

Doctrine of Salvation

Sanctification

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

- To sanctify, in the general sense, means to make holy, consecrate, or set apart for a particular purpose.
- **Framing the Conversation:**
 - **John 17:17** *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*
 - Jesus's prayer implies there's an ongoing "setting apart" that happens as we grow in the knowledge of the truth.
 - **Hebrews 10:14** *For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*
 - What does it mean that we are already "perfected" (past tense) but are "being sanctified" (present tense)?
 - **1 Corinthians 6:11** *And such were some of you. 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.*
 - What does this verse teach us is the point of sanctification? What does it teach us about the power for sanctification?
 - **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.*
 - Who is responsible for sanctification, according to this verse?
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:23** *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.*
 - What does this passage teach about the fruit of sanctification? What's the end goal?
 - **Ephesians 4:20-24** *But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put 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.*

- What does this verse teach us about the process of sanctification? How does it happen?
- **1 Peter 1:14-16** *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*
- See also Romans 6:1-11.
- **Definition of sanctification:** *It's the transforming process by which God's people shed their past sinfulness and grow to reflect His holiness.*
- **The Differences between Justification and Sanctification**

<i>Justification</i>	<i>Sanctification</i>
Legal standing	Internal condition
Once for all time	Continuous throughout life
Entirely God's work	We cooperate with God
Perfect in this life	Not perfect in this life
The same in all Christians	Varying degrees among Christians

The Timing of Sanctification

- **Sanctification has a beginning at regeneration.**
 - Once we have been born again, we cannot continue to sin as a habit or a pattern of life, because the power of new spiritual life within us keeps us from yielding to a life of sin. This initial moral change is the first stage in sanctification.
 - **1 John 3:9** *No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.*
 - This initial step in sanctification involves a definite break from the ruling power and love of sin, so that the believer is no longer dominated by sin and no longer loves to sin.
 - **Romans 6:11-18** *So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*

- Practically, we affirm two realities:
 - **Reality 1** – We will never be able to say, “I am completely free from sin,” because our sanctification will never be completed this side of heaven.
 - **Reality 2** – A Christian should never say, “This sin has defeated me. I give up. I have had a bad temper for thirty-seven years, and I will have one until the day I die, and people are just going to have to put up with me the way I am!”
- **Sanctification increases throughout life.**
 - 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.
 - *This is the primary sense in which sanctification is used in systematic theology and in Christian conversation generally today.*
 - Although Paul says that his readers have been set free from sin (Rom. 6:18) and that they are “*dead to sin and alive to God*” (Rom. 6:11), he nonetheless recognizes that sin remains in their lives so he tells them not to let it reign and not to yield to it (Rom. 6:12–13).
 - The Christian’s task is to grow more and more in sanctification, just as he/she previously grew more and more in sin:
 - **Romans 6:19** *Just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.*
- **Sanctification is completed at death (for our souls) and when the Lord returns (for our bodies).**
 - Because there is remaining sin in our hearts even though we have become Christians (Rom. 6:12–13; 1 John 1:8), our sanctification will never be completed in this life.
 - When we die and go to be with the Lord, our sanctification is completed in one sense, for our souls are set free from indwelling sin and are made perfect.
 - The author of Hebrews says that when we come into the presence of God to worship we come “*to the spirits of just men made perfect*” (Heb. 12:23).
 - However, when we appreciate that sanctification involves the whole person, including our bodies, then we realize that sanctification will not be entirely completed until the Lord returns and we receive new resurrection bodies.
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:23** *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.*
- **Sanctification is never completed in this life.**
 - Does the Bible teach perfectionism (that we can – and should – achieve perfection in this life as evidence of our salvation)?
 - Where does this idea come?

