament are relational in nature, one to another. Aren’t they? If you isolate yourself from others you hogtie the Spirit’s sanctifying work in your life. If you really want to grow, find a group of believers who are committed to the process of transformation and stick together. And you will grow.

Transition

Application #3. [Slide #8]

3. Sanctification isn’t a completely passive process

⁷ Grudem, p. 747.

⁸ Dave Goetz, "Suburban Spirituality," *Christianity Today* (July 2003), p. 33

- Sometimes I hear people say stuff like, “Let go and let God.” I kind of understand what they mean. But that generic kind of catchphrase Christianity can really mislead people. Sanctification isn’t about you sitting there like a bump on a log while God does all the work. The language of sanctification is active and it’s cooperative; you and God together. He supplies the power of His Spirit while we work out our salvation. He empowers us by the Spirit while we put to death the misdeeds of the body, **Romans 8:13**.
- Or even **Ephesians 4:22-24**. *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.* God is committed to changing you but you have to cooperate; you have to put on the new self.
- Sanctification means that with the Spirit’s help and power we choose to be obedient. We must cooperate with the Spirit of God and not resist his work in our life.

Transition

Application #4. [Slide #9]

4. **Saying “yes” to Jesus at conversion but “no” to the Holy Spirit on an ongoing basis, as a patterned way of life, means you may not be a Christian.**
 - If you continually say no to the Holy Spirit when He tries to tell you that something is not right, that you shouldn’t do something, say something, look at something. And if that’s the modus operandi of how you live. You may not be a Christian.
 - Part of God saving a person is the practice of daily saying yes to the Holy Spirit and yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. We have to ask the Holy Spirit to fill us and empower us to overcome sin. **Ephesians 5:18** *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.* If you continually say “no” to the Spirit and resist the Spirit so that in practice sin’s grip isn’t lessening it means you may not be a Christian. In either case, whether you’re resisting now in disobedience or have always resisted him you can say yes to him today. Right now.

Transition

Application #5. [Slide #10]

5. **Sanctification is a painful yet rewarding, joy producing process**
 - Experientially, the more a person becomes free from the power of sin the more aware they become of their own sin. I know it sounds

counterintuitive. But think about it. Think of the graph that was up earlier.

- [John Murray](#) says this. “Indeed, the more sanctified a person is, the more conformed he is to the image of his Savior, the more he must recoil against every lack of conformity to the holiness of God. The deeper his apprehension of the majesty of God, the greater the intensity of his love to God, the more persistent his yearning for the attainment of his prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, the more conscious will he be of the gravity of the sin that remains and the more poignant will be his detestation of it...Was this not the effect in all the people of God as they came into closer proximity to the revelation of God's holiness?”⁹ Think Joshua falling on his face aware of his sin. Or Isaiah. Those are extreme scenarios. But even at a slower rate as it is for most of us, the process is still the same.
- As I grow in holiness and I look within to see the blackness that's still there it makes me sick. It's painful. If you are deeply troubled by your sin, if you mourn over it, that is actually a good sign that God's sanctifying work is progressing. Seeing who I really am as God chips away at me is painful. But it is also joy producing. *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* By his grace, I am not now who I was before. He's is changing me.
- [\[Video\]](#)

Communion

- As we prepare to remember to eat the Lord's Supper we remember that Jesus earned our sanctification for us. [1 Corinthians 1:30](#) *And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.*
- As we eat and drink I want you to remember that you are dead to sin and alive to Christ. His body broken for you, his blood shed for means you have new life. You are a new creature in Christ and you are in the process of being saved. You are a masterpiece in progress. As you eat, as you drink, ask him to change you. Say yes to him chiseling away at you. Hide nothing from him; give every part of your life to him. Ask him to do whatever it takes to make you want he wants you to be.

Words of Assurance of Forgiveness

⁹ Grudem, p. 753 quoting John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p. 145.

- **Romans 6:22** *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.*
- Bread--“The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me’” **1 Corinthians 11:23-24**
- Cup--“In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” **1 Corinthians 11:25-26**
- *20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*