

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

B0545 – November 20, 2005 – Major Bible Themes
Chapter 30 – Sanctification

I. THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION AND JUSTIFICATION

The Protestant Reformation, a turning point in world history, without which the United States of America would not exist. For America is constitutionally built on the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion for which our founders fled England in order to enjoy! The word ‘Protestant’ was first used of the Reformers in the 1500’s because they first protested against the doctrinal teachings decreed by the Diet of Spire. The word “Reformation” is descriptive of the original intent of certain Roman Catholics who were concerned with abuses of the Roman Church and sought to “reform” them. Their original intention was not to break away from the Roman Church but merely to reform its teachings by correcting the abuses of the papacy. However, when the “reform” did not work Luther, Savonarola, Calvin, and others were left with no other option than to break from the Roman Church. Thus, the movement became known as the Protestant Reformation. There were several key doctrines that led to the Protestant Reformation.

1. A return to the inspiration, inerrancy and authority of Scripture.

The Roman Church’s tradition was not the authority. God’s word was the sole authority.

2. A return to the literal or normal or plain interpretation of Scripture.

Once we have decided that the Scripture is the sole authority, to fully come under that authority we must interpret it normally and not according to our own whims.

3. A return to justification by faith alone.

This naturally falls out of a literal or normal interpretation of Scripture and was the subject Dick Roesch spoke about last week. I hope you can understand the importance of that

doctrine. Being an ex-Roman Catholic Dick knows very well the abuses of the Catholic Church and how the doctrine of justification is the essential difference between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Yet today there is a movement called Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT). This phenomena is virtually spits on the lives of thousands of godly men who laid down their lives for the gospel of Jesus Christ and religious freedom. It is indeed to spit on the word of God, our founding fathers and every soldier who sacrificially laid down his life for the religious freedoms of our country. The ECT's first announcement came in March 1994 and called for Roman Catholic and evangelical cooperation on social and cultural issues (such as abortion). Justification according to this document was "by faith because of Christ."ⁱ That is, Christ makes justification possible. Any Roman Catholic could sign this statement because Rome teaches that justification is possible because grace is mediated through the sacraments and aided by the works of the believer! No Reformer could sign this statement! Yet evangelicals like Charles Colson, Pat Robertson, Bill Bright, JI Packer, Os Guinness, Richard Mouw, Mark Knoll, and others signed this statement. What is interesting is that not one single pastor signed the statement. All the Protestant signers were leaders of parachurch ministries. That is, they were disconnected from the local church, and parachurch ministries are historically ecumenical. Modern levels of tolerance have reached unprecedented levels to the point that what the Reformers once abandoned their homes, families and even their own lives for has now been erased. Denomination by denomination now holds hands with Rome (most recently Lutherans and Catholics together as of the first week in November, 2005). Martin Luther would turn over in his grave if he knew what was happening to the denomination named after him. Luther stated that justification by faith alone is the

“article upon which the church stands or falls.”

He saw in justification by faith alone the essential difference between the Romanist concept of justification and the biblical concept of justification in Romans and Galatians. John Calvin stated that justification by faith alone is

“the principal ground on which religion must be supported.”

It is important to understand what the Reformers stated about justification. They taught that it was a legal declaration of God. They said God declares a man righteous when that person exercises faith in the person of Jesus Christ. This is a forensic declaration. They rejected the idea that in justification God ‘makes’ a person righteous. The Romanist doctrine stated that “justify” meant “to make righteous”. Since converts to Romanism still sinned and thus needed confession, they were not yet “made righteous”. Thus, justification was a process

that continued even in purgatory. When the person was totally cleansed of all sin through the payment of indulgences that released merit from the treasure chest of merit then they were pronounced justified but not before. So, the Romanist concept is heart-centered rather than Christ-centered. What Luther saw was that God legally declared a sinner ‘righteous’ at the moment of faith in Christ which is the beginning of our journey. This declaration is made before we are actually righteous at our resurrection. Thus, justification is a legal declaration made by God when a person exercises faith in Christ. This is crucial to understanding the relationship between justification and sanctification.

II. THE WORDS RELATED TO SANCTIFICATION

In the OT, the English words related to sanctification are “holy” and “sacred”. The Hebrew words are *qodesh* – “apartness”; *qadosh* – “sacred”; *qadash* – “to be set apart” and the Aramaic *qaddish* - holy. The word means to set apart a person or object for God’s use. For example the priests were set aside for God’s use in the tabernacle and Temple. Objects were also set apart for use in worship.