- **Matthew 5:48** *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*
- **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.*
- What do these verses actually mean?
 - When Jesus commands us to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5: 48), this simply shows that God’s own absolute moral purity is the standard toward which we are to aim and the standard for which God holds us accountable.
 - When Paul speaks of “bringing holiness to completion”, he’s referring to the effort we put into growing in holiness as the means through which the Spirit works to set us apart for God’s glory and purposes.
 - In both instances, the call to the goal of perfection is meant to demonstrate our need of God’s grace to achieve it; we cannot achieve perfection apart from God’s power, and only he can finally bring it to completion.
- Furthermore, many passages teach that we cannot be morally perfect in this life:
 - **Ecclesiastes 7:20** *Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.*
 - **1 John 1:8-10** ⁸ *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* ⁹ *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* ¹⁰ *If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*
 - **James 3:2** *For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.*
 - Jesus commanded his disciples to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, as we also have forgiven those who sin against us” (Matthew 6:11–12).
- Once we have concluded that sanctification will never be completed in this life, we must exercise wisdom and caution in the way we use this truth.
 - Some may take this fact and use it as an excuse not to strive for holiness or grow in sanctification—but this is wrong.
 - **Romans 6:1-2** *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*
 - Others may consider this fact and lose hope of making any progress in the Christian life.
 - Therefore, although sanctification will never be completed in this life, we must also emphasize that sanctification *should never stop increasing in this life.*

The Agents of Sanctification

- **God's Role in Sanctification**

- Sanctification is primarily a work of God, but we cooperate with him to grow in Christ.
 - Paul tells the Philippians, *"God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13), thus indicating how God sanctifies them—both by causing them to want his will and by giving them power to do it.
 - The author of Hebrews speaks of the role of the Father and the role of the Son in a familiar benediction: *"Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever"* (Heb. 13:20–21).
- It is specifically God the Holy Spirit who works within us to change us and sanctify us, giving us greater holiness of life.
 - The Holy Spirit produces in us the *"fruit of the Spirit"* (Gal. 5:22–23), those character traits that are part of greater sanctification.
 - If we grow in sanctification, we "walk by the Spirit" and are "led by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16–18; cf. Rom. 8:14), that is, we are more and more responsive to the desires and promptings of the Holy Spirit in our life and character.

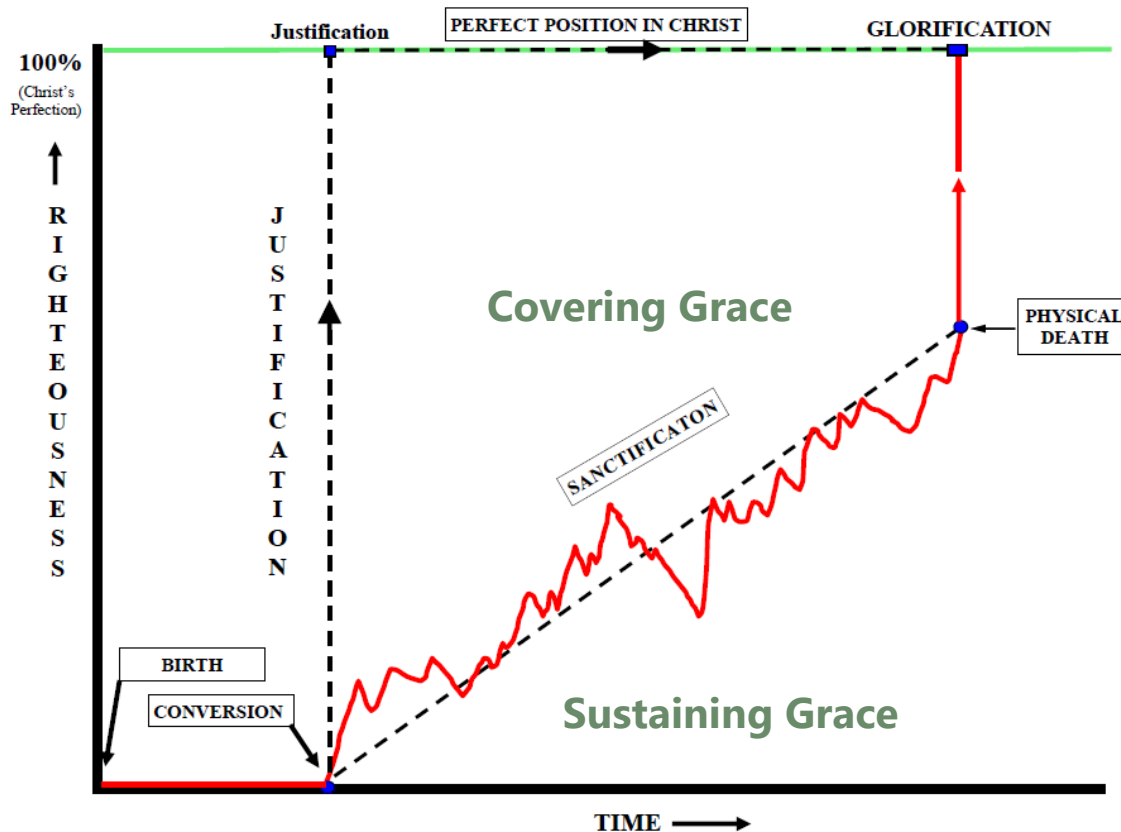
- **Our Role in Sanctification**

- The role that we play in sanctification is both *passive* and *active*.
- The passive role that we play in sanctification is seen in texts that encourage us to trust God or to pray and ask that he sanctify us. In these truths we see that we depend on God to sanctify us.
 - Paul tells his readers, *"Yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life"* (Rom. 6:13; cf. v. 19), and he tells the Roman Christians, *"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God"* (Rom. 12:1).
 - Paul realizes that we are dependent on the Holy Spirit's work to grow in sanctification, because he says, *"If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live"* (Rom. 8:13).
- The active role that we are to play is indicated by Romans 8:13, where Paul says, *"If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live."* Sanctification is a process in which we strive to obey God and take steps that will increase our holiness.
 - Here Paul acknowledges that it is "by the Spirit" that we can do this. But he also says we must do it! It is not the Holy Spirit who is commanded to put to death the deeds of the flesh, but Christians.
 - Paul tells the Philippians, *"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 God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12– 13).

- There are many aspects to this active role, including:
 - We are to “strive... *for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord*” (Heb. 12:14)
 - We are to “abstain from immorality” and so obey the will of God, which is our “sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3)
 - John says that those who hope to be like Christ when he appears will actively work at purification in this life: “*Everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure*” (1 John 3:3)
 - This kind of striving for obedience to God and for holiness may involve great effort on our part, for Peter tells his readers to “*make every effort*” to grow in character traits that accord with godliness (2 Peter 1:5)
- Many specific passages of the New Testament encourage detailed attention to various aspects of holiness and godliness in life (see Rom. 12:1–13: 14; Eph. 4:17–6: 20; Phil 4:4–9).
- We are continually to build up patterns and habits of holiness. One measure of maturity is whether Christians “*have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil*” (Heb. 5:14).
- The New Testament does not suggest any short-cuts by which we can grow in sanctification, but simply encourages us repeatedly to give ourselves to the old-fashioned, time-honored means...
 - Scripture intake (Ps. 1:2; Matt. 4:4; John 17:17)
 - Prayer (Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6)
 - Worship (Eph. 5:18–20)
 - Witnessing (Matt. 28: 19–20)
 - Christian fellowship (Heb. 10:24–25)
 - Self-discipline (Gal. 5:23; Titus 1:8).

