

LESSON 9 Sanctification

Most people like to hear stories that involve a struggle between a hero and a villain. When the hero is winning, we are happy. If the villain appears to be winning, we cheer for the hero to take control. This kind of story ends with the hero winning in the struggle against the villain.

We are all born with a sinful, wicked nature. This sinful nature is the “villain” or “bad guy” in our lives. It is that part of us that influences us to do wrong. When we accept Christ as our Savior we receive a new spiritual nature. We could call this nature the “hero” or “good man” in our lives. When we allow the old, sinful nature to control us, our new nature becomes weak and the old nature becomes strong. But if we allow the Holy Spirit to control us, He strengthens our new nature and we are able to overcome the temptations of the old nature. And as our new nature becomes stronger, we become more like our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The process by which we become like Christ is called *sanctification*. It becomes possible through the new birth or conversion experience. It develops as we yield to the Spirit and allow our new nature to control our lives. In this lesson we will see how the process takes place, and what we can do to allow this new nature to be the “hero” who helps us to win in the struggle against sin and become like Christ.

lesson outline

Nature of Sanctification

Receivers of Sanctification

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

1. Identify an example of sanctification.
2. State the meaning of sanctification.
3. Differentiate between positional and progressive sanctification.
4. Identify those who can receive sanctification, and state the purpose of sanctification.
5. Describe the means of sanctification.

learning activities

1. Read Romans 6, 7, and 8, and Colossians 3:1–10 in preparation for the lesson development.
2. Check the glossary at the end of the study guide for definitions of words you do not understand.

key words

ethical
majestic
moral
positional
profane

progressive
restrain
secular
subjection
upright

lesson development

NATURE OF SANCTIFICATION

Objective 1. *Identify an example of sanctification.*

We believers are involved in three “deaths.” First, we are the victims of condemnation because of our death *in* sin (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13). Sin has corrupted us and brought us to the condition of spiritual death or separation from God. Second, we are involved in death *for* sin in justification. Since Christ endured for us upon the cross the sentence for our sin, we are counted as having endured it in Him. What He did *for* us is considered as having been done *by* us (2 Corinthians 5:14; Galatians 2:20). As a result we are considered legally free from the penalty of sin if we believe in and accept what He did for us. And finally, we must experience death *to* sin (Romans 6:11). What is true *for* us must be made real *in* us. Death to the *penalty* of sin must be followed by death to the *power* of sin. This “death” is brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us (Romans 8:13).

Sanctification involves putting off the *old self* and putting on the *new* (Ephesians 4:22, 24). The old self is the corrupt nature that every one of us has when he is born into this world. The new self is the new nature that is born in a person at regeneration. When Paul speaks of getting rid of this old self, he does not mean that the old self is destroyed; rather, he means that the new self replaces it. And when he speaks of *putting on* the new self, he means that the born-again person should begin to exercise the graces of the new self: “. . . compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Moreover, he charges born-again persons: “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:12–13).

Our old self was that disposition which rules us, with the capacity to serve Satan, self, and sin. But the new self, whom the Holy Spirit has produced in us, gives us the capacity to serve God and people, and stand for what is right.

Sanctification involves putting to death the deeds of the old self, that is, our sinful actions (Colossians 3:5; Romans 8:13), so that we do not continue in sin. It also involves the principle of holy living that was implanted at regeneration. Out of this spiritual experience there flows a life characterized by faith in Jesus Christ: a new walk distinguished by new standards, goals, and motives. It is a life that is sober, upright, and godly.

We might compare the ongoing process of spiritual growth to the sap that rises in a tree. As the sap rises and flows into new leaves forming in spring, dead leaves that have stubbornly clung to the tree in spite of cold weather and raging storms are crowded off. In the same way, the Holy Spirit crowds out the imperfections, earthly desires, and habits of the old self so that we may live lives of dedication and commitment to Christ.

