

More Than Being Saved!

Eight Major Doctrines Defining New Testament Salvation

V. SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification means to be set apart unto God for God's use; to be set apart from sin unto holiness. It is an act of God where He consecrates the believer unto Himself.

The topic of sanctification (or holiness) is found over *one thousand times* in the scriptures. It is a doctrine the Holy Spirit wants believers to especially understand.

There are three distinct tenses of sanctification concerning New Testament salvation:

- a. *Positional*, which refers to the initial act.
- b. *Progressive*, which refers to the believer's present life.
- c. *Final*, which refers to the completion of its work.

A. Positional Sanctification

1. This is the *instantaneous* sanctification the believer receives the moment he trusts Christ. At that time, Christ sets his soul apart from sin and imparts unto him His own holiness and righteousness. God's law, a reflection of His nature, demands that man be perfect and holy. This, however, is impossible for the natural man because he is by nature sinful and unholy (Romans 8:8; Ephesians 2:1-4).
2. God's work of sanctification supplies every moral virtue He requires man to have. When a person receives Christ, he gets all of Christ's moral virtues with Him—he meets all the law's requirements in Him (Romans 10:1-4).
3. When God looks at the *position* of a Christian, He sees the *separated, sanctified, righteous, and perfect* life of His son Jesus Christ. The saint need never fear of losing this standing before God because it is his union with Christ that brought it about. This union can never be broken (see *Regeneration; Justification*; Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30, 6:11; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 1:3-4; Hebrews 2:11, 10:10,14, 13:12,21; 1 Peter 1:2).
4. Also, the instant one believes, his soul is cut loose from his flesh by a spiritual circumcision performed by Christ (Colossians 2:10-15). As a result, the believer is no longer a slave to his old, Adamic nature (though he can still yield to it); he is set free to serve his new righteous nature which is Christ's. The saint is now capable of living a holy life that is pleasing to God (Romans 6:11-23; Colossians 3:1-4).

B. Progressive Sanctification

1. This tense speaks of how the Christian's present life is to become holier and more Christ like day by day. Since the believer's soul is sanctified in Christ, God expects this holiness to affect his behavior and be manifested in his daily walk. He wants him to follow his Savior and live a clean, separated life (Romans 12:1-4; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Galatians 5:22-25; 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 4:1-7).
2. Before a person is saved it is impossible for him to live a holy life. However, after salvation he can; he has the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit to assist him. The Spirit prompts him to live "**...not conformed to this world...**", but after Christ. "**As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him**" (Colossians 2:6). See also: Romans 12:1-4, 16:19; 1 Corinthians 6:12-13, 19-20, 7:23; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, 7:1; Philippians 2:15, 4:8; Colossians 3:5-15; 1

Thessalonians 5:5, 22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 6:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-4; James 1:24-27, 4:4; 1 Peter 2:11-12, 24).

a. How To Resist Temptation And Live Above Sin

1. Every Christian knows what it means to be tempted. However, being tempted to sin is *not* a sin in itself. The Lord was tempted in all the areas we are, yet He did not sin (Hebrews 2:17-18). God will allow His people to be tempted for several reasons. Some of them are: to try their faith (1 Peter 1:7), to keep them humble and dependent on Him (1 Peter 5:6), to cause them to know the victory that is in Christ (Hebrews 2:18), and to enable them to win the crown of life (James 1:2-4, 12).

2. The Bible gives the believer some guidelines to follow concerning temptation.

a. He is to *watch and pray* that he enters not into it (Matthew 26:41).

b. He is to *stay away* from any thing or situation that may lead him into it (Romans 16:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:22).

c. And he is to be *transformed* from worldly thinking to godly thinking by the renewing of his mind (Romans 12:1-4).

3. Nevertheless, even after abiding in these guidelines, temptation may still come. The Christian can defend himself against it by following three scriptural principles. He should:

a. *Follow* his Savior's example and resist the Devil by rebuking him with scripture (Matthew 4:1-11; James 4:7).

b. *Yield* himself to God and reckon himself dead to sin (Romans 6:2-11; Galatians 2:19; 1 Peter 2:24).

c. Earnestly *watch* for the way of escape God has promised, taking it immediately once it is discovered (1 Corinthians 10:13).

4. If the believer will sincerely and prayerfully follow all three of these principles when he is tempted, he will, by the power of God, overcome the temptation. Furthermore, the experience he gains in dealing with it will make him stronger and better able to serve the Lord. However, if a believer gives in and does sin (and all Christians do at times), it is because he *neglected* one or more of the above means of defense.

5. When a Christian sins he must remember that *God will by no means abandon or forsake him*. He is still his Father no matter what happens! God will instantly forgive any believer when he confesses his disobedience as sin (1 John 1:8-10). He may have to pay in the flesh for the sin (reap what he has sown), but he will not suffer eternal condemnation. Though sin cannot break a saint's relationship with God, it can cause a break in fellowship until he confesses it as sin and forsakes it.

6. Finally, concerning doubtful things (thoughts and actions the believer is not certain about), the Holy Spirit has given some more principles to guide Christians.

a. Can the believer do the action he is thinking about in the name of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20)?

b. Can he give thanks to God for it (Colossians 3:17)?

c. Can he do it with the belief that it pleases God (Romans 14:23)?

d. Would he like the Lord to find him doing it when He returns (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)?

The safest and surest way to deal with doubtful thoughts, actions, and circumstances is, "*when in doubt, don't.*"

b. The Means Of Progressive Sanctification

1. The Lord Jesus Christ prayed to His Father that all believers be sanctified by the word of God (John 17:17). The scriptures can sanctify because they reveal God's nature and show the saint where he needs correction and instruction (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Before a believer can continue to live a godly life he must read, study, and submit himself to the Bible. By doing this the Holy Spirit will give him all he needs to live above sin.

C. Final Sanctification

1. This tense refers to a future event where God sanctifies the believer completely—body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). This will occur when Christ comes back for His people at the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Now, the believer's body is not yet sanctified, but in that glorious day it will be, making the him unable to sin! God will separate his body from iniquity, as his spirit is now, and his old nature will become literally dead to sin (Romans 6:7). This event is also called "**...the day of redemption**" (Ephesians 4:30; also see Adoption). When the Lord returns, all His saints will have a glorified body like His, completely and totally *separated* from sin (1 Corinthians 15:35-38; Philippians 3:21; Colossians 3:4; 1 John 3:2).

The Term "Salvation" Also Has Three Tenses:

a. **Past** - The believer *has been saved* from the guilt and *penalty* of sin (Luke 7:50; 1 Corinthians 18-21; 2 Corinthians 2:15; Ephesians 2:5-8; 2 Timothy 1:9; Tit. 3:5; Hebrews 5:9; etc.).

b. **Present** - He *is being saved* from the *power* of sin in his daily life (Romans 6:14; Philippians 1:19, 2:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 4:16).

c. **Future** - He *will be saved* from the *presence* of sin at the second coming (Romans 13:11; 1 Peter 1:5).