

Introduction

The New Testament teaches us that in eternity God decreed to sanctify his elect in Christ. It further teaches us that the elect were sanctified in the death and resurrection of Christ. It also teaches us that the moment the elect sinner trusts Christ he is perfectly sanctified. In addition, it teaches us that the converted sinner (the believer) must live a sanctified life to the glory of God. Finally, it teaches us that at the return of Christ the believer will be absolutely sanctified.

And all that formed the substance of my book *Fivefold Sanctification*.¹

In this short follow-up volume I want to take one of those aspects of sanctification – positional sanctification – and explore two of its glorious new-covenant benefits or uses in the life of the believer; namely, the part positional sanctification plays in the believer’s assurance and his progressive sanctification.

Why do I concentrate on positional sanctification and its benefits to the believer? Not because the other aspects of sanctification are unimportant. No! Take, for instance, progressive sanctification. This aspect of sanctification, the believer’s life of godliness, his growing in grace (2 Pet. 3:18), is a vital doctrine, one which needs stressing today, not least because some deny its very existence! Consequently, I hope that this booklet might do something to maintain biblical teaching of this vital aspect of the Christian life.

But I concentrate on positional sanctification because, in my experience, this aspect of sanctification is so little preached, even less understood, and, worst of all, so rarely

¹ It goes without saying that *Fivefold Sanctification* should be read before this volume.

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appreciated and ‘improved’ (made use of) by believers today. I want to do what I can to put this right. After all, the believer’s positional sanctification is one of the glorious (yes, I use the word again) new-covenant blessings for the elect: it was purposed by the Father, accomplished by the Son and applied by the Spirit.

Let me put this personally. We believers must not live like paupers – as too often we do when we pay little attention to our standing in Christ. The fact is, being in union with Christ, we are forever perfect before God, as perfect as Christ himself. Immense benefits, immense comforts and immense challenges come to us through this, not least our assurance and our progressive sanctification. I hope that this booklet will remind many of the blessings they have in Christ, and encourage them to rise to the challenges flowing from their union with him. Maybe, for some, it will not be so much a reminder, but a voyage of discovery.

First, I will look at the believer’s assurance, and its link to his positional sanctification. This is not to say that the believer’s absolute sanctification has no part to play in his assurance,² but I concentrate on the role of positional sanctification in the believer’s comfort. So many believers lack biblical assurance, and this, I am afraid, is because the doctrine of positional sanctification, with its inbuilt witness of the Spirit, is not always appreciated as it should be. Having looked at assurance, I will then address the believer’s progressive sanctification – that is, his life of godliness to the glory of God – and the part played in this by his positional sanctification.

² See my *Grace*.