Application

- 1** Circle the letter in front of the correct example of the nature of sanctification.
- a)** John has died sufficiently to Satan, self, and sin so that he no longer is bothered by temptation and the demands of the old self.
 - b)** Alfred has established Christ as the Lord of his life; therefore, since his new self is in control, he experiences a continual weakening of the old self.
 - c)** Anthony, in one dramatic experience—regeneration—has become holy, pure, and perfect. And as a result, he lives on an exalted spiritual plane.
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Meaning of Sanctification

Objective 2. *State the meaning of sanctification.*

The New Testament teaching on sanctification rests upon the foundation of the work of Christ for and in us. This means that because He elected, called, regenerated, justified, and adopted us, we respond with upright living. We see, then, that sanctification is closely related to all the doctrines of salvation. It is the logical result of all of them.

Notice in Ephesians 2:8–10 the various doctrines we have considered:

For it is by *grace* you have been saved, through *faith*—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God [election]—not by works [justification], so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship [election], created in Christ Jesus [regeneration] to do good works, which God prepared in advance [foreordination] for us to do.

Application

2 Reread Ephesians 2:8–10 and state what should be the result of all these provisions.

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The literal meaning of *to sanctify* is “to make holy or to consecrate.” But the basic meaning of the words translated *sanctification* or *holiness* is “to separate or set apart,” especially from what is profane or secular (worldly). The biblical words used refer to character, and this shows the very close relationship between being set apart and personal holiness.

When speaking of God’s holiness some see a twofold separation. They see God as separate from and highly exalted over His creatures and creation (Exodus 15:11; Isaiah 40:25–26; 57:15). Though His handiwork appears in all creation, He is unlike anything else. And nothing may be compared to Him.

That is why they refer to His *majestic holiness*, which speaks of His exaltation above all His creation. Then they see God as “separate from sin.” He cannot tolerate sin in any form. Thus He requires that we obey His moral laws. If we would truly become His, then we must be pure in thought, word, and action (Psalm 24:3–4). This separation from sin refers to His *ethical holiness*, which signifies that He is altogether separate from sin.

Application

3 Read Isaiah 6:1–5 and state whether it speaks of God’s majestic holiness, His ethical holiness, or both.

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4 According to the following Scriptures, what happens when a person draws near to God and recognizes His infinite holiness?

- a)** Isaiah 6:1–5
- b)** James 4:8–9



If you were to enter a room that was filled with intense lighting, every piece of your clothing would be highly visible. If you had on a white suit, and it had a spot on it, the spot would be seen by other people in the room. However, if you were to leave that room and walk in the dark, who would know the difference? In the same way, the closer we draw to God the more we are aware of sin and the greater our desire will be to be *sanctified* or *set apart* for His service. This concept of ethical holiness provides the basis for our understanding of the biblical teaching on sanctification. Sanctification is the work of God’s grace in us by which we are renewed in our total being in the image of God. As this work of grace progresses, we are enabled to overcome our sinful nature and to live uprightly.

We see, then, that while God is separate from sin, He did not remain apart from sinful people. He sent His Son, who became like us in order to redeem people. Therefore when Peter says that we are to sanctify the Lord in our hearts, we understand that we

are to reverence Him as God and Lord (1 Peter 3:15). The basic meaning of the word *sanctification*, therefore, explains why it can be said of Christians—like it was said of the Corinthians who were guilty of serious failure—that they are saints or holy persons. Paul recognized that while the Corinthians were *set apart* by conversion, they needed to mature in the faith.

In the same way we can understand why lifeless *things* are some times called *holy*. They are holy because they are *set apart* for sacred use. We must remember that as it is used here, the meaning is that a person or thing is to be holy because it is set apart.

Application

- 5** In each Scripture below note what is holy.
- a)** Exodus 3:5; Joshua 5:15
 - b)** Leviticus 11:44
 - c)** Leviticus 27:14–16
 - d)** Numbers 8:17
 - e)** Isaiah 48:2



Sanctification implies more than separation *from* sin and the things that corrupt. It speaks of dedication *to* God. One who is separated from the bondage of sin but who is not dedicated to God is like a ship that has broken loose from its moorings but which has no steering mechanism.

In sanctification we fully dedicate ourselves to fulