

Becoming Like Jesus - Sanctification

1. Sanctification defined
2. Paradigm shift: God-first vs God-centered
3. Justification and sanctification compared
4. Three stages of sanctification
5. Cooperating with God in our sanctification
6. Sanctification affects the whole person
7. What motivates us?
8. Possible topics for December 10, 17 and 31?

Quick review of the last few weeks - a short course in systematic theology

1. Last week - prayer
2. Adoption into God's family as his children
3. Justification - saved by grace...alone

Sanctification defined

Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and [more and more] like Christ in our actual lives. (Grudem, 746)

A paradigm shift to consider

1. God (Christ)-_____ (first)
 - a. God
 - b. Family
 - c. Work
 - d. Swimming :)
 - e. Does this work practically? Is life really this linear?
2. God (Christ)-_____ (centered)
 - a. Compare your life to our solar system: Christ is the blazing sun at the center of your life, and all the various areas of your life are the planets revolving in orbit around that sun. When any of those planets become the center, chaos follows.
 - b. "I have a picture in my mind of the majesty of Christ like the sun at the center of the solar system of your life. The massive sun, 333,000 times the mass of the earth, holds all the planets in orbit, even little Pluto, 3.6 billion miles away...So it is with the supremacy of Christ in your life. All the planets of your life — your sexuality and desires, your commitments and beliefs, your aspirations and

dreams, your attitudes and convictions, your habits and disciplines, your solitude and relationships, your labor and leisure, your thinking and feeling — all the planets of your life are held in orbit by the greatness and gravity and blazing brightness of the supremacy of Jesus Christ at the center of your life. And if he ceases to be the bright, blazing, satisfying beauty at the center of your life, the planets will fly into confusion, and a hundred things will be out of control, and sooner or later they will crash into destruction.”

-- **John Piper**, *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ (Part 2)*, DG National Conference, September 26, 2004

Justification and Sanctification compared

Justification	Sanctification
Legal standing	Internal condition
Once for all time	Continuous throughout life
Entirely God's work	We cooperate with God
Perfect in this life - no stages in justification	Not perfect in this life
The same in all Christians	Greater in some than in others

Three stages of sanctification

Draw Grudem's diagram: The Process of Sanctification (750)

1. Sanctification has a definite beginning
 - a. Begins at _____ ? (regeneration)
 - i. **Titus 3:5**
 1. There is "a definite moral change"
 - ii. **1 Corinthians 6:11**
 1. It is "a completed event..."
 - b. What does this beginning look like?

- i. There is “a **definite break** from the ruling power and love of sin, so that the believer is no longer ruled or dominated by sin and no longer loves to sin.” (Grudem, 747)

- 1. **Romans 6:11-14**

- a. v. 11 - Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God, because that’s what you actually are
 - b. v. 12 - Do not let sin reign in your bodies, as it once did
 - c. v. 13 - Do not present your members (body parts) to sin
 - d. v. 14 - Sin will have no dominion over you, since it is no longer your master
 - e. “To be dead to the ruling power of sin means that we as Christians, by virtue of the power of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection life of Christ working within us, have power to overcome the temptations and enticements of sin.” (Grudem, 747)

- In other words, we can now say “No” to sin.

- 2. **Romans 6:18**

- a. We have been set free from sin, and we have a new master: righteousness.
 - 3. Two things then, are true:
 - a. We will never be able to say in this life that we are completely free from sin.
 - b. But, we should also never say, “This sin has defeated me for years. It’s hopeless. I give up.” To say this is to say that sin does have dominion over you, and it is once again your master.

- ii. There is “a **reorientation** of our desires so that we no longer have a dominant love [and desire] for sin in our lives.” (Grudem, 747-8)

- 1. **Romans 6:17-18**

- 2. “...the desire for light is the beginning of the emergence of light in our lives.”

- **David Powlison**, *Making All Things New*, DG National Conference, September 25, 2004

- 2. Sanctification continues (increases) throughout life - it’s a process

- a. **Romans 6:12-13**

- i. Paul recognizes that sin remains in our lives, so he tells us to not let it reign over us, and not to yield to it.

- b. **Romans 6:19**

- i. Our task is to grow more and more in sanctification, just like we once did when we were growing more and more in sin.
- c. 2 Corinthians 3:18**
 - i. Sanctification is progressively becoming more and more like Christ - "from one degree of glory to another."
 - ii. Another truth: We become like what we worship.
- d. Philippians 3:12-14**
 - i. Paul has not arrived at this point...he is still pressing on!
- e. Want more? Read the New Testament - it's full of exhortations, commands, and instruction in living the Christian life, which is our part in sanctification, as we'll see shortly.
- f. "One key to fighting well is to lengthen your view of the battle. If you think that one week of "shock and awe" combat will win this war, you're bound for disappointment. If you're looking for some quick fix, an easy answer, a one-and-done solution, then you'll never really understand the nature of the fight. And if you promise easy, once-for-all victories to others, then you'll never be much help to them.

The key to getting a long view of sanctification is to understand direction. What matters most is not the distance you've covered. It's not the speed you're going. It's not how long you've been a Christian. It's the direction you're heading.

The rate of sanctification is completely variable. We cannot predict how it will go. Some people, during some seasons of life, leap and bound like gazelles...You turn from sin to Christ; the open sins disappear...It sometimes happens like that. For other people (and the same people, at another season of life) sanctification is a steady, measured walk. You learn truth. You learn to serve others constructively. You build new disciplines. You learn basic life wisdom. You learn who God is, who you are, how life works. You learn to worship, to pray, to give time, money, and caring. And you grow steadily — wonder of wonders!

