

God's Will: Your Sanctification

This morning our text of Scripture is 1 Thessalonians 4:1-3

1) Importance of Sanctification

Sanctification – that cooperative work between God and the Christian which progressively decreases sinfulness and makes one more like Jesus throughout life.

Literally the word means “set-apart / devoted” and is also the same work translated “holy”.

To be technically accurate, the Bible actually uses “Sanctification” in two different ways...

Positional Sanctification – our standing / position before God is declared to be “holy” – this is a one-time act, at moment of Salvation, in which Christ’s righteousness is written on our account, and we are forever accepted by God – we become “holy” in God’s sight... It is accomplished entirely by God Alone – it is something done to us, not by us. That is not what we are talking about here.

Progressive Sanctification – the ongoing process of becoming more like Christ in actual living.

While Salvation reserves for us a place in heaven, it is the Sanctification process that determines the depth of our experience of heaven.

Think about that...

Acceptance into God’s presence and Heaven’s glory are absolutely free gifts and are reserved for all who trust in Christ alone for their standing with God... and that is the same grace for all. That is Salvation.

But the individual Christian’s experience of God’s presence and glory of heaven... Scripture tells us is in proportion to one’s own progress in the Sanctification – actual holy, devoted living in this life.

Paul says in 2 Cor 4:16-17, *though we are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake (v. 11) ..., we do not lose heart, for though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day (Sanctification!). For momentary, light affliction is **producing** for us an eternal weight of glory, far beyond*

all comparison.

This “eternal weight of glory” is certainly not gaining heaven for us, but rather deepening the experience of it.

2) What is Sanctification?

Definition:

Sanctification – that cooperative work between God and the Christian throughout life which progressively decreases sinfulness and makes one more like Jesus in actual living.

3 Additional Truths...

a. All people Sin

(1 Kings 8:46, Prov 20:9, Eccl 7:20)
(Rom 3:23, Matt 6:11-12, 1 John 1:8, Jms 5:16)

This applies to Christians and non-Christians alike – we will not reach perfection in this life.

b. We are called to diligently strive against our flesh & the devil toward real growth in holy living

(Gal 5:16-17, 1 Cor 6:18, Col 3:5,12, Heb 12:14)

c. This is a cooperative effort with God

- God’s Role – 1 Thes 5:23, Heb 13:20-21
- Our Role – Rom 6:12-13, 2 Cor 7:1
- Cooperation – Rom 8:13, Phil 2:12-13

3) How to we go about it?

First, Counterfeits...

Law Counterfeits... – 3 strains of legalism

- a. Works Righteousness – confusing Sanctification and Salvation, thinking that our Salvation comes by works of Righteousness

Titus 3:5 – He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy...

- b. Law-Keeping as the Means to Sanctification

Self-effort alone to keep God's law, rather than by faith and the power of God's Spirit.

Phil 3:3 – We worship in the Spirit of God, glory in Christ Jesus, and place no confidence in the flesh.

Gal 3:3 – Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Col 2:6 – As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.

- c. Law-Keeping as the End of Sanctification

Where the extent of your holiness is merely what the Law requires. Therefore your Christian life is all about avoiding the worst of outward sins – it is entirely a legal issue for you – not driven by the Spirit, but by Law – stops at the fence and does no more than absolutely required.

Thus his relationship with the Lord is cold, and all about duty, and there is no joy.

Paul says in Rom 14:17 – *the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking (or not eating or not drinking), but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

Titus 2:14 says that Jesus *gave Himself to redeem us (not only) from every lawless deed, (but also) to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*

Grace Counterfeits – “Dis-Graces”

- a. Free Grace

No real effort in Sanctification – just live. In fact, Free Grace teachers say that

effort toward actual holiness can be an enemy of your relationship with God.

So, when you sin, just remember that you are a sinner, and be glad once again that Jesus died on the cross for that sin. That's it. That is the Christian life – just sinners sinning and glad that they are saved by grace.

This became a popular teaching among Bible Churches back in the 80s with some at Dallas Seminary promoting a kind of “easy believism”, and now it is being espoused in many Reformed circles as a supposed “championing of a Gospel-centered life.”

God's grace saves sinners, yes!
But God's grace also transforms sinners.

Rom 12:2 – Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

b. Let Go, Let God

Often called “Passive Sanctification” this teaching says we are to rely solely on God to work within us to cause us to do the right things, believing God will bring about a radical “2nd Blessing” or “2nd work of Grace” in our lives as we simply focus on Him and the things of His Kingdom. He will bring us suddenly into a state of “entire sanctification,” where we do not desire to sin (or some say, do not sin).

Seek first His Kingdom AND His righteousness...

Heb 12:14 – Pursue peace with all men, AND the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

Phil 2:12 – Work out your salvation with fear and trembling...

Heb 10... You have need of endurance... AND... My righteous one shall live by faith. (Heb 10:36,38)

c. Laziness

In the back of your mind, you knowing that God's grace covers all sin for the Christian (blessed truth!), so a general sloth in spiritual matters settles in. Many of us slip into this Dis-Grace at times. “It doesn't really matter whether or how

much I grow in holiness – God is gracious and forgiving – relax...”

True! He is gracious and forgiving and patient and has granted us freedom to build our own house as we choose.

But Paul directly challenges such thinking in...

1 Cor 3:10 – *Let each man be careful how he builds.*

Romans 6:1,15 – *Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?*

Gal 5:13 – *Do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*