In the NT the English words related to sanctification are “saint”, “holy”, “sanctify”, and “sanctification”. The corresponding Greek words are *hagiazō* – to set aside, *hagiasma* – a space set aside, *hagiasmos* – personal dedication to God, *hagios* – consecrated to the service of God, *hagiotēs* – holiness and *hosios* - holy. Again, the basic meaning is to set apart a person or object for God’s use. For example, Jesus Christ was sanctified (cf John 10:36; John 17:19)

Hebrews 7:26 holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners

We need to comment specifically on the word “saint” as used in the NT. The word has come to mean for many a person who has reached a very high level of holiness in their daily life. The word never has this connotation in the NT. It is applied to believers over sixty times. When the word “saint” is defined biblically then many confusions are erased. The word “saint” means “set apart” or “sanctified”. When the word is applied to believers it is referring to the moment they believed in Christ at which point they were set apart for the service of God. Thus, “Sainthood is not subject to progression. Every born-again person is as much a saint the moment he is saved as he ever will be in time or eternity.” If I ask you if you are a “saint” then I expect you to repeat God’s declaration, “Yes, I am a ‘saint’. God has called me a ‘saint’ and I will never be more of a saint either now or in eternity than I am right now.” Even though the word of God declares this many Christians shrink back from such a statement. But there should be no fear of saying “I am a ‘saint’ in the

fullest sense”. Those who are unsure of this do not know their position ‘in Christ’. But I find it interesting that the Bible declares believers to be “brethren” 184 times, “saints” 62 times, and “Christians” only 3 times. So, we are designated as “saints” far more often even than “Christians”.

Two words of warning; first, sinless perfection is not necessarily implied when the Bible speaks of a “holy nation”, holy priests, “holy prophets”, holy apostles”, holy men, holy women, holy brethren, holy mountain, and holy temple. None of these were sinless before God. Rather, they were holy according to some particular standard which God issued and that separated them from others. Of course, inanimate objects of worship could not even be related to the question of sin. Second, the words do not necessarily imply finality. All who are called “holy” or “sanctified” are called to higher degrees of holiness. People are set apart again and again throughout the Christian life. Thus, even though we are once for all sanctified there are levels or degrees of sanctification that should follow

III. 3 ASPECTS OF SANCTIFICATION

This leads us to observe the two tenses of the words used in the NT. The words are used of our position and of our experience. Which makes it proper to distinguish between our position or standing before God and our present experience or state.

A. Positional (aka Standing)

First, over sixty times the word “saint” is applied to all believers. These references speak to our position, not our experience. Paul begins 6 of his 13 epistles by addressing them as “saints”.

Romans 1:7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called *as saints*: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, *saints* by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours:

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the *saints* in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

Colossians 1:2 To the *saints* and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

Secondly, in many contexts Christians are said to be “sanctified” (cf Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Cor 6:11; **Heb 10:10, 14, 29**)

Even the carnal Corinthians (1 Cor 3:1-3) are said to be “sanctified”.

1 Corinthians 6:11 you were washed, but you were *sanctified* (aorist passive indicative), but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

B. Experiential (aka State or Condition)

Several verses urge Christians to be sanctified or speak of an ongoing sanctification. Once the Spirit sets us apart for service to God we ought to obey God by setting ourselves apart to do His commandments. When we do we enjoy spiritual growth (cf Rom 6:19, 22; 1 Thess 4:3, 4, 7; 5:23?; 1 Pt 3:15)

Romans 6:19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in *sanctification*.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 For this is the will of God, your *sanctification*; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in *sanctification* and honor, ⁵ not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

1 Peter 3:15 *sanctify* Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

C. Ultimate

Major Bible Themes speaks of a third category of sanctification at which point our position and experience will be one. At the point when we receive a resurrection body we will be transformed into a creature that is entirely sanctified.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself *sanctify* you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

D. Experiential Sanctification Developed

Too much emphasis is often placed on our positional or ultimate sanctification when really the emphasis should be our experiential sanctification. We could define *experiential sanctification as the time between one's spiritual birth and physical death or the rapture when he is set apart unto God*

What is the incentive for living a holy life? The incentive is always what God has first done for us. When we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ God did many wonderful things for us simultaneously.

