

Salvation: God's Love Forever

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, June 23, 2013

Being 'Saved' in Everyday Living

Between the 'past' aspect of our salvation (our "justification") and the 'future' impact of our salvation (our "glorification"), there is also its present aspect. For us, salvation is not just a past event; nor is it a future expectation only; but is also a living, present, ongoing, day-to-day reality of life transformation. We not only *have been* saved, and *will be* saved, but there is a sense in which we *are being* saved right now.

This 'present-tense' aspect of our salvation is brought about by what the Bible calls our "sanctification".

I. WHAT THE PROCESS OF SANCTIFICATION INVOLVES.

- A. The idea behind the word 'sanctification' is that of 'setting something apart'. It's related to the Greek word for the adjective "holy" (*hagios*). In the Bible, when someone is referred to as a "saint", the word used is a participial form of *hagiazō*; which means "a 'set-apart' one". The word used for "sanctification" itself is *hagiasmos*--that is the consecration or dedication of a thing or a person; setting that thing or person apart from all the rest as that which belongs to God and is dedicated to His use.
- B. It's interesting that, in 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul writes his letter, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus . . ." There, the apostle uses the word *hagiasmos* in what, grammatically, is the perfect tense. This refers to a past, completed act. The believers in Corinth *had been* "sanctified" unto God through Christ. But if you've ever read Paul's letter to them, you already know that they didn't always behave like what he said they were. So, Paul then goes on to say that they were "called to be saints . . ." And here, he uses the adjective *hagios* in a way that remind them that God "calls" them to become what they--in fact--are already declared to be. They are "sanctified" but are also called *to be* holy. This shows us that sanctification has two basic aspects:
 1. There is a positional aspect of sanctification. In this positional aspect, we --by God's grace--are said to have a positional standing before Him in which we are separate from the common things of the world. We belong to Him and are His treasured possession--set apart for His use and His pleasure. In 1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul described a terrible list of soul-damning sins to the Corinthian believers and wrote, "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." This speaks of their honored position before God by grace--sanctified and set-apart in His sight. This is true of us in Christ even when we don't live up to what we truly are.
 2. But there is also a practical aspect of sanctification--sometimes referred to as "progressive sanctification" because it is an ongoing and developing work. Even though a believer is positionally sanctified, he or she is not yet 'sanctified' in actual practice. There is still much of the sinful habits and practices of the old man that must be put off, and the holy habits and practices put on that reflect our positional sanctification in God's sight. That's why Paul called the Corinthian believers to rise up and "be" what they in fact "are". (See Romans 6:1-19; Ephesians 4:17-24 and Colossians 3:5-17 for more on this matter.)

THE 'WHY'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'WHAT'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'HOW'
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SALVATION

THE 'WHO'
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THE 'WHEN'
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3

THE 'WHERE'
OF
SALVATION

THE 'WONDER'
OF
SALVATION

II. WHO DOES THE WORK OF SANCTIFYING THE BELIEVER.

- A. We'd be right to say that *all* of the Persons of the Trinity--the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit--are fully involved in the process of sanctifying a believer. But the main work of bringing about our *positional* sanctification is done by the Father's sacrifice of His Son on the cross. This is what Jesus spoke of in John 17:19, when He prayed to the Father and said, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth." In Hebrews 10:10, the writer of Hebrews says this concerning the will of God the Father: "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"; and in verse 14, he writes, "For by one offering He [that is, Jesus] has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." And the main work of bringing about our *practical* sanctification is done by the Holy Spirit. In Romans 15:16, Paul said that he labored in his missionary work that "the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Among those Gentiles were the Thessalonian believers, to whom Paul wrote, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
- B. But note that we *too* are involved with the process of our own sanctification. Unlike our justification or our ultimate glorification--both being works of God for which we are only passive recipients--we are instructed to avail ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying us, and cooperate with Him in the process. In 1 Peter 3:15, the apostle Peter commanded, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts . . ." Our part in the Spirit's sanctifying work would involve, among other things:
1. Trusting continually in the blood of Christ. We have trusted in the blood of Jesus, of course, for our full, complete justification in God's sight. But that's only the beginning. We are also to experience a transformation of life by an *ongoing* trust in His blood. As the writer of Hebrews put it, "For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:13-14). We must live in an attitude of trust in the blood of Jesus every day for a progressive cleansing of the 'dead works' that Jesus gave Himself to take away; and for the motivation in love to give ourselves entirely to Him to died for us. The apostle Peter encouraged his brothers and sisters to continue to grow and build godly qualities upon their initial faith in Christ; "For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:9).
 2. Growing in our knowledge of and obedience to the Bible. Our Lord Himself stressed the importance of the Scriptures to our progress in sanctification. In His great prayer for His followers in John 17, He prayed, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." Even in the Old Testament, the Scriptures are set before us as that which sanctifies us. Psalm 1 tells us the blessedness of the person whose "delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night"; affirming to us, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper" (Psalm 1:2-3). As the psalmist prays, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11). This continues to be a great theme in the New Testament. As the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16-17; "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

3. Presenting our bodies as slaves of righteousness. This is a part we play in our sanctification that involves two sides of the same coin. One side is that of habitually putting to death the sinful deeds of the body (“mortifying the flesh”, as it used to be called). Paul wrote, “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Romans 8:13). In the power of the Holy Spirit, we must say a decisive “No!” to the sinful practices that characterized our life before Christ and cease obeying the sinful impulses of the flesh. The other side of the same coin is to present our bodies--no longer as slaves to sin--but now as slaves to righteousness. As we do the one thing, we are to also do the other--and always while trusting in the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. As Paul put it in Romans 6:13, “And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” He told the Corinthians, “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).
4. Allowing the Spirit to produce His fruit in us. The power-source for the transformed life is the indwelling Person of the Holy Spirit; and we allow Him to do His life-transforming work in us by following His lead in the daily actions of life--marching according to His drumbeat; and putting our feet, as it were, wherever He commands. As Paul writes in Galatians 5, when we “walk in the Spirit” (v. 16), we do not perform the wicked deeds of the flesh (vv. 17-21). Instead, as we place our feet in accord with His moment-by-moment leading, He produces the qualities of Christ in us. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (vv. 22-25).

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Praise God that He calls us to Himself in Christ just as we are. But praise Him also that He doesn’t leave us as we are. He daily transforms us by His ongoing work of sanctification; so that every new day’s faithfulness and obedience in Christ brings us closer to His own image and likeness in the way we live.

May God help us to cooperate with this great work--and to His glory!

¹Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version; copyright 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc.