

**Introduction:**

- Most people spend their whole lives pretending to be something they're not. But when a person becomes a Christian, the situation is reversed. Suddenly they are faced with the challenge of living up to what God has already declared them to be—holy! **Application:** Every believer, according to the Apostle Paul, is “sanctified (made holy) in Christ” (1Cor. 1:2). Paul wrote this of the Corinthians—a group of believers that he also described as divisive (1Cor. 1:10-11), prideful (1Cor. 1:31), carnal (1Cor. 3:3), self-deceived (1Cor. 3:18), guilty of gross immorality (1Cor. 5:1), and worldly (1Cor. 5:9-11). The Corinthians were under achievers, to say the least. But, that fact did not cancel out God's promise to them. By their faith in Christ, they were declared to be holy (sinless!). When God declares something to be a reality, it is the reality. A reality that will be fully realized in the promise of the resurrection. In the lag time, just like the Corinthians, we have the opportunity to live up to God's declaration.
- God wants us to be holy, set apart from the rest of the world in definable ways. We saw this last week in: God's will is for us to be holy. Set apart, pure, living to be perfect in all our ways. This week I want to go deeper into the subject of sanctification. If this is God's will, and it is according to 1 Thes. 4:3
- Sanctification has three expressions: begun, continued, and goal.

**I. Sanctification Begins At Salvation**

- A. In one sense, sanctification has already begun in the life of the believer and belongs to everyone who is genuinely born again. This sanctification/holiness is the floor of our existence as God's holy people. We are sanctified because 1.) when we believe we are set apart to God and 2.) because we are cleansed from sin. 1 Peter 2:9 we are the ‘holy nation’ who has been called out of darkness into his wonderful light.’ *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”* (1 Peter 2:9, NKJV)
- B. Paul in 1 Cor 6:9-11 says we were....*“Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”* (1 Corinthians 6:11, NLT) It is not only a distancing from sin but also an inner purification. There is both a separation and a cleansing in sanctification.
- C. The source of our sanctification is Jesus. *“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—”* (1 Corinthians 1:30, NKJV) Just as our justification was at the beginning so was our sanctification! It is received by putting our faith in Him. *Everything that we have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ.* Message
- D. We are called Saints. *“To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:”* (1 Corinthians 1:2, NKJV) A saint is any and every person who is a Christian. Not some person with a high degree in spirituality. In Christ we are all holy one, and therefore saints.
- E. *“For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy.”* (Hebrews 10:14, NLT)
- F. The reality is, our reality is, that we were sanctified when our walk with God began. Sanctification belongs to all who call on the name of the Lord.

**II. Sanctification Continues From Salvation** is a process that we are all called to grow in so it is a continuing process. We have been sanctified from the beginning and called into a process of sanctification. It is the continuing life of the believer in Christ. It is important that we understand this. Why? Because there is skewed theological view of sin that is gaining in roads into the church: That view is this, “you don’t really have to change. You are saved now.” It cheapens the grace that has been bought for us at such a great price.

- A.** In Lev 19:2 Israel was set apart as holy, called to be holy and then was given the ten commands and various other ordinances that God expected them to follow as His people.
  - 1.** They were holy because they were separated unto God.
  - 2.** But they were also expected to live with a Kingdom of God mindset. Cast off all evil.
- B.** The NT says the same thing. You were sanctified but you must continue to be sanctified. *“But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, “You must be holy because I am holy.”*” (1 Peter 1:15–16, NLT) Being holy in everything you do is a call to total holiness. Ie. From family, to business, to play, entertainment, etc.
- C.** In 1 Cor 6:18 Paul says run from sexual immorality! This phrase in itself implies continuing sanctification or holiness. Later in 2 Cor he tells the church to not touch anything unclean...a call to continuing sanctification.
- D.** *“Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.”* (2 Corinthians 7:1, NLT)
  - 1.** Another clear statement by Paul affirming our need to grow in sanctification. Therefore, though we are sanctified by His blood we still have sin issues that we need to deal with in ongoing sanctification. These sin issues spring from an unsundered self.
  - 2.** The unsundered self is the root cause of most of our spiritual problems. Sanctification is dealing with that unsundered self. Mt 16:24 *“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me.* NLT NKJV “deny yourself and follow”
- E.** *“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”* (1 John 3:3, NKJV)
- F.** *“Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.”* (Hebrews 12:14, NLT) (Work at) so we can see that sanctification is not only a continuing process but a progressive transformation that takes place in a believer. Rom 12:1-2 don't be conformed to the pattern of this world is another scripture that speaks of movement towards deeper/ongoing sanctification. So sanctification began at salvation it continues on in our lives daily and as a result it is obvious that sanctification is the goal of life in Christ!

**III. Sanctification is the Goal** of the Christians life in Christ.

- A.** So we have seen we were sanctified in Christ (past), we are continuing to grow in sanctification, and now we will see it is the goal of the Christian life. God wants us completely holy.
- B.** *“Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23, NLT) So the goal looks pretty clear in this passage. Phil 1:9-11 also repeats this goal is purity and blamelessness until the coming to Jesus Christ.
- C.** Complete sanctification is the goal. Let patience grow *“So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.”* (James 1:4, NLT)

**D.** The question here is this: Is this achievable in this life?

- 1.** There can be no question that the goal of holiness is always present. Therefore we can never with a clear conscience abandon the goal. I.e. The bride making herself ready.
- 2.** Listen to Paul: *I have not reached perfection but I press on to the goal. Paul declares I have not yet reached it but I press on to take hold of it.* Phil 3:12-14
- 3.** Heb 12:3-13, 14 strengthen the feeble arms and legs. 22-23 speaks of the place of where the spirits of righteous men are made perfect. So, the thought of the goal is always before us and we are striving for it. The completed work is done at death as we enter into glory. Purity, perfection, completeness, holiness...whatever word you choose this is the goal.
- 4.** 1 Jn 3:3 again says that until he comes we purify ourselves but when He comes we will be like Him. So at death or Christ's return, the sanctifying work will be complete.

**E.** Therefore, it is important for us to distinguish between the goal and fulfillment of perfection. Why?

- 1.** There is serious error if we do not devote ourselves to growing continually in sanctification.
- 2.** And the error is just as bad if we claim that we have reached that goal. Pride, spiritual blindness, deception are all brothers to that belief.

### **Conclusion:**

- We are sanctified in Christ when we believe but the work is on going in the life of the believer. Our goal is to be like Jesus when He returns. Sanctification is not an option it is the way of God.
- The Spirit filled life is a life in which we as believers, with the help of Holy Spirit, live to be transformed into the image of Christ. Let me ask a few questions this morning:
  - How is your eye gate?
  - How is your relationship with your wife? Husband? Children? Is it edifying?
  - Do those who know you see Jesus in your life? What would be the evidence?
- When Paul speaks of being sanctified spirit, soul and body—what is not like the image of God in those three areas?
- This is not about getting under shame it is an invitation to enter into who God is. You are being led by Holy Spirit to share in His divine nature...not to be bound by laws and legalism.