

Salvation—Sanctification (2nd)

(We are continuing our study of the doctrine sanctification in this podcast. Today we are showing that sanctification originated before the foundation of the world.)

Too often when the doctrine of sanctification is being considered a vital part of this doctrine is overlooked. This is likely because salvation is equally presented as essentially something beneficial in this life with it ending in the world to come or in some form of afterlife. However, sanctification (like salvation and all its parts) originated in eternity before the creation of the universe. In other words, just as the design to create, election, adoption, justification, the death of Christ, and all other aspects of the eternal counsel of God, sanctification also began in the mind and purpose of God before the world was. There is an *eternal* aspect of sanctification as well as a *judicial* and an *experimental* aspect that is worked out for each child of grace.

In the previous podcast it was stated, “To sanctify means commonly to make holy, that is, to separate from the world and consecrate to God.” From this it can be safely affirmed that the sanctification of the elect of God began before the creation of the universe. Ephesians 1:4 says that God chose us in Christ “before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” In other words, the elect were separated or set apart from the rest of mankind and chosen in Christ so that they would “be holy and without blame” before God. Therefore, sanctification began in eternity. This truth is often overlooked when studying this subject. In fact, many (if not most) books that address this doctrine omit this altogether and teach that sanctification begins with the new birth or regeneration. However, regarding sanctification prior to regeneration, John Gill wrote the following:

There is a sanctification which is more peculiarly ascribed to God the Father; and which is no other than his eternal election of men to it: under the law, persons and things separated and devoted to holy uses, are said to be “sanctified”; hence those who are set apart by God for his use and service, and are chosen by him to holiness here and hereafter, are said “to be sanctified by God the Father,” Jude 1. There is a sanctification also that is more peculiar to Christ the Son of God; not only as he is the representative of his people, and is “holiness to the Lord” for them; which the high priest had upon his forehead, who was a type of him, and the representative of Israel; and as he has the whole stock of grace and holiness in his hands, which is communicated to the saints as is necessary; and as the holiness of his human nature, is, with his active and passive obedience, imputed to their justification, and so makes a part of that; hence he is said to be made to them “sanctification,” 1 Corinthians 1:30 but as the expiation of their sins is made by his blood and sacrifice; this is called a sanctification of them; “Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his blood, suffered without the gate,” Hebrews 13:12. *Body of Divinity*, p. 552.

Since Christ was set up as the Surety for the elect before the world was (Hebrew 7:22), it follows that our sanctification was vitally connected and identified with Christ in eternity. There are a couple of verses that testify to this which contain the phrase “called *to be* saints.” The verses are Romans 1:7 and I Corinthians 1:2. They are as follows: “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” And, “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” You will notice that “to be” is in italic which means that it is not in the Greek text and it is literally “called saints.”

Since the believers in Rome and in Corinth are equally designated as saints, it is obvious that each and every believer had the same degree and measure of holiness. In fact, viewing the congregation at

Corinth as a whole, there was much to be desired in many of them. While the believers in both places were equally designated as saints this must include more than personal holiness. Even Peter spoke of those believers being elected “according to the foreknowledge” of God “through sanctification of the Spirit,” I Peter 1:2. This is well summarized by John Calvin in his comments on I Corinthians 1:2. He wrote, “What immediately follows — *called to be saints* — I understand to mean: As ye have been called unto holiness. It may, however, be taken in two senses. Either we may understand Paul to say, that the ground of sanctification is the call of God, inasmuch as God has chosen them; meaning, that this depends on his grace, not on the excellence of men; or we may understand him to mean, that, it accords with our profession that we be holy, this being the design of the doctrine of the gospel.” While Calvin says that it is of “no great consequence” as to which meaning is given to the text, he does state that the “former interpretation appears to suit better with the context” or “that our holiness flows from the fountain of divine election.”

