

“WHAT IS SANCTIFICATION?”

“Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.”
(Westminster Shorter Catechism #35)

I. The Vital Truth of Sanctification

Understanding *sanctification* puts a believer in a place in which he can appreciate what it means to live out his faith. *Sanctification* is a separate aspect of salvation or redemption from *justification*. While there is more than one dimension to God’s work of *sanctification*, it is especially important to be able to distinguish *sanctification* from justification. *Justification* is a once-and-for-all time event, while *sanctification* is an ongoing process.

A. Read the following scripture references and comment on what they tell us about sanctification.

Philippians 1:6

2 Thessalonians 2:13

Ephesians 4:23-24

Romans 6:4, 6

B. The process of *sanctification* is synergistic, which means that it entails a cooperative effort between the believer and God. While it is certainly true that all of salvation, including *sanctification*, is a sovereign work of God’s grace, He has sovereignly appointed particular *means of grace* for the believer. The believer’s utilization of the various *means of grace* is the manner by which God accomplishes the work of *sanctification*. Failing to avail oneself of the *means* God provides to accomplish *sanctification* constitutes nothing less than disobedience, thus is itself a hindrance to maturity and growth in the faith.

Read the following Scripture references and identify the *means of grace* described.

Romans 10:17

Hebrews 10:24-25

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Philippians 4:6-7

Ephesians 5:21

Matthew 16:15-19

Ephesians 5:18-20

Malachi 3:8-12

- C. A second dimension of sanctification is called *definitive sanctification*. It may be understood as a consecration or setting apart of an individual for and unto God. This is described in 1 Peter 2:9:

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

Definitive sanctification is a once-for-all-time event — similar to *justification* in that respect. It is important for all believers to know about definitive sanctification because it helps us understand God’s *purpose* in saving us as well as our special relationship to Him.

According to 1 Peter 2:9, what is God’s *purpose* in redeeming the believer?

Read Matthew 5:14-16 and discuss how it corresponds to the point above.

Read Romans 8:1 and describe what it says about the position of the believer.

Read Galatians 2:20 and describe how a believer is to live.

D. For further discussion:

1. Does the doctrine of *sanctification* maintain that believers *always* progress in terms of righteousness and maturity?
2. What ought we expect to occur in our lives when we neglect the *means of grace*?
3. What are some common errors believers (churches) embrace when they fail to separate and distinguish *justification* from *sanctification*?
4. How does God respond to His child when he refuses to use the various *means of grace*?