

## **Sanctification**

There is a “triune process” through which every soul must go in order to have eternal life with God on the coming new earth. This salvation process begins with justification, then proceeds to sanctification and ends in glorification. Some challenge the essentialness of such a time dependant process, and in some cases, they are correct in doing so. The thief on the cross is often cited as evidence of the fallacy of this contention. However, does this really refute of the essentialness of the “process”? Let us please examine the issue before we simply dismiss it, and fall into the trap of “easy prayerism.” Sanctification is commonly defined as setting apart the redeemed soul. If that be true, and it occurs when the soul has been saved, how can one justify a claim that sanctification is an essential component of salvation? Sanctification is the continuance of being saved through the setting apart for the purpose of preparing the soul for service both here in this life and in the eternal realm. The thief on the cross, while seeming to be a refutation of my contention is in fact no such evidence at all. A reading of my commentary “The Three Thieves” will verify that fact. There, the “Triune” process was accomplished even though it took a very short time.

The simple truth is that sanctification is not a “pre-requisite”, it is a post-requisite of redemption, that is having been saved. If you doubt the truth of this statement, check out James 2:14 which ends with “faith without works is dead.” It’s the “works” within the sanctification process that gives evidence of the “faith.” Only God knows that one is saved and at what moment it occurs, because it is God, through His grace who has given it. That it has been truly received becomes known with certainty only after the fact when the changed life begins to manifest. Neither a spiritual “event” nor a miracle is certain evidence of redemption. It should be understood that to be saved, to be justified, to be redeemed and to be born-again, are all expressions of the same blessed act that results from accepting Jesus as ones personal Lord and Savior.

The first step, the one that assures one's journey to heaven is to have been born-again. A prerequisite to this is to be humbled in recognition that we are all hopelessly condemned sinners destined to eternal damnation unless there is a Savior to redeem us. Salvation occurs the instant that we understand this, and realizes who Jesus really is, and therefore put our faith and trust in Him as our Lord and Savior. It is a believing that is an absolute knowing and committed faith in His having paid the full price of ones sins. It follows then that ones soul has been freed from the otherwise eternal punishment that God demands of an unrepentant heart. The Holy Spirit tells us through Paul in Ephesians 2:8, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."* While many claim that both the grace and the faith are provided by God, according to some experts in Greek linguistics, this is speaking of a "two party deal." God provides the grace through the persons own choice to believe and to have a genuine faith in Jesus. It is the saving grace, that gift of God that is "not of yourselves."

This is the principal reason that God gave man free will, so that he could make that choice by his own volition. Again, justification means that the Judge has decreed, that because of that faith, that faith that is in Jesus and His debt-paying work on the cross, the guilty person's debt has been paid. It means that he or she is therefore freed from the eternal punishment that God's justice would have necessarily charged against them. However, the nature of sin is such that no one, regardless of the magnitude and strength of effort, can be freed from punishment through any mortal or even supernatural effort, other than by what Jesus provided on the cross. Satan also has supernatural powers to deceive in these matters. This provision by Jesus is for all who sincerely, and knowledgeably turn to Jesus in faith, fully believing in the fact that the vicarious punishment He suffered is what made justification possible.

Again, it can't be emphasized enough, that although all of the above is true, there is that one essential pre-requisite to receiving that saving grace. There must be a deep seated recognition that one needs a Savior! Can there be any benefit in having a Savior if you don't believe that you need one? You must believe that you deserve eternal damnation, and that this will most certainly be your fate, absent a Rescuer. If that fact is not deeply

established in your heart, than what is the sense and purpose of claiming Jesus as being your Savior? There cannot be a saving faith absent the recognition of a desperate need for Jesus as one's Savior. How sad it is that a great number of "Christians" claim a "belief" that Jesus is the Savior, yet do not see themselves sinful enough to desperately need a Savior. On that basis they see no need, nor do they desire, to change their style of living because of their "faith" in Jesus.

As noted above, "salvation" is a three step process that begins with justification, that is, obtaining freedom from the punishment of sin. When validated, the understanding and faith in the blood of Christ through His work on the cross, is one's "passport" to heaven. A place in heaven is thereby guaranteed by the highest authority. It is God's most wonderful and costly achievement, far more costly to Him than was His work of creation. He needed to only breathe into existence all of creation. However, salvation cost Him the pain and suffering of the entire Triune Godhead as demonstrated through His "only begotten Son," whose suffering was infinitely greater than any mortal could ever be capable of even comprehending.

Immediately upon having received the justification that frees one from the punishment of sin, those so blessed are, spiritually "set apart," and the process of sanctification begins. It necessarily continues to the last moment of one's mortal life. Again, the definition of sanctification can be stated as a spiritual setting apart from the rest of mankind, and also as the process by which one is freed from the power of sin, and proceeds toward becoming holy. The process does not free one from sinning, but instead gives one the power, by one's own volition, to eliminate sinful thoughts and behaviors. It is during this time period when one can earn "crowns" so as to enhance one's future position of service in heaven. The problem is that in everyone, even after having been justified, there remains that same woefully sinful nature. Sin, to the carnal mind and soul, is a many splended thing! It is in many ways pleasing, pleasurable, and ever perniciously preferable to God's prescribed precepts. Repenting from the world's ways to God's ways is what the process of sanctification is all about. The first evidence of the existence of the sanctification process is the increased sensitivity of the conscience. The sinful life, and

all of our lives are sin-filled, whether or not we choose to admit it, has in the past continually worked against our God-given conscience, that is our intuitive sense of right and wrong.

When this “working” has gone on unheeded, calluses are formed, and the conscience becomes less and less sensitive to sin, until most of it no longer can even be recognized as such. Sanctification, by the power of the Holy Spirit, proceeds to remove these “callouses” so that one’s sins become more readily recognizable. This sanctification, through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit directs one away from the sinful ways and toward Jesus’ ways in humility obedience and profound gratitude. One is then allowed to see these sins as hatefully despicable, and in dire need of being purged from one’s life. That is how sanctification begins and continues to work within all justified souls. The gratitude then is one of the human elements that activates the power of the Holy Spirit unto prayer, obedience and many forms of good works. These, when performed in selfless humility and love, are not only the evidences of redemption, but also they become rewards or “crowns” that one may take to heaven. They may be considered as “currency” through which one is able to in effect, “purchase” a more God-glorifying and serving position in heaven.

Thus sanctification may be considered to be a three-fold process as the Holy Spirit works within the justified soul. The first is this ever increasing recognition of, and sensitivity to sin. Then there is one’s awareness that the Holy Spirit within has provided the strength needed to avoid, resist, and overcome what formerly would have been impossible. One can feel this wondrous work in progress, and it is evidenced to others by a changed or changing attitude and way of life. Third, this process working in the repentant justified soul, continually keeping alive a profound sense of gratitude, that manifests as a desire to please God, to study His Word in order to better know what He wants, and to then do it, thus becoming an active, fruitful component of the Body of Christ.

This process necessarily must continue as long as there is physical life. It is a “perfecting” process, a preparing period, equipping one for that eternal position with the Godhead. Again, it is also a time of great opportunity to earn those golden crowns that

all grateful souls eagerly desire to place at our Savior's feet on that great day when He greets them on their arrival in heaven. Those who can honestly say that they are better, more effective Christians today than they were a year ago, as evidenced by their increased knowledge of His Word, and in their good works complete with love towards others, along with their improved resistance to sin, can take comfort in knowing that they are being worked on, that the Holy Spirit is active in their hearts, ever increasing, and ever perfecting, their Christian walk.

However, it must be remembered that just as God's gift of the saving grace is given only through evidence of genuine faith, so also the Holy Spirit's perfecting efforts can come about only within one's humble, eager, willing and cooperative soul. I don't believe that anyone can coast into heaven riding on the "sinner's prayer." If those who believe they are "saved" do not honestly sense or "feel" that they are undergoing the process of sanctification, then there should be a careful reexamination of the evidence that originally caused them to believe they were justified. It should be the most feared thing that any soul can imagine, to go through life complacent in the belief that they have received the passport to heaven, and then, when it's too late, discover that it was never validated, that is stamped with our Saviors blood.

The third component of this "triune" process called "glorification," may be expressed as freedom from the presence of sin. This is a total "freebie." Given that the whole earth is nothing if it is not sin filled, it is evident that one must leave this place in order to be free from the presence of sin. In order to be glorified, one must be completely cleansed of all sin and therefore to have become like Jesus. This cannot happen until one is leaving the earth and ascended into His presence where no sin ever exists. All who are justified have the assurance of glorification from Romans 8:30 where Paul reveals that "...*whom he justified, these he also glorified,*" that is, rendered sinless, esteemed and glorious. Perhaps we might call this the final scrubbing, that cleansing that is essential before one can enter into Jesus' holy presence. That all happens in that "twinkling of the eye" amount of time that occurs between the instant of physical death and the arrival of the

soul/spirit in heaven. We might consider glorification as being that last and complete removal of the sins that sanctification did not remove.

To summarize, sanctification is the saving process that commences when a soul becomes justified, that is to have received the passport to heaven, paid for in full by the blood of Christ Jesus. The process, which is called sanctification, then continues for the rest of mortal life. It's the growing, maturing, and preparing process for ones place in the eternal realm. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the justified soul providing that soul with the power to resist sin, and to walk an increasingly Godly walk. To the extent one allows, and calls upon Him to assist in the process, to that extent one is empowered to grow in the faith, and to perfect ones' soul for the highest and best possible eternal purpose. It is the individual's free will, that is their volition, stimulated by love for, and gratitude to, our blessed Savior that motivates and drives one to utilize that empowerment for the glory of God. Anything less than the best we have to offer Him during this time will be the basis of deep and eternal regrets when we stand before Him on that fateful Day of Judgment.

As we pass through that moment of death, all justified souls will be glorified, that is eternally freed from the presence of sin. Figuratively, they will be carrying with them in this passage from physical death to eternal life, a "voucher" for all of the spiritual rewards they acquired, and sent forward as they were being sanctified. It cannot be empathized too strongly, that once one has professed faith in Jesus, that unless the changes as described as the sanctification process are highly noticeable and continuous to the end, it's essential that one quickly revisit that initial commitment and examine it most carefully. Today's "Christian" church is overflowing with professors of a saving faith who are not possessors of that most precious of all things. Sadly, they hardly ever become aware of the ultimate tragedy of their situation. I pray that everyone who reads this will take the message most seriously, and do what is necessary to get that passport validated, and see the evidence of that validation.