

## SANCTIFICATION IS ONLY POSSIBLE BECAUSE SIN'S DOMINION HAS ENDED BY THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

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- In this section, we are going to start getting into the practical areas of our sanctification and what it looks like from the ground level.
- It is one thing to know what the Bible says about our sanctification, and know that we are to be more and more like Christ. But how does it work? What are some practical aspects of our sanctification so that we can know that we are going on the right path?
- In other words, I want to answer the question, *how does this help me right now and tomorrow?*

### What have we learned about sanctification so far?

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- It is the work of God in us so that we are empowered to say no to sin and yes to righteousness. Our total aim in our whole life is to now be made more and more like Christ in every aspect.
  - “Sanctification involves the concentration of thought, of interest, of heart, mind, will, and purpose upon the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus and the engagement of our whole being with those means which God has instituted for the attainment of that destination. Sanctification is the sanctification of persons, and persons are not machines; it is the sanctification of persons renewed after the image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.”<sup>1</sup>
- “Believers are not conformed to the image of Christ in an instant, but rather, they experience a progressive transformation into his image by degrees. Thus, the Holy Spirit’s work in believers will cause them to increase in sanctification throughout their Christian lives.”<sup>2</sup>
- Not only is every part of our new lives transformed by God’s grace, but it is a continual transformation that does not stop in our earthly lives.
- **Our sanctification has everything to do with where we focus our attention in our lives.**
- Listen to Puritan John Owen, “Let us live in the constant contemplation of the glory of Christ, and virtue will proceed from Him to repair all our decays, to renew a right spirit within us, and to cause us to abound in all duties of obedience.... It will fix the soul unto that object which is suited to give it delight, complacency, and satisfaction.... When the mind is filled with thoughts of Christ and his glory, when the soul thereon cleaves unto him with intense affections, they will cast out, or not give admittance unto, those causes of spiritual weakness and indisposition.... And nothing will so much excite and encourage our souls hereunto as a constant view of Christ and His glory.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, 150.

<sup>2</sup> MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 635.

<sup>3</sup> John Owen, *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ*, in *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 1, 460–61. , 643)

- “...so also does the Spirit work in progressive sanctification, *strengthening that holy disposition created in regeneration*. The spiritual apprehension of Christ’s glory conforms believers’ affections to the divine will, *causing them* to hate sin and love righteousness. Then, sanctified affections direct the will in such a way that it desires the righteousness it has come to love and repudiates the sin it has come to hate. Finally, the internal transformation is brought to fruition externally, as the sanctified will issues in holy living.”<sup>4</sup>
- **Notice what is being said here...**
  - When one is “apprehended” by Christ, their *new affections* are for Christ and His will.
    - The Puritans believed that while the mind “sees” what is good, it is the affections that “taste” and “relish” it.
  - Your affections are now *sanctified* so that even they come to love righteousness and hate sin.
    - True “Religious Affections” are movements of the soul produced by the **Holy Spirit**. (Jonathan Edwards)
    - The Holy Spirit’s goal *and now our goal*, is to savor, relish, and rest in God above all other realities in our lives.
    - For the Puritans, you did not truly know a truth until that truth affected your will.
  - Not only is there a new love towards Christ, but there is also a new life aimed at Christ, and that comes out with actions which glorify Christ.
    - Our internal change then *must* produce external change. This is why behavior modification (just do what is right) without a heart change is detrimental to the Christian (or any) life.
    - A person’s actions (saved or otherwise) are *always* going to be motivated by their affections.
- Sanctification is not asking yourself *what would Jesus do...* it is asking yourself *do I love what Jesus loves?*

## **A Brief Example**

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- “Many a lovely person I have seen; but none so lovely as Christ. Many a kind friend I have had; but none like Christ, in loving-kindness and in tender mercies.” (John Brown of Haddington)
- Your sanctification is as much about Christ’s work in you as it is about how you view Christ.
  - We have discussed this before, but how do you gaze at the glory of Christ in your daily living?
- It was written about John Brown that “he preached Christ as if Christ was at his elbow.”
- He was a prolific writer and professor, training men for ministry. He warned them against a **cold** ministry, saying, “A soul-saving minister is a very rare thing...preach as if you were already in the presence of God.”
- June 19, 1787, John Brown of Haddington went home to be with the Lord.