Other people (and the same people, at another season) trudge. It's hard going. You limp. You don't seem to get very far very fast. But if you're trudging in the right direction, someday you will see him face to face, and you will be like him. Some people crawl on their hands and knees. Progress is painful. Praise God for the glory of his grace, you are inching in the right direction. And then there are times you aren't even moving, stuck in gridlock, broken down — but you're still facing in the right direction. That's Psalm 88, the "basement" of the Psalms. This man feels dark despair — but it's despair in the Lord's direction. In other words, it's still faith, even when faith feels so discouraged you can only say, "You are my only hope. Help. Where are you?" That counts — it made it into the Bible!

There are times you might fall asleep in the blizzard and lie down comatose and forgetful — but grace wakes you up, reminds you, and gets you moving again. There are times you slowly wander off in the wrong direction, beguiled by some false promise, or disappointed by a true promise that you falsely understood. But he who began a good work in you awakens you from your sleepwalk, sooner or later, and puts you back on the path. And then there are times you revolt, and do a face-plant in the muck, a swan dive into the abyss — but grace picks you up and washes you off again, and turns you back. Slowly you get the point. Perhaps then you leap and bound, or walk steadily, or trudge, or crawl, or face with greater hope in the right direction.

We love gazelles. Graceful leaps make for a great testimony to God's wonder-working power. And we like steady and predictable. It seems to vindicate our efforts at making the Christian life work in a businesslike manner. But, in fact, there is no formula, no secret, no technique, no program, and no truth that guarantees the speed, distance, or time frame. On the day you die, you'll still be somewhere in the middle, but hopefully further along. When we lengthen the battle, we realize that our business is the direction. God manages to work his glory in and through all of the above scenarios! God's people need to know that, so someone else's story doesn't set the bar in a place that is not how your story of Christ's grace is working out in real life."

-- **David Powlison**, *Making All Things New*, DG National Conference, September 25, 2004

3. Sanctification is completed at death (for our souls) and when Jesus returns (for our bodies)
 - a. **Hebrews 12:22-24**
 - i. "The spirits of the righteous made perfect" - those who have died and are with God in heaven right now
 - b. **Philippians 3:20-21**
 - i. Our bodies will be transformed to be like Jesus' glorious (glorified) body
 - c. Loraine Boettner on dying before Jesus comes, from his book *Immortality*
4. What about those who say sinless perfection is possible in this life?
 - a. There are a handful of passages that some have used to teach that perfectionism is possible in this life.
 - i. **Matthew 5:48**, for example
 1. Either God expects perfection from us, OR...

2. This is the standard we should be aiming for, and the standard by which God holds us accountable
- b. In response:
 - i. **Matthew 6:11-12**
 - ii. **James 3:2**
 - iii. **1 John 1:8-10**

Cooperating with God in our sanctification

1. To be clear:
 - a. Not because God needs our help
 - b. God is the primary mover
2. God's role
 - a. Disciplines us as his children (**Hebrews 12:5-11; esp. 10-11**)
 - b. Gives us the will (desire) and power to do (**Philippians 2:13**)
 - c. In Christ, God earned our sanctification for us (**1 Corinthians 1:30**)
 - d. Jesus is our example (**Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 2:21**)
 - e. God the Holy Spirit is "who works within us to change us and sanctify us." (**1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 5:22-23**)
3. Our role
 - a. **Romans 8:13**
 - i. Passive - we are dependent on the Holy Spirit
 - ii. Active - we are commanded to put to death the deeds of the body
 - b. **Philippians 2:12-13**
 - c. **1 Peter 2:11-12**
 - d. "The New Testament does not suggest any short-cuts by which we can grow in sanctification, but simply encourages us repeatedly to give ourselves to the old-fashioned, time-honored means of Bible reading and meditation, prayer, worship, witnessing, Christian fellowship, and self-discipline or self-control." (Grudem, 755) Often called the spiritual disciplines.
 - e. In the New Testament, this is usually a corporate (together) process
 - i. **Hebrews 10:24-25**
 - ii. **Ephesians 4:1-3**
 1. "You" is plural
 - iii. **Philippians 2:12-13**
 1. "Your own" and "you" are plural
4. "Let go and let God" - a "tragic distortion of the doctrine of sanctification?"

Sanctification affects the whole person

1. Our intellect and knowledge (**Colossians 3:9-10**)
2. Our emotions (**Galatians 5:22**)
3. Our will (**Philippians 2:13**)
4. Our spirit (**2 Corinthians 7:1**)
5. Our body (**1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20**)

What motivates us to pursue sanctification?

1. The desire to please God, because we love him (**John 14:15**)
2. The desire to please God, because we are and will be accountable to God for how we lived our lives (**2 Corinthians 5:9-10**)
3. The desire to keep a clear conscience (**Romans 13:5**)
4. The desire to be “a vessel for honorable use,” useful to God (**2 Timothy 2:20-21**)
5. The desire to see unbelievers come to Christ through observing our lives (**1 Peter 3:1-2**)
6. The desire to receive blessings in this life (**1 Peter 3:9-12**)
7. The desire to avoid God’s displeasure and discipline on our lives (**Hebrews 12: 3-11; 1 Peter 1:17**)
8. The desire to seek greater heavenly rewards (**Matthew 6:19-21**)
9. The desire for a deeper walk with God (**Psalms 86:11**)
10. The desire for peace (**Philippians 4:9**) and joy (**Hebrews 12:1-2**) in our lives

Closing thoughts

1. Encouraging or discouraging? Why?
2. In thinking about cooperating with God in your sanctification, do you tend to emphasize God’s role or your role? Or do you think you keep a good balance between the two?

Topics for December 10, 17, 31?

Resources

1. Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem
2. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/making-all-things-new-restoring-pure-joy-to-the-sexually-broken>
3. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/sex-and-the-supremacy-of-christ-part-2>
4. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/do-men-owe-women-a-special-kind-of-care>