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| • Redemption Applied | “Price Paid” |
| • Reconciliation Applied | “Friends With God” |
| • Propitiation Applied | “The Father Satisfied” |
| • Forgiven | “Sins Taken Away” |
| • Justified | “Declared Righteous” |
| • Positionally Sanctified | “Set Apart for God” |
| • Regenerated | “Born Again” |
| • Baptized | “Placed in Christ” |
| • Indwelt | “Spirit In Us” |
| • Sealed | “Spirit Seals Us” |

The deeper we understand the enormity of these blessings which have been imparted or imputed to us by God once for all the more we are motivated to set ourselves apart to living a life of holiness to God. Experiential sanctification involves many factors:

1. considering yourself dead to sin
2. considering yourself alive to God
3. presenting yourself as a slave of righteousness
4. learning God's word
5. obeying God's word
6. confessing your sin
7. yielding to the Spirit
8. abiding in Christ

These factors can be organized into five categories; 1) the foundation of sanctification, 2) the aim of sanctification, 3) the enemies of sanctification, 4) the means of sanctification and 5) the dimensions of sanctification.

1. The Foundation of Sanctification

The foundation of sanctification is to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God and thus present yourself to Him as a slave of righteousness. As long as we have not reckoned that we are dead to sin and alive to God then it will continue to reign in our lives. Once we reckon this to be true by trusting God's word then we must present ourselves to Him as a slave of righteousness. We must have a desire to do His will and fulfill His purposes for our lives (Rom 6:1ff).

2. The Aim of Sanctification

The aim of sanctification is to learn obedience to God through His word. Our aim is misdirected if we are trying to rid ourselves of all sin (perfectionism). A new or immature believer needs to learn God's word and develop the skill required to apply it. Before the fall there were no impediments to sanctification until Satan was introduced into the environment.



After the fall we have the impediments of the world, the flesh and the devil. The flesh and the devil want to keep you focused on your sin problems which will deflect you from learning and applying God's word. Sometimes we get so focused on our sin problems that we feel too dirty and guilty even to study God's word. In such cases Satan has been successful in stifling our sanctification. To keep moving we need to simply recall the positional truths listed above and confess our sin to restore fellowship (1 John 1:9). Once fellowship is restored we need to learn to remain in fellowship (i.e. abide). The mechanism for remaining in fellowship is yielding to the Spirit. This means we submit our will to His will. The result is an act of obedience and the product appears as fruit of the Spirit. At such times the word of God guarantees us that our prayers will be answered. So, *the aim of sanctification is not to eradicate sin but to learn obedience to God through His word.*

3. Enemies Of Sanctification

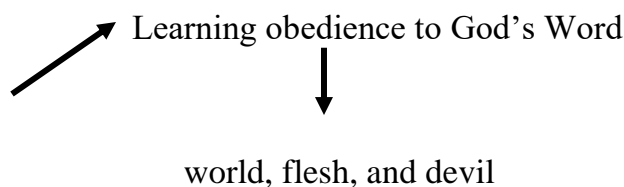
There are spiritual powers that do not want you to learn loyalty to God through His word. These enemies cause resistance by one of three means; the world, the flesh, or the devil. The world is not your friend. The world wants to distract you from learning obedience to God through His word. The world wants you to satisfy the lusts of your flesh. The flesh wants instant gratification; overspending (the latest gadgets, knick-knacks, cars, homes, etc...), overindulging (food, alcohol, illegitimate sex), overstimulation (movies, drugs, music, etc...). The flesh at other times wants to be lazy (thinking that you are free to do what you want with your time, wasting time, procrastinating). The flesh wants you to be a busybody (gossiping, cleaning, running around). The flesh wants self-fulfillment (me, me me, now, now, now). The world only feeds this frenzy. All these things deflect us from the aim of sanctification which is to learn obedience to God through His word!

4. Means of Sanctification

As I implied earlier you should never fight *directly* against the forces of the world, flesh, and devil. Some of the world's greatest military commanders have recognized the effectiveness of the *indirect* approach. B.H Liddell Hart, surveying every major conflict for the past 2,500 years concluded, "Effective results in war have rarely been attained unless the approach has had such indirectness as to ensure the opponent's unreadiness to meet it. The indirectness has usually been physical, and always psychological. In strategy, the longest way round is often the shortest way home." (Strategy, p 25). A *direct* attack against the world the flesh and the devil leaves places you wide open for slaughter. As demonstrated in Scripture by Paul in Romans 7, those who use the head on approach get slaughtered by their enemies

Christian \longrightarrow World, Flesh, Devil

However, if we disregard the distractions of the world, the flesh and the devil and take the *indirect* approach of faith in God's word which only comes through hearing God's word then we will enjoy victory. In this case, taking the long way around is the shortest way home to victory.