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<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine*, 643.

- As his loving family stood around him in the manse which he had lived in and worked out of for 36 years, his final words were “*My Christ.*”
- John Brown could never get over the loveliness of Christ. In his final weeks, as he was dying, it was said of him that “as his body failed, his affections of the will seemed to intensify.”
- John Brown is known for many things, but chiefly among them was his total and complete love for Christ.
- It was from this total and complete love for Christ that he taught his students and shepherded his church.

### **Practical or Continual or Progressive Sanctification in Real Life**

- After knowing what has been done and knowing that we now have new affections, new thoughts, new desires, and a new will...how can we live for the glory of God?
- “I have had a deep conviction for many years that practical holiness and entire self-consecration to God are not sufficiently attended to by modern Christians in this country. Politics, or controversy, or party-spirit, or worldliness, have eaten out the heart of lively piety in too many of us. The subject of personal godliness has fallen sadly into the back-ground. The standard of living has become painfully low in many quarters. The immense importance of “adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour” (Titus 2:10), and making it lovely and beautiful by our daily habits and tempers, has been far too much overlooked.”<sup>5</sup>
- “Yet sanctification, in its place and proportion, is quite as important as justification. ***Sound Protestant and Evangelical doctrine is useless if it is not accompanied by a holy life.*** It is worse than useless: it does positive harm. It is despised by keen-sighted and shrewd men of the world, as an unreal and hollow thing, and brings religion into contempt.”<sup>6</sup>
- What Ryle is saying (from the late 1800’s...) is that the major problem facing the church is those men who have professed faith in Christ, tell others of their faith in Christ, attend church and worship Christ, yet live their lives for the own passing and hollow glory.
- There can be no sanctification without justification and if one has been justified, they **must** be in the process of living out their sanctification.
- Our holiness in our daily lives must be of the utmost importance so that we are able to magnify Christ to an onlooking world.
- While there are many things which get in the way, it does us well to keep our eyes on Christ.
  - Is He our greatest delight? Our loveliest friend?
- How can we say, like John Brown of Haddington, that “Christ is not just a King to obey, but a spouse to delight in?”

<sup>5</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties and Roots* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1889), ix–x.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

- The place to start is in our minds...we must believe and understand that *sin's dominion has ended*.<sup>7</sup>
- What does it mean that *sin's dominion has ended*?
- “Although the character of sin in the Christian is no different from its character before he became a child of God, the status of sin has been dramatically changed.”<sup>8</sup>
  - The point that Ferguson is making is that while the redeemed, born-again Christian has a new nature, the mind of Christ, is in God's family, etc., sin is still present and temptation is active in their lives.
  - The presence of sin still remains and so do the memories of our old sinful life. Not only that, but so do our old habits and desires.
  - Sin still desires to deceive you, trick you, use your emotions and thoughts against you.
- **Here is where the mind must align itself with reality.**
  - Our new reality is that sin is still present, but we now can actively war against it.
  - We now can have true and lasting victory in our fight against sin.
- “Sanctification is predicated on union with Christ, so a believer must know and comprehend the truth entailed in that union (Rom 6:1–10).”<sup>9</sup>

### **Romans 6:1-14 ~ Our New Relationship With Sin**

**Romans 6:1-2** “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? {2} May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”

- Our new status is like those who are dead to sin.
- Paul's point in these two verses is to combat the teaching that a robust teaching and understanding of grace will lead to a life of continual and unrepentant sin.
- Paul wrote in **Romans 5:20** “The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more...”
- It sounds like Paul is advocating for a lawless life. It sounds like he is saying that we should sin more and more so that we can have more and more grace.
- Those who objected to Paul's teaching from Romans 5:20 would sound like this, “If this is so, then the more we sin the more grace God will reveal; therefore we can sin to our heart's content and promote the grace of God rather than incur his wrath.” (126)
- In our English text, the depth of Paul's emotion when he says **Romans 6:2** “**May it never be!**” is missed.
  - He is saying, *let it not happen! Or Perish the thought! Or God forbid!*

<sup>7</sup> This section taken from Sinclair Ferguson's chapter 13 in *The Christian Life*, 123-132.

