

Sanctification

Warren Doud

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Definition

This study of the Doctrine of Sanctification is an edited compilation from the teaching of various Christian scholars, including:

- Chester McCalley, late pastor of Beth Haven Church, Kansas City, Missouri.
- Ralph Braun, pastor emeritus, Austin Bible Church, Austin, Texas
- R. B. Thieme, Jr., late pastor of Berachah Church, Houston, Texas
- Lewis Sperry Chafer, first president of Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas.

Sanctification is a state of separation unto God; all believers enter into this state when they are born again.

1 Corinthians 1:30

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

This is a once-for-ever separation, eternally unto God.

In the following verses, the word “Sanctification” implies “set apart unto God”.

1 Thessalonians 4:3

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification,

1 Thessalonians 4:4

That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor;

2 Thessalonians 2:13

But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

1 Peter 1:2

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Sanctification is the setting apart of a person or an object for a special purpose. The object is usually indicated in the context.

Positional Sanctification is the result of baptism by means of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:13

2 Thessalonians 2:13

Experiential Sanctification involves the state of fellowship with God and the process of spiritual growth, and takes place whenever the believer is filled with the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:14-15

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

Romans 8:29

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Romans 12:2

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Galatians 5:22,23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Ultimate Sanctification is the state of every believer in eternity future. Sanctification does not require any particular life style or “saintly” attitude.

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Ephesians 5:27

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Philippians 3:21

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

1 John 3:2

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Etymology

There are several Greek words used for “sanctification”.

The Greek verb ἁγιαζω (hagiadzo) means “to set apart; to make holy; to consecrate; to sanctify”. This what God the Father does for members of His family, He sets us apart to show that we are royalty.

The unique privileges of members of God’s family begin at salvation.

The adjective ἅγιος (hagios) is translated “saint”. But this does not refer to a person who is self-righteous, strained, and living a sacrificial life! The word is descriptive of the consecrated life which a believer can enjoy.

There is only one class of believers, the “set apart” ones. There is no differentiation of race, sex, or human status.

The noun ἁγιασμος (hagiasmos) means “sanctification; or sanctifying”. It refers to a state of being for every believer. We are related to God the Father by grace, through faith, and the salvation ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Another noun, rarely used, is ἁγιαγιωτης (hagiotes). It means “sanctification” but is also translated “holiness”.

There is another noun, ἁγιασμος (hagiosune) is used only by Paul. It also refers to holiness, or being set apart.

The Three Phases of Sanctification

Sanctification is the normal way of life for members of God’s royal family, believers in Jesus Christ. Born-again Christians are set apart to God in three ways, from the time of salvation through eternal life.

Positional Sanctification Positional Sanctification occurs when a person is born again. At that time the new believer is placed into and identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mechanism of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

TOPIC: HOLY SPIRIT, BAPTISM

Every believer is thus in a place, in union with Christ, where it is possible to follow the plan of God.

The phrase “in Christ” is a reference to positional sanctification.

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

The phrase “all spiritual blessings” means that every divine operating asset is available to the Christian, so that the believer:

- can be well oriented to the Christian life
- can be stabilized in the Christian walk
- can grow in Christ under the process of edification, and
- can be productive in witnessing and discipling •

TOPIC: UNION WITH CHRIST (POSITIONAL TRUTH)

Having been placed permanently in Christ means that a Christian has eternal security; there is no way one can get out of the relationship with Christ or with God.

Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 8:38,39

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Positional sanctification qualifies a Christian to live with God forever. The reason this is possible is twofold.

A believer possesses the righteousness of God, because it was imputed to him at the time of Salvation. Therefore, since we share perfect righteousness of Christ, we satisfy the demand of God that nothing unrighteous be in His presence.

Romans 4:20-22

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

The believer possesses eternal life.

1 John 5:11,12

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

Positional sanctification does not depend on the Christian’s behavior, faithfulness, perseverance, or sinlessness; it belongs to both spiritual and carnal believers. Even Christians who are the worst of sinners are sanctified in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:2,30

Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: . . .

[many in the church at Corinth were wretched sinners]

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

The believer has been created in Christ and has a wonderful opportunity to serve Him.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in (by means of) them.

Characteristics of Positional Sanctification

- It is not an experience. It is neither emotional or ecstatic.
- It is not progressive. Experiential sanctification is progressive. Positional Sanctification cannot be improved.
- It is not related to human merit. Positional Sanctification cannot be earned. It is Jesus Christ who did the work for our salvation, and it is the Holy Spirit who entered us into Christ.
- It is obtained at the moment of salvation by any person who accepts Christ.
- Positional Sanctification can only be understood through the intake of Bible truth by a Christian who is filled with the Holy Spirit.
- It is eternal; It cannot be changed by God, angels, or mankind.

Implications of Positional Sanctification We share the perfect righteousness of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

We share the eternal life of Christ.