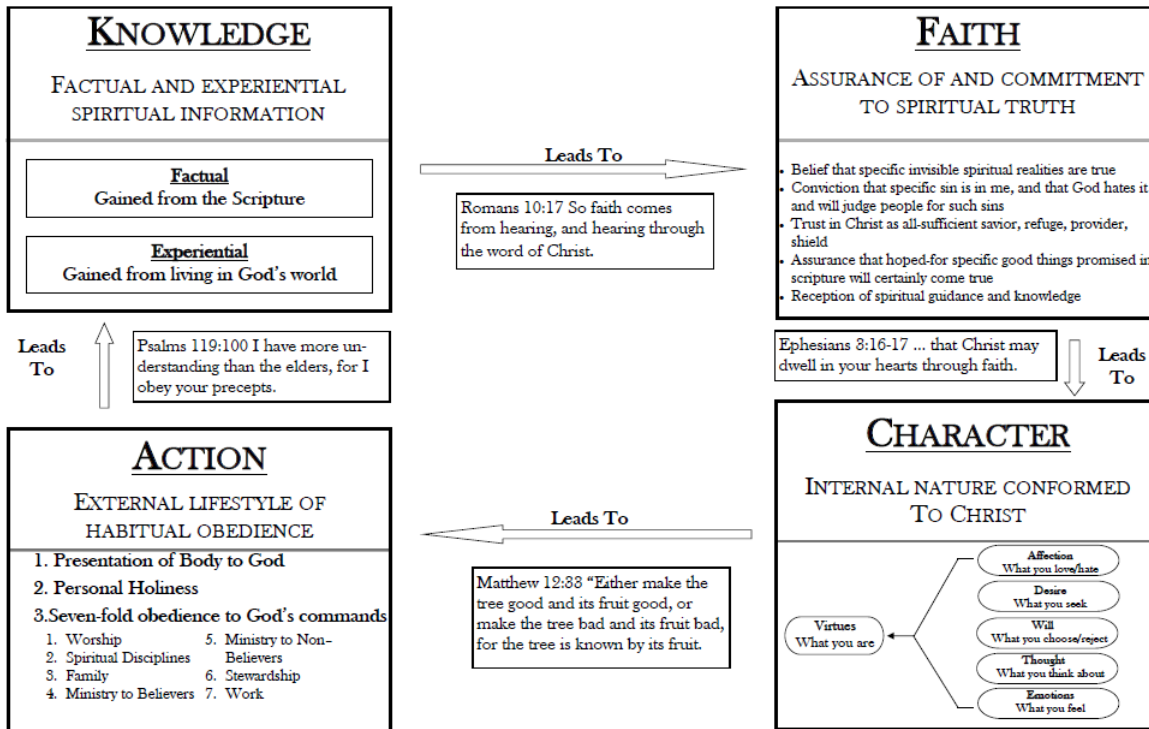
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE



The Process & Effects of Sanctification

- **The Change of the Whole Person**
 - We see that sanctification affects our *intellect* and our *knowledge* when Paul says that a life “worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him” is one that is continually “increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10).
 - Growth in sanctification will also affect our *emotions*. We will find it increasingly true that we do not “love the world or things in the world” (1 John 2:15), but that we, like our Savior, delight to do God’s will.
 - Sanctification will have an effect on our *will*, our decision-making faculty, because God is at work in us, “to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).
 - Moreover, sanctification will also affect our *spirit*, the nonphysical part of our beings, and our *physical bodies*, as Paul encourages us to “cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1; cf. 1 Cor. 7:34).
 - God’s purpose for our lives is that we be increasingly “conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29) in every dimension of our personhood.

A Pathway to Christian Maturity



- Increased Joy in Christ**

- It would not be right to end our discussion without noting that sanctification brings great joy to us.
- The more we grow in likeness to Christ, the more we will personally experience the "joy" and "peace" that are part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5: 22).
- And the more we will draw near to the kind of life that we will have in heaven.
- Paul says that as we become more and more obedient to God, *"the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life"* (Rom. 6: 22).
- He realizes that this is the source of our true joy. *"The kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (Rom. 14: 17).
- As we grow in holiness, we grow in conformity to the image of Christ, and more and more of the beauty of his character is seen in our own lives. This is the goal of perfect sanctification that we hope and long for and that will be ours when Christ returns. *"Every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure"* (1 John 3: 3).

Questions for Personal Application

- Can you remember in your own experience the beginning of sanctification that occurred when you became a Christian? Can you trace a growing break from the ruling power of sin since you came to faith in Christ?
- As you look back over the last few years of your Christian life, can you see a pattern of definite growth in sanctification?
 - What are some things that you used to delight in that no longer interest you?
 - What are some things that you used to have no interest in that now hold great interest to you?
- Are there areas where you have struggled for years to grow in sanctification, but with no progress at all in your life?
 - If you have serious discouragement over lack of progress in sanctification, it is important to talk to a pastor or other mature Christian about this situation rather than letting it go on for a long period of time. God gives the body of Christ to help us in our journeys!