<sup>8</sup> Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, 123.

<sup>9</sup> Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, 152.

- The usage of this “no” is saved for times when a logic is so flawed or offensive that it deserves a deep-felt rejection.
- In other words, the thought that those who were born again would continue in sin under the banner of grace was repulsive to the mind of Paul.
- As Ferguson says, “He argues that the grace which justifies us is the grace which also sanctifies us...if we have died to sin we cannot go on living in it!” (126)
- Since we are now in Christ, new creations and in His family, to continue in sin contradicts who we are and the divine see that is now in us.
- Ferguson goes on to say about the believer’s new relationship with sin, “Ever since the day when by God’s mighty power we were born from above we have had this radically new relationship to sin. The tragedy is that so many of us either do not know it or do not live in the light of it.” (127)
- This is what it means to live under your new freedom. You no longer have to sin, you no longer have to give in to temptation, you now have a new power in you because of the work of Christ on your behalf.

**Romans 6:3-5** “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? {4} Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. {5} For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection...”

- It is because of our union with Christ that we now are truly dead to sin.
- In these verses, the Apostle is appealing to our baptism in Christ.
- “...if they were baptised [sic] into Christ, it was into a Christ who died and rose, so that they have been baptised [sic] into his death and resurrection. Just as Christ’s death led him to a new, resurrection life to God, the same is true of the Christian who has had been united to him.”
- This means that if someone who is professing to know Christ, professing to have died and been raised with Christ, is to still live according to their old life, they are not acting in accordance with their new identity.
- Notice how Paul writes that it is not just in the future that we are going to become like Christ.
  - He says in **verse 4** “...so we too might walk in newness of life.” Here is where the proof is in our living for Christ. We have the new identity, now we need to have the life which matches it.

**Romans 6:6-7** "...knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; {7} for he who has died is freed from sin."

- Since we have died to sin, since we are now in Christ and since we have been given new life, Paul tells the church at Rome...we cannot continue to live as if we are under sin's domain.
- We are now, as Paul wrote, **freed from sin**.
- **What does he mean?** "The words appear in the context of sanctification, not one of justification. Further, Paul is speaking about the slavery of sin, and salvation in the context must mean more than justification." (129-130)
- Paul speaks of sin as a master over someone. He talks of sin as if it is a tyrant that only seeks to enslave its victims and force them to do what it desires.
  - On a side note, that is why in the original Greek language of the New Testament, the writers consistently use the phrase *the sin*. That phrase personifies its power and the control that people allow it to have over them.
  - **This is where the writers want to give sin the power that it really has:**
  - Paul constantly treats sin as a slave-owner or a king over his servants:
    - Sin is a master:
      - **Romans 6:23** "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
      - **Romans 7:14** "For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin."
    - Sin is an occupier:
      - **Romans 7:17** "So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."
    - Sin is a power one is under, not just something you do.
      - **John 8:34** "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.'"
  - Believers cannot think of "sin" as the acts that we commit or the thoughts that we have, but it is an actual power that desperately wants to have control over you.
- **Genesis 4:7** "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."
  - "By this divine analysis we learn that sin has a pervasive power that seizes occasion to enslave its victims (cp. Rom 3:9; 1 Cor 15:56; 1 John 5:19). But Cain is urged to repent lest he be consumed; he cannot claim helplessness nor ignorance, for he has divine counsel. The apostle Paul testified to the inner struggle against the power of sin and conceded that the power of Christ alone could liberate

him (Rom 7:15–25). Cain’s refusal to deal rightly with his sin permitted his anger to fester into murder.”<sup>10</sup>