1 John 5:11,12

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

We share the election of Christ. He is elect, so we are elect.

Ephesians 1:4

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

We share the sonship of Christ.

Galatians 3:26

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

We share the inheritance of Christ.

Romans 8:16,17

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

We share the priesthood of Christ.

Hebrews 10:10-14

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

We are transferred into the Kingdom of the Son of His love.

Colossians 1:13

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Positional sanctification puts believers in a position to walk by means of what God has provided. That new walk is the subject of Experiential Sanctification.

Experiential (Progressive) Sanctification

In this phase of sanctification, two important concepts are included, spirituality and edification (growth).

In the Christian life, a believer has an opportunity to grow spiritually into a solidly stable and productive individual. There are two requirements for this to happen.

The Christian must be continuously walking in the Spirit. Being “in the Spirit” refers to the Filling of the Holy Spirit. It is necessary both to understand this concept and to practice it.

At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit permanently indwells the body of the believer.

At the same time the new believer receives the filling of the Holy Spirit, but this is not permanent!

The body contains a sin nature; the Holy Spirit indwells the body to be in place to help the believer in conflicts within the soul. The spiritual battlefield is the soul, and victory over the power of sin begins with the filling (control) of the Holy Spirit.

We are always indwelt by the Holy Spirit, a feature of Positional Sanctification.

We are not always filled with the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Holy Spirit means God the Holy Spirit controls the soul; and He does not control when we sin (grieve Him) or perform human good or evil (quench Him). When we confess our sins (1 John 1:9), God forgives the sins and “cleanses” us; and the Holy Spirit is in control again and able to carry out His work.

The word experiential refers to this cleansing process, which much take place on a daily basis in order for the spiritual walk to be consistent.

1 John 1:9,10

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

The term progressive sanctification emphasizes the fact the Christian growth is a process, a process that is interrupted when a person is not occupied with Christ.

1 John 1:10 states that when sin is not confessed, God’s “word is not in us”! This means that without the filling of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to grow in Christ.

John 17:17

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever.

Ephesians 5:25,26

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word

1 Thessalonians 5:23

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

TOPICS: HOLY SPIRIT, INDWELLING; HOLY SPIRIT, FILLING; CONFESSION OF SIN

To make progress in the Christian life requires living within the sphere of the plan of God. It is this decision that determines whether a Christian will be a winner or a loser in the Christian life.

That is why the inspired writers of the Bible talk so much about “walking in the Spirit”, “living in the Word”, “being occupied with Christ”, “being free from sin”, etc.

Outside of the will of God, Satan has places in his world in which a person can dwell. That is why God the Father provided Experiential Sanctification, so that every believer will have a safe place of habitation!

Experiential Sanctification is the believer living in his own spiritual home, under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, and having continuous growth and momentum from learning and applying Bible doctrine.

TOPICS: OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST; NEGATIVE VOLITION; WALK, THE CHRISTIAN; EDIFICATION; SIN OF NOT THINKING GRACE

Experiential Sanctification, then, is FHS + BD, the filling of the Holy Spirit plus Bible Doctrine.

Ultimate Sanctification

Ultimate Sanctification takes place when the believer enters the eternal state. It carries the concept of the resurrection body which every believer will have.

At the Rapture of the Church, believers will receive their resurrection bodies. Ultimate Sanctification is the state of being blameless before God, possessing a resurrection body.

1 Corinthians 1:8

Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ultimate Sanctification also includes the crowns, rewards, and stored-up blessings which are laid up for faithful Christians in the eternal state.

Ultimate Sanctification sees the conversion of the Church (the Body of Christ) into the Bride of Christ. The royal family shares in the coronation and triumph of Jesus Christ at the Second Advent. This is why it is so important to be prepared prior to the Second Advent.

Philippians 3:21

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 3:1,2

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

The Means of Sanctification: The Lord Jesus Christ Our Lord Jesus Christ, through His saving work on the Cross, is the means by which all sanctification is effected. Therefore, there is no sanctification in the Church Age for those who do not personally believe in Christ.

Without personal salvation there is no sanctification. Salvation precedes all three categories of sanctification.

Hebrews 10:9-14

Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Agents of Sanctification God the Holy Spirit is the agent of Positional Sanctification, at the point of salvation. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit mentioned in:

1 Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Ephesians 4:4

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

The phrase “to drink into one Spirit” is explained in:

John 7:37-39

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

(But this spoke he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Bible doctrine (the Word of God) is the agent of Experiential Sanctification. The Christian’s growth, his “progression” in the Christian life, depends on his intake of Bible truth.

John 17:17

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Ephesians 5:26

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

2 Thessalonians 2:13

But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

God the Father is the agent of Ultimate Sanctification; He provides for everything in the eternal state.

Romans 8:28,29

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren

1 Corinthians 1:8

Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:4

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: