

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines
 Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24
 25 | Sanctification

APPLYING OUR UNION WITH CHRIST: SANCTIFICATION

Colossians 3.1-17 - *"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore . . . Put on then . . ."*

What is Sanctification?

WCF 13.1 - They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

- What is sanctification differentiated from? And yet no one who is justified is not being sanctified!
- How is it accomplished?
 - What are some bad ways to understand it being accomplished?
 - What is actually being accomplished?

Indicative first, then imperative - "If..., then..." OR "Therefore..."

"I became a Christian once for all upon the basis of the finished work of Christ through faith; that is justification. The Christian life, sanctification, operates on the same basis, but moment by moment. There is the same base (Christ's work) and the same instrument (faith); the only difference is that one is once for all and the other is moment by moment . . . If we try to live the Christian life in our own strength we will have sorrow, but if we live in this way, we will not only serve the Lord, but in the place of sorrow, He will be our song. That is the difference. The 'how' of the Christian life is the power of the crucified and risen Lord,

through the agency of the indwelling Holy Spirit, by faith moment by moment.”

– Francis Schaeffer

“Be who you are” From DeYoung’s, *The Hole in our Holiness* - “God doesn’t say, ‘Relax, you were born this way.’ But he does say, ‘Good news, you were reborn another way.’”

- You’re on a different team - no longer “in Adam”, you’re “in Christ” - so act like it!
- You’ve been released from prison, so don’t act like you did when you were in, or want to go back in!
- You’re no longer a baby anymore, you’re a ten-year-old, so don’t act like a baby!
- A college student today arriving on a horse, with a quill and candles - you’re in the wrong century!

On the difference between justification and sanctification: “Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification **imputes** the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification his Spirit **infuses** grace, and **enables** to the exercise thereof; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued: the one doth **equally** free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is **neither equal** in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.” (WLC 77)

- Misunderstanding the distinction here is the most common problem I encounter in Christian counseling issues. Believers are either not convinced they’re justified, because they look at the sanctification for its proof; or they’re discouraged because sanctification is not perfected yet.

At war – The contradiction within our heart – WCF 13.2 - “This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.”

Yet we know the victory – 13.3 - In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of

strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

“Though sin still remains it does not have the mastery. There is a total difference between surviving sin and reigning sin, the regenerate in conflict with sin and the unregenerate complacent to sin. It is one thing for sin to live in us: it is another for us to live in sin. It is one thing for the enemy to occupy the capital; it is another for his defeated hosts to harass the garrisons of the kingdom.” – John Murray

God’s work in us – see Phil. 1.6, 1Cor. 15.10 – “God’s working in us is not suspended because we work, nor our working suspended because God works. Neither is the relation strictly one of co-operation as if God did his part and we did ours so that the conjunction or co-ordination of both produced the required result. God works in us and we also work. But the relation is that *because* God works we work. All working out of salvation on our part is the effect of God’s working in us, not the willing to the exclusion of the doing and not the doing to the exclusion of the will, but both the willing and the doing. And this working of God is directed to the end of enabling us to will and to do that which is well pleasing to him. We have here not only the explanation of all acceptable activity on our part but we have also the incentive to our willing and working. What the apostle is urging is the necessity of working out our own salvation, and the encouragement he supplies is the assurance that it is God himself who works in us. The more persistently active we are in working, the more persuaded we may be that all the energizing grace and power is of God.” - John Murray

Christians work: “They work to kill sin and they work to live in the Spirit. They have rest in the gospel, but never rest in their battle against the flesh and the devil. The child of God has two great marks about him: **he is known for his inner warfare and his inner peace.**” - Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in our Holiness* [paraphrasing JC Ryle’s “Holiness”]

*** **On a Common Problem in Sanctification, from *Good News for Anxious Christians: 10 Practical Things You Don't Have To Do*, by Phillip Cary**

The Problem of "Letting God" do Anything - from *Good News for Anxious Christians*

1. **Vicious cycle of "how do I know?":** "It's as if God's working replaces yours, so you're not doing anything—you're just letting God do it. But that doesn't really work, because then you have to make sure that you're really letting God do it—and so you get all anxious about whether you're really doing that—and 'letting God' becomes one more thing you have to do on top of everything else—and it's the worst of all because it's so inward and psychological and hard to see—and you have to wonder: *how do you know* if you're really letting God do it—or are you still just trying to do it in your own strength?"
2. **It doesn't work!** "We're supposed to give God control, which must mean we're the ones who are in control to start with. That means it's ultimately up to us—God has no control unless we give it to him. It's often put this way: *God can't work in your life unless you let him*. This is an astonishing piece of fantasy. Where in the Bible or anywhere else in God's creation did people get the **idea that God was so helpless?** . . . [If so] then God is not really God, and indeed he is less real than any person we know. After all, you don't have to 'let' real people work in your life." (47)
 1. **Getting out of the cycle:** "As usual, the obsession with 'how do you know?' questions is a sign that something's wrong—there's a false presupposition here. The truth is that **you don't have to know** whether you're really letting God do it, because in fact you're always the one who's doing it. The inner acts of your heart are always your own, even when they're a result of God working in you. The false presupposition is that it's an either/or: either you're doing it or God is, so if you're at work, God isn't." (39).

Obedience & Control in the Bible

3. **"Obedience** means doing what God says. 'Giving God control' means letting God do it, not us." It's not about "letting", it's about either cooperating/obeying or fighting/rebelling.

4. *In control of our talents:* “To ‘let go and let God’ is to refuse responsibility, to pretend that the work God has given us is not ours to do. He has let us have a certain number of talents and he expects us to work with them. And like the Lord in the parable, he will require us to give an account of our work in the end. In that sense, he remains ultimately in control. He’s still Lord, ruler of our lives, judge of the whole world. But his judgment of us will concern precisely those things that he has put in our control. So our being in control of our talents doesn’t contradict his lordship over our lives. It’s the **result of his lordship and the basis of his judgment**” (41).
5. *Command vs. Control* - “The notion that God is supposed to control our lives is thus the opposite of the biblical concepts of stewardship, servanthood, and obedience. A servant, even a slave, is not ‘controlled’ but ruled and commanded. **You command persons, you control machines.** . . . There is not even a word for ‘control’ in the Bible, really—which is what you’d expect from a book written at a time when there were not many machines around.”

The Mysterious Work of God’s Grace in Us

6. *The Both/And* - “His working does not take away from our working but gives it being. It’s not like: the more he does, the less we do. On the contrary, in the great saints he works mightily precisely in the greatness of *their* work. . . . In his redemption **we don’t disappear but become our true selves**, the new selves he has called us to be in Christ.” (53, 56)