

I Thessalonians 4:1-3a

First RPC Durham

I. The Doctrine of Sanctification (v 1)**A. Defining Sanctification**

- 1) Definition — *WSC 35, What is sanctification?* Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.
- 2) Description — Both Passive, a work of God's grace; and Active, mortification and vivification (Eph 4:22-24, ESV)

B. Sanctification is commanded of us (Lev 19:2)**C. Sanctification is progressive****D. Sanctification is perpetual (1 Thes 1:7; Lk 2:52; Heb 5:8, NKJV)****E. Sanctification is fueled by the ordinary means of grace****F. Uses from the Text**

- 1) Be prepared to answer common objections:
 - a) The objection of easy-believism (Jn 19:34, ESV; LC 77)
 - b) The objection of antinomianism (Rom 3:27, 31)
- 2) Delight in the law of God (for the following three reasons)
 - a) Because of your delight in God (1 Jn 5:3)
 - b) The burdensomeness of sin (2 Sam 11-12).
 - c) The lightness of the Law (Mt 11:28-30)
- 3) Pursue sanctification (2 Pt 3:18)

II. The Objective Standard for Sanctification (v 2)**A. The Word of God is alone the rule of faith and life, and therefore the objective standard for Sanctification**

- 1) The clarity of God's commandments (*WCF 1.7*)
- 2) The command to learn God's Law (Neh 8:8; Acts 20:27)
- 3) God alone is the Lawgiver (Isa 33:22; 2 Tim 3:16-17)

B. Uses from the Text

- 1) Beware false standards of faith and life: Such as (a) feelings; (b) experience; (c) 'the ends justifies the means'; (d) the traditions of man (Col 2:8, ESV); (e) cultural norms (Titus 1:12-13, NKJV)
- 2) We are to thoughtfully apply the Scriptures to each situation according to its proper use: Whether that is by (a) expressed command; (b) good and necessary consequence; or (c) general

principles of the Word (1 Cor 14:40)

- 3) Make diligent use of God's Word as it is read, sung and preached in public worship

III. Sanctification is God's Will for the Christian (v 3a)**A. Understanding God's Will****1) Decretive Will**

- a) Definition — That which God has willed to bring to pass
- b) Description — Louis Berkhof, (i) Wise; (ii) eternal; (iii) effectual; (iv) unchangeable; (v) unconditional; (vi) all-inclusive; and, (vii) with respect to sin, permissive (*A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, Banner of Truth, p 35)

2) Preceptive Will**3) The relationship between God's Decretive and Preceptive will****B. Use from the Text: Sanctification is God's Will for the Christian****1) Addressing wrong understandings of seeking God's will**

- a) The necessity of humility. (Dt 29:29)
- b) The necessity of faith
- c) The necessity of right understanding of God's sovereignty (Isa 14:27)
- d) The necessity of right understanding of suffering (Num 33:9, 14)
- e) Prayer, Patience and Obedience mark the biggest between faithfulness and presumption (Acts 13:3; Gen 16; Jonah 1-4).

2) How do I follow God's will for my life?

- a) Beware the temptation to sin; Such as: (i) anxiety; (ii) self-sufficiency; (iii) idolatry and covetousness; (iv) despair; (v) laziness
- b) Know and search God's Word (Psa 119B, BOPFW)
- c) Commit the matter to prayer (Mt 6:10-11, 13)
- d) Examine the situation (Pr 13:16, NKJV)
- e) Seek the counsel of godly Christians (Pr 15:22, ESV)
- f) Seek and receive the counsel of your elders
- g) Go forward in faith, committing the matter again to prayer (Pr 3:5-6)
- h) Continue in obedience (Pr 3:33-35)
- i) Look to Christ (Rom 8:1, 29-30)