Vitally connected to this is our sanctification in Christ. I Corinthians 1:30 says, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” While many commentators will admit that the wisdom, and especially the righteousness and redemption, refer to the redemptive work of Christ, all too often they will teach that the sanctification here has to do with our personally sanctifying ourselves. For example, regarding the righteousness, Albert Barnes said, “*And righteousness*. By whom we become righteous in the sight of God. This declaration simply affirms that we become righteous through him, as it is affirmed that we become wise, sanctified, and redeemed through him. But neither of the expressions determine anything as to the *mode* by which it is done.” Then concerning redemption he wrote, “Probably the word is used here in a wide sense, as denoting the whole group, or class of influences by which we are brought at last to heaven; so that the apostle refers not only to his atonement, but to the work by which we are *in fact* redeemed from death, and made happy in heaven.” However, when speaking of sanctification he stated, “This does not mean, evidently, that his personal holiness is reckoned to us; but that, by his work applied to our hearts, we become personally sanctified or holy.” This is inconsistent with the overall context of the verse. To affirm that the righteousness and the redemption on either side of sanctification to refer to the Person and work of Christ while insisting that sanctification being in the middle of the list to mean that “we become personally sanctified or holy” is, to say the least, begging the question. J. C. Philpot summarized it better saying, “*Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. God has made Christ all these to his people. He has set him up as their eternal Head, made him the Bridegroom of their souls, that out of his fullness they may all receive. Then, just in proportion as they learn these two lessons—what *they* are, and what *he* is—they receive him into their hearts actually what he is to them in the purpose of God.” However, John Gill gives a fuller interpretation of this in the following:

Christ is the sanctification of his people, through the constitution of God, the imputation of the holiness of his nature, the merits of his blood, and the efficacy of his grace, he is so “federally” and “representatively”; he is their covenant head, and has all covenant grace in his hands for them, and so the whole stock and fund of holiness, which is communicated to them in all ages, until the perfection of it in every saint: this is sanctification in Christ, which differs from sanctification in them in these things; in him it is as the cause, in them as the effect; in him as its fountain, in them as the stream; in him it is complete, in them it is imperfect for the present: and they have it by virtue of union to him; sanctification in Christ can be of no avail to any, unless it is derived from him to them; so that this sanctification in Christ does not render the sanctification of the Spirit unnecessary, but includes it, and secures it: likewise Christ is the sanctification of his people “by imputation”, as the holiness of his human nature is, together with his obedience and sufferings, imputed to them for their justification; Christ assumed an holy human nature, the holiness of it was not merely a qualification for his office as a Saviour, or what made his actions

and sufferings in that nature significant and useful, or is exemplary to men; but is a branch of the saints justification before God: the law required an holy nature, theirs is not holy; Christ has assumed one not for, himself, but for them, and so is the end of the law in all respects: and this may be greatly designed in the whole of this passage; “wisdom” may stand in general for the wise scheme of justification, as it is laid in Christ; “sanctification” may intend the holiness of his nature; “righteousness” the obedience of his life; and “redemption” his sufferings and death, by which it is obtained: but then justification and sanctification are not to be confounded; they are two distinct things, and have their proper uses and effects; sanctification in the saints does not justify, or justification sanctify; the one respects the power and being of sin, the other the guilt of it. Moreover, Christ is the sanctification of his people “meritoriously”; through the shedding of his blood, whereby he has sanctified them, that is, expiated their sins, and made full atonement for them; see Hebrews 10:10. Once more, he is their sanctification “efficiently”; by his Spirit, as the author, and by his word, as the means; he is the source of all holiness, it all comes from him, and is wrought by his Spirit in the heart; which lies in filling the understanding with spiritual light and knowledge; the mind with a sense of sin, and a detestation of it; the heart with the fear of God; the affections with love to divine objects and things; the will with submission and resignation to the will of God in all respects; and is exercised in living a life of faith on Christ, and in living soberly, righteously, and godly, before God and man: and this, though imperfect now, will be perfected from and by Christ, without which it is impossible to see the Lord. (This and other quotations are copied from the computer Bible program *Sword Searcher*.)

I realize this is a lengthy quote and it goes beyond that part of sanctification which resides in the eternal counsel of God and speaks of the judicial aspect as well as the experimental phase of sanctification, but I believe it was worth quoting all of it.

The Lord willing we will continue this in our next podcast; however, our time is up for today. Farewell.