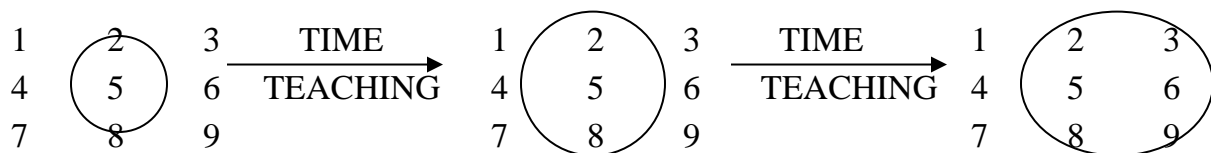


This strategy was demonstrated by one of the greatest military commanders the world has ever seen; Moses' successor, Joshua. In what seemed like an impossible situation, the little people of Israel with no battering rams or catapults, no place to retreat, and a well-protected enemy behind the fortified walls of Jericho faith in God's word was victorious over all odds. Joshua had met Israel's true military commander on the roadside, the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. Jesus commanded the nation to walk around Jericho once a day for six days and seven times on the seventh day after which seven trumpets would blast and the people should yell and scream. What kind of military strategy is this? Day by day walking around a city? What if the enemy breaks forth during our march, splits us and tramples every last one of us down? Day by day having to put up with people laughing and yelling at you over the walls. Did the people walking cause the ground to shake and weaken the walls? Did the trumpet blast send forth sound waves that somehow caused the wall to crumble? No, it was the Lord God who gave the victory! This historical incident is a perfect example of the *indirect* approach. Joshua had been told to meditate on God's word and to do it (Josh 1:8). God is the one who gives victory; it is our job to have faith in His word! Do you have a Jericho in your life? Do you have something impossible to overcome? Nothing is impossible with God. Focus on the word of God and not on your problems and you'll enjoy the victory God provides.

5. Dimensions Of Sanctification

Lastly, there are two dimensions to sanctification: The Existential Present and Long-Term Growth. The first dimension is the Existential Present; either you are in or out of fellowship at any given moment. If you have known sin in your life your responsibility is to confess that sin. Upon confession God's promise is to restore you to fellowship (1 John 1:9).

However, what is often missed is the second dimension of sanctification: Long-Term Growth. Long-Term Growth looks at sanctification from the perspective of overall growth which takes time and learning obedience to God's word through study and/or teaching.



These two dimensions are related. If we confess our sin, fellowship is restored and if we learn to yield to the Spirit and remain in fellowship (i.e. abide) then the fruit of the Spirit is produced through us and we get to see His wonderful working power as we grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. ERRORS RELATED TO SANCTIFICATION

One of the biggest errors today is the confusion of justification with sanctification. When one allows our subjective sanctification to have a bearing on our objective justification then justification always ends up being by works and not by faith alone. One statement which is confused on this point is “we are justified not *without*, yet not *by* works”ⁱⁱ. This statement is ties works to justification in a way that effectively nullifies justification by faith alone. It is also very dangerous because it moves the focus from Christ to our works and uses them as a basis for measuring whether we or others are justified when the litmus test for justification is not our works but faith alone.

A second glaring error is interpreting sanctification in terms of spiritual experience. It is very dangerous to measure spirituality on the basis of externals; hand raising, clapping, jumping, barking, speaking in tongues, fainting, dancing, etc...none of which are valid measurements of spirituality or an individual’s degree of sanctification. The word of God is always the standard by which we measure our spirituality. Too often people set up their interpretation of an experience as the standard and interpret God’s word in light of it. We must realize that our experiences do not interpret themselves. We often bring an interpretation to our experience that is invalid. Thus, God gave us His word by which we can interpret our experiences. It is a fact that God’s word often invalidates our interpretation of our experiences. You may interpret a warm tingly feeling as the presence of God but it may not be God at all but a demon. Those who have set up experience as a standard do not enjoy the stability God desires for us.

ⁱ Ron Merryman, *Justification by Faith Alone and It’s Historical Challenges* (Hermantown, MN: Merryman Ministries, 1999), 94ff.

ⁱⁱ For a defense of this confusion see

http://www.hornes.org/theologia/content/zacharias_ursinus/are_good_works_necessary_to_salvation.htm

[Back To The Top](#)

Click [Here](#) to return to other lessons.

[Return to Fredericksburg Bible Church Web Site](#)