

From Glory to Glory

Introduction

A. In Romans 8:28-30 Paul tells us that God predestined us to be “conformed to the image of Christ”—

Romans 8:28-30

²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

B. The moment we were born of the Spirit—“regenerated”—, this transforming process began—this is called “sanctification”

C. God the Holy Spirit is at work in us conforming us into the likeness of Jesus

D. The theme of this message is “the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian”

E. My aim for us this morning is to gain a clear understanding on this subject, and we’ll do this by answering three related questions:

1. **First**, “What is sanctification?”
 2. **Second**, “What does sanctification look like in the life of a Christian?”
 3. **Third**, “What is the Holy Spirit’s role in the sanctification of a Christian?”
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Question 1: “What is sanctification?”

A. First, its **meaning**

1. The **Westminster Shorter Catechism** (completed in 1647) defines “**sanctification**” as: “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. “**Sanctification**” is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives

B. Second, its **distinction** from regeneration

There is a clear distinction in the Bible between “**regeneration**” and “**sanctification**”—

- a. **Regeneration** is birth; **sanctification** is growth
- b. **Regeneration** is a miracle of a moment; **sanctification** is an ongoing process that lasts a lifetime

c. In **regeneration**, God implants desires that were not there before: desire for God, for holiness, and for the hallowing and glorifying of God’s name in this world; desire to pray, worship, love, serve, honor, and please God; desire to show love and bring benefit to others

In **sanctification**, the Holy Spirit “works in you to will and to act” according to God’s purpose; what He does is prompt you to “work out your salvation” (that is, express it in action) by fulfilling these new desires

C. Third, its **stages** in the Christian life

1. **First**, sanctification has a definite beginning at regeneration

a. A definite moral change occurs in our lives at the point of regeneration—

i. In Titus 3:5, Paul wrote about the “washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit”

ii. 1 John 3:9 tells us that once we have been born again we cannot continue to sin as a habit or a pattern of life (1 John 3:9)—this is because the power of new spiritual life within us keeps us from yielding to a life of sin

iii. This point is clearly exemplified by the Corinthian Christians—

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NIV)

⁹Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But

you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

b. This initial step in 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

c. This initial moral change is the first stage in sanctification

2. **Second**, sanctification increases throughout life

a. Even though the New Testament speaks about a definite beginning to sanctification, it also sees it as a process that continues throughout our Christian lives

b. For example, in Romans 6, although Paul tells us we have been set free from sin and are “dead to sin and alive to God”, he nonetheless recognizes that sin remains in us, so he tells us not to let it reign and not to yield to it

Our task is to grow more and more in sanctification, just as we previously grew more and more in sin (see Romans 6:19)

c. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul says that throughout the Christian life we all are being changed into Christ’s likeness from one degree of glory to another”—we are progressively becoming more and more like Christ as we go on in the Christian life

3. **Third**, sanctification is completed at death (for our souls) and when Christ returns (for our bodies)

a. Sanctification for **our souls** will be completed at death

Once we die and go to be Christ in Heaven, our souls are set free from indwelling sin and are made perfect (see Hebrews 12:23)

b. Sanctification for **our bodies** will be completed at the Rapture of the Church

i. Sanctification involves the whole person, including our bodies (see 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)

ii. We await the coming of Jesus from heaven, and He “will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body” (see Philippians 3:21)—

It is “at his coming” that we will be made alive with a resurrection body and then we shall fully “bear the image of the Man of heaven” (see 1 Corinthians 15:23 and 15:49)

Question 2: “What does sanctification look like in the life of a Christian?”

A. First, **God’s** role in sanctification

1. Sanctification is primarily a work of **God**—

a. **God the Father** disciplines us “that we may be partakers of His holiness” (see Hebrews 12:5–11)

b. God the Son is Himself our sanctification (see 1 Corinthians 1:30) and our example of holiness of life (see Hebrews 12:2, 1 Peter 2:21, and 1 John 2:6)

c. God the Holy Spirit works within us to change us and sanctify us, giving us greater holiness of life

2. God assures us He **will complete** His work of sanctifying us—

Philippians 1:6

⁶being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ...

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

²³Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

B. Next, our role in sanctification

1. Our **passive** role:

Here, we yield ourselves to God and depend on Him daily to sanctify us— to make us more and more free from sin and make us more and more like Christ in our actual lives

2. Our **active** role:

a. Here, we strive to obey God and take steps that will increase our sanctification

b. The Bible commands us to take an active role in sanctification (here are four examples):

Philippians 2:12-13

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

¹⁴Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

“I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.”

¹⁷Therefore

“Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.”

¹⁸“I will be a Father to you,

And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty.”

¹Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

³For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. ⁷For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:13-16

¹³Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

c. The Bible does not offer any short-cuts by which we can grow in sanctification—

It simply encourages us over and over again to give ourselves to Bible reading and meditation, prayer, worship, witnessing, Christian fellowship, and self-discipline—self-control

d. This is our daily active role in sanctification

Question 3: “What is the Holy Spirit’s role in the sanctification of a Christian?”

A. The Holy Spirit is “holy”

1. Being holy, He hates sin, and is grieved (“to cause sorrow; pain”) when we sin against Him in our attitudes and actions—

Ephesians 4:17-32

¹⁷This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; ¹⁹who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

²⁰But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²²that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another. ²⁶“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷nor give place to the devil. ²⁸Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. ²⁹Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. ³⁰**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.** ³¹Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³²And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

2. 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 states: “⁷For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.”

B. We are the “temple of the Holy Spirit”

1. “Temple” can be translated “The Holy of holies”—the dwelling place of God in the Tabernacle and Temple

2. The Holy Spirit dwells within us; therefore we can and should practice holiness in our attitudes and actions—

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁹...do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

C. The Holy Spirit is at work within us conforming us into the likeness of Christ—

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)

¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

D. Here are three practical ways the Holy Spirit is sanctifying us:

1. First, He shows us what’s wrong

a. In John 16:8, Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit “convicts” the world of sin—this applies to us as well

b. Is He showing you something wrong in your life right now?

2. Second, He teaches us what's right, how to get right, and how to stay right

a. In John 14:7 and 16:13, Jesus told us that the Spirit of truth teaches us and guides us into all truth—and this includes the truth about our spiritual condition and progress

b. Generally, He does this when we are reading and meditating on His word—the word of truth—

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

3. Third, He leads us, and supplies us with power to overcome sin and practice Christ-likeness—

Romans 8:12-14 (NLT)

¹²Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. ¹³For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

Galatians 5:16-26 (NLT)

¹⁶So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

¹⁹When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²²But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.

E. In the end, we will see Jesus face to face “just like Him”—

Psalms 17:15

As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

F. God will be praised for the sanctifying work He completed—

Jude 1:24-25

²⁴Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
²⁵To God our Savior,
Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever.
Amen.