- We know that sin looks for opportunities to come upon us, but because of Christ, believers are no longer under the power or obligation to sin.
  - “The consequences of his reaction to God’s correction are more far-reaching than the initial sin itself, for if he pursues sin’s anger, it will result in sin’s mastery over him. This is his decision. It is possible for Cain to recover from sin quickly if he chooses the right thing.”<sup>11</sup>
  - We must now allow sin to have mastery over us, for we have been freed from its power and now live under the care of Christ.
- **Now, what does it mean to be freed from sin?** It can’t mean that believers are now free from the act of sinning, though it is now our new desire to sin no more. It also can’t mean that believers are freed from temptation which can lead to sin.
  - What Paul has in mind is sin’s “rule has been broken and abolished in Christ, Sin no longer has the same authority even although its nature is unchanged. It is from such a perspective that a life of settled victory over present indwelling sin is a possibility.” (130)
  - What Ferguson is pointing out is that with the Paul’s language, while sin still dwells in the believer, the mastery and power it once had is now gone.
  - This is our new reality, we now live our new life knowing this truth and acting like our new man.

**Romans 6:8-10** “Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, {9} knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. {10} For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.”

- What is true of Christ is now also true of us...we not only have a new relationship with sin but we also now share in Christ’s new life.
- “We do not continue in sin, not only because we have died to it, but also because by our very nature as Christians, we are living new lives to the glory of God.” (130)
- One of the most practical applications of our new life in Christ is just this...sin no longer has any dominion over us; it is no longer our master and commander.
- Not only that, but because of our new status, because Christ died once for all, we now can live our lives fully for the glory of God.

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<sup>10</sup> K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, vol. 1A, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 271.

<sup>11</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, vol. 1A, 270.

**Romans 6:11-14** “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. {12}

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, {13} and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. {14} For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”

- Only once one is born again do they have real and true freedom in their choices.
- When one is dead in sin and trespass, they can only choose to please themselves or seek the approval of others in their actions.
- Now, since we are dead to sin and alive to God, we have a true choice...a true freedom.
- Once again, Paul is basing his argument on the fact that we are *dead to sin*. But as he says here, we are not just dead to sin...we are alive to God in Christ Jesus!
- Being alive to God means that we can truly know what God wants. We can really live after His own desires. We have the capacity to know His thoughts, please Him, and glorify Him with our entire being.
- Now, because we are dead to sin and alive to God, as Paul writes in **verse 13**, the same power that we used, the same energy that we had to sin...now use that same energy for God.
- No longer give your bodies over to the dominion and power of sin, now submit yourselves under the power and care of Christ.
- Even though we are truly dead to the power of sin, we must continually remind ourselves of that truth.
- We cannot go through life as on a river; just floating along and agreeing with wherever it takes us.
- We now must be intentional and purposeful with our bodies.
- They are instruments that can be used for sin or righteousness.
- We now, as those who are born again, “...are to make sure, by fighting against its [sins] every movement, that it does not invade our hearts as though it had dominion. If we consider ourselves to be what we truly are, he argues, dead men brought to life in Christ; if we build on this sure foundation, refusing to yield our body to sin as its slave, then we will discover that the assurance Paul gives us, ‘sin shall not be your master’, will also be our daily experience.” (131)
- Ferguson then asks, “what practical difference does this really make to Christian living?”
- **He uses an illustration that was on BBC Radio when he was a boy: (131)**
  - When I was a little boy there was a children's record request programme on BBC Radio. One of the songs, regularly played towards the end of the programme because of its popularity, was called ‘The Ugly Duckling’ sung by Danny Kaye. It told the story of a rather self-conscious little ‘duckling’, mixing with the other birds and feeling very sorry for himself because of his feathers all stubby and

brown. He was rather despised by his fellow birds, and felt something of a failure, especially when he cast a side-long glance at their comparative beauty. Then one day the 'ugly duckling' looked down, and saw something marvellous. He no longer had brown, ugly feathers, but was arrayed in the splendid white feathers of a swan! And off he went shouting, I'm a swan, I'm a swan! Although he had thought he was a duckling, he had never been a duckling. He had been a swan all the time. But the real difference came when he saw what he really was. The recognition of his true identity was the beginning of new joy! Precisely the same is true of the teaching of this chapter.

