

Soteriology Part 4

Sanctification

- **What benefits accompany the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit and subsequent redemption of all those who believe?**

All believers, in this life and the life to come, partake of the benefits that accompany or flow from justification, adoption and *sanctification*.

- **What is sanctification?**

Sanctification is the experience of God's free grace, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

Question: Which comes first, justification or sanctification?

Question: Has the speed or development of sanctification any effect on adoption?

Every believer is sanctified, both now and progressively so.

2 Corinthians 5:17 – Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, **he is a new creation**.

Philippians 2:12-13 – Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling, for **it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure**.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 – But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, **through sanctification by the Spirit** and belief in the truth. **To this he called you** through our gospel, **so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

Question: What percentage of Christians experience sanctification?

The Holy Spirit enables every believer to die to sin and live unto righteousness, in varying degrees.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 – And I will give you a **new heart**, and a **new spirit** I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And **I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 – Now may the **God of peace himself sanctify you completely**, and may your whole spirit and soul and body **be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.**

Ephesians 4:23-24 – [P]ut off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to **put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.**

1 Peter 2:24-25 – He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, **that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.** By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but **have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

Question: Who is the active agent of sanctification?

Question: Are believers to actively pursue sanctification?

Every person either dies to sin or remains enslaved by it.

Romans 6:1-14 – What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? **By no means!** How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, **we too might walk in newness of life.** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, **so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.** For one who has died has been **set free from sin.** Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in

Christ Jesus. **Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.** Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but **present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.** For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

2 Corinthians 7:1 – Since we have these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.**

Question: What does the Apostle Paul say in Romans 6 that you and I can do in order to grow in sanctification?

Every Christian is **now** sanctified, **being** sanctified, and **will** be sanctified.

1 John 3:1-3 – “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and **so we are.** The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, **we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared;** but we know that **when he appears we shall be like him,** because we shall see him as he is. And **everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”**

Concerning the two ditches on either side of the road of sanctification, *legalism* and *antinomianism*, R.C. Sproul writes,

Legalism is a distortion that takes many forms. The first form of legalism involves the abstracting of the law of God from its original context. This variety of legalism reduces Christianity to a list of do's and don'ts, a codified system of rigid moralism that is divorced from the covenant context of love. The Law of God is meant to reveal the character and nature of God Himself, not to be a path to right standing before Him.

A second dimension of legalism, closely related to the first, involves the divorce of the letter of the law from the spirit of the law. This is the distortion Jesus constantly dealt with when confronting the Pharisees, and He rebuked them for it in the Sermon on the Mount. As we have indicated with respect to Jesus' expansion of the full import of the law in the Sermon on the Mount, it is not enough for the godly person to obey the mere externals of the law while ignoring the deeper implications of the spirit behind the law. Righteousness and goodness have much more to do with one's heart than one's hands.

A third aspect of legalistic thinking is that of majoring in the minors. As Christians, we want to be recognized for our growth in sanctification and for our righteousness. This desire to accumulate points on a scorecard for “righteousness” sake demeans our perspective of God’s requirements to such a degree that we concentrate our efforts in areas where we may be more successful rather than in the areas of greater value.

Which is easier to achieve, maturity in showing mercy or in the paying of tithes? To pay my tithes certainly involves a financial sacrifice of sorts, but there is a real sense in which it is cheaper for me to drop my money into the plate than it is for me to invest my life in the pursuit of justice and mercy. We tend to give God the cheapest gifts.

Which is easier, to develop the fruit of the Spirit, conquering pride, covetousness, greed, and impatience, or to avoid going to movie theaters or dancing? We also yearn for clearly observable measuring rods of growth. How do we measure our growth in patience or in compassion? It is much more difficult to measure the disposition of our hearts than it is to measure the number of movies we attend.

Legalism is the greater tendency; hence it has received the greater treatment here. However, *Antinomianism* is the opposite twin distortion. *Antinomianism* simply means “*antilawism*.” As legalism comes in many shapes and sizes, numerous subtle forms of antinomianism may be delineated. The first type of antinomianism is *libertinism*, the idea that the Christian is no longer bound to obey the law of God in any way. Another type is *spiritualism*, the attitude that feels the need to supersede God’s expressed truth with the inclinations of desire. “I have prayed about this and feel at peace with my extramarital affair.” *Situational ethics* is a third form of antinomianism, the practice of casting absolutes aside and giving preference to a reaction that the momentary circumstances seem to dictate.

*Legalism and Antinomianism are both enemies of a Christian’s Sanctification.*¹

¹ Sproul, R. C. (2009). How Should I Live in this World? (Vol. 5, pp. 28–33). Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing.