

The Nature of Sanctification–Part 2

As we have begun to see, sanctification is a complex work. Its nature is multifaceted. Yet, we can divide it into two overall aspects. It has a constitutional side and a functional side. The constitutional side is hidden or internal. The functional side is visible and external. The constitutional side relates to who we are and the external relates to what we do. What we do is a testament to who we are. And while the constitutional aspect is completed, occurring but once, the functional aspect is ongoing.

Last week our focus was on the constitutional side of sanctification. We saw three truths of the invisible side of sanctification. First, it is an act of God by which he sets people apart for himself—for his use, for his glory, for his delight. Second, it is a cleansing of those devoted to God’s use. Third, it is an adorning or beautifying of those whom God cleanses and sets apart unto himself. The moment a person repents of sin and believes in Christ, that person is sanctified in these three ways. They occur internally. They are reflective of a position we have before God and a condition in which we have been created by God. Observers will not witness what goes on in the heart, the work that happens there. However, these aspects of sanctification cannot occur without producing visible results. As I said last week, these invisible aspects of sanctification are the seed-bed of outward holiness. Tonight’s study, and really for the rest of this study series, our focus will be on the functional side of sanctification. This is the ongoing impact and exercise of our constitutional sanctification in the course of daily living. Who we are and what we have been set apart to be internally goes public externally.

This study considers several specific texts of scripture that bear out the fact that external sanctification proceeds from internal sanctification.

1 Peter 1:1-2 – Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion (here and there) according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood...

Notice, “elect according to the foreknowledge of the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to [the Son].” The Trinitarian aspect itself is stunning, but notice the goal of God’s electing work. He chose, according to his fore-love, persons to obey the Son. How? Through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit! This is the invisible aspect of sanctification. And what is the goal? Obedience to Christ. He works internally so that from the heart we behave according to the commands of Jesus. Internal leads to external.

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."

Holiness is commanded.

The focus of holiness is on what? **In all your conduct.**

What is one's conduct? **It is the way one behaves.**

Is behavior visible or invisible?

Are there invisible aspects to behavior? **Absolutely—motives and attitudes.** But are these things discernable? **Yes they are.** And I am certain Peter is not ignoring motives and attitudes.

But back to behavior. The context points to the observable works one does by contrasting holy conduct with what? **Being conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.**

This takes us back to two texts that were mentioned last week.

Ephesians 2:1-10.

What is the history of every believer?

Before God intervened and made us alive, we were dead. And how did we live? What kind of works did we do? **Trespases and sins. We walked in them. This was our conduct. We lived in the passions of our flesh and carried out the desires of the body and the mind. There was outward conduct that made visible the invisible dead state in which we existed in our hearts.**

What happens to the spiritually dead when God by grace makes us alive? **Verse 10. We are created in Christ Jesus for what? For good WORKS.**

Hebrews 9:13-14. The blood of Christ works powerfully. As the blood of bulls and goats operated under the OT sacrificial system to sanctify (to render unclean flesh pure), the blood of Jesus also sanctifies but in a far greater way. It purifies the conscience from dead works. The question was asked, "What are dead works?" The answer is simple. It is works that do not serve the living God. It is works that proceed from people in their deadness. It is trespases and sins. It involves motives and attitudes but the writer is speaking generally of works that arise out of a heart resistant to serving the living God. When the blood of Christ is applied to our consciences. They are purified so that we do works that serve and please God.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-5

In verse 1 Paul is urging the Thessalonians to live out in their conduct a way of life that corresponds to their salvation. In verse 7, he states that "God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness." In the context, his particular concern is with what aspect of living? **Sexuality**. And what is God's will? **Sanctification; holiness**. And what is his specific instruction? That each one controls his own body. This is what sexual holiness looks like—self-control. So internal sanctification manifests itself externally in the act of self-control.

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.

What was Paul talking about before he launched into these two verses? Christ Jesus has been exalted with a name above every name so that every knee should bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord. Therefore, obey. How? With fear and trembling. In awe because it is God who is at work IN YOU so that what pleases Him comes OUT OF YOU. Inward sanctification (God at work within you) leads to outward sanctification. Work out what God is working in.

Conclusion.

This doctrine of inward and outward sanctification is ROOTED in scripture.

If you have the inward which occurs at the time of conversion, you will not fail to have the outward.

Quote from J. C. Ryle (Holiness, 17)

Sanctification, then, is the invariable result of that vital union with Christ which true faith gives to the Christian. 'He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit' (John 15:5). The branch which bears no fruit is no living branch of the vine. The union with Christ which produces no effect on heart and life is a mere formal union, which is worthless before God. The faith which has not a sanctifying influence on the character is no better than the faith of devils. It is a 'dead faith, because it is alone'. It is not the gift of God. It is not the faith of God's elect. In short, where there is no sanctification of life, there is not real faith in Christ. True faith worketh by love. It constrains a man to live unto the Lord from a deep sense of gratitude for redemption. It makes him feel that he can never do too much for Him that died for him. Being much forgiven, he loves much. He whom the blood cleanses walks in the light. He who has real lively hope in Christ purifieth himself even as He is pure (James 2:17-20; Titus 1:1; Galatians 5:6; 1 John 1:7; 3:3).