- The great mistake many of us make is to look only at our sin and failure, and then ask, a little despairingly, What can I do? But our need is not to do, it is first of all to understand what God has done; to see that what he has made us through his Son is a man or a woman who has died with Christ to sin's dominion and has been raised with Christ to newness of life. We are those over whom sin no longer has any dominion.
  - Like the 'ugly duckling' then, I may say: I'm not under sin's dominion! I'm a new creature! I'm not what I thought I was, now what I once was! I am not an 'ugly duckling' Christian, I'm a child of God!"
- While it is true that we are now children of God, no longer under the power of sin, it is equally true that we have not reached the end of our struggle with sin.
  - In fact, it is precisely at our salvation that the real conflict with our sin begins...we have died to it, but it has not died to us.

### **Our Hope of Seeing Christ Motivates Our Holiness**

- **1 John 3:2-3** "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. {3} And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."
- "...God's children are a work in progress...we are *now* children of the Father, even with all our faults and flaws and, yes, sins. But it is not God's purpose to allow his children to be as we are now, for the full benefit of our status cannot be even imagined in this world."<sup>12</sup>
- "John uses the word similarly to refer to the moral transformation of the believer that takes the place of external religious rituals in the life of the Christian. Just as OT rituals set one apart for a special time of service to God or to enter his presence, all of the Christian's life is to be set apart by a moral consecration in one's way of life."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, ZECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 141.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

## Availing Ourselves to the Means of Grace

- “By fighting to behold the glory of Jesus by all the means of grace, the follower of Christ will be gradually transformed into his image from the inside out. He will therefore conduct himself in a manner worthy of the gospel (Phil. 1:27) and worthy of the Lord himself (Col. 1:10), working out his salvation with fear and trembling, just as Scripture commands (Phil. 2:12). As 2 Timothy 2:21 declares, ‘He will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.’”<sup>14</sup>
- These means of grace, by way of reminder:
  - The Word of God is a vehicle for the glory of God (Ex. 33:18; 34:5–7; 1 Sam. 3:1, 21).
  - Prayer is the occasion for personal communion with God, in which the worshiper seeks God’s face (2 Chron. 7:14; Pss. 24:6; 27:8; 105:4; Hos. 5:15) in order that he might behold his transforming beauty (Ps. 27:4).
  - Fellowship in the local church is an opportunity to hear the Word preached skillfully, to sing songs of worship with sanctifying lyrics drawn from biblical truth, to pray corporately as the body of Christ, and to see the gospel pictured in the ordinances of baptism and communion.
  - Besides this, to whatever degree Christians have been imperfectly conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18), to that degree they reflect the image of his glory to one another.”<sup>15</sup>
- We need the **constant reminder** that God has given us many avenues to grow in grace so that we can continue to live for Him day to day. (Rom 15:15; 1 Cor 4:17; Tit 3:1; 2 Pet 1:12; 3:1; Jude 1:5)
- **Reckon the Facts:**
  - “Reckoning is a faith-realization or an unquestioning acceptance that the judicial factors mentioned above (death to sin, old self crucified, definitive break with sin, etc.) are actual and exist for him.”<sup>16</sup>
- **Surrender to God:**
  - “Once in Christ, stop allowing sin to reign in your body and begin presenting yourselves to God.”<sup>17</sup>
- **Resist Sin:**
  - “...the believer must take the initiative against sin. He cannot coast on Holy Spirit power or rest passively in some kind of spiritual equilibrium.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine*, 643–644.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 643.

<sup>16</sup> Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, 153.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 154–155.