

The Doctrine of Sanctification – Part Three

In his *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, James P. Boyce has written of the mysterious nature of the work of God in our sanctification:

The manner in which the Spirit operates in sanctification is beyond our knowledge. In none of the acts of God can we tell how he exerts his power, not even in creation. “As thou knowest not,” says the preacher, “what is the way of the wind, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the work of God who doeth all.” Ecc. 11:5. In sanctification the Spirit moves as mysteriously as we are taught that he does in regeneration. John 3:8 (e-Sword)

I. Sanctification is the Work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

1. Sanctification is the work of God the Father.

John 17:17; Hebrews 12:5-10

2. Sanctification is the work of God the Son.

1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 5:25-27; Titus 2:14

3. Sanctification is the work of God the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2

Wayne Grudem agrees and observes that:

... it is specifically God the Holy Spirit who works within us to change us and sanctify us, giving us greater holiness of life. Peter speaks of the “sanctification of the Spirit” (1 Pet. 1:2, author’s translation), and Paul speaks of “sanctification by the Spirit” (2 Thess. 2:13). It is the Holy Spirit who produces in us the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-23), those character traits that are part of greater and 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. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of holiness, and he produces holiness within us. (*Systematic Theology*, p. 754)

II. Sanctification is a Work in which God and Believers Cooperate

Sanctification is first and foremost the work of God: 1 Thessalonians 5:23

However, sanctification is also the work of the believer, who must cooperate with the work of God in his heart and life.

Romans 6:11-13; 8:13; 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Philippians 2:12-13

As Anthony Hoekema has succinctly put it, “God works in us the entire process of our sanctification – both the willing of it and the doing of it. The harder we work, the more sure we can be that God is working in us” (*Saved By Grace*, p. 202).

Means of Sanctification: We may further add that we are sanctified by means of God's Word (John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17) and by means of faith (Acts 26:18). This means that we must constantly appropriate the promises of God's Word and live in accordance with His Word by faith. We must trust in His working in our hearts to enable us to live in accordance with His Word. Prayer (Heb. 4:12-16) and Christian fellowship (Heb. 10:23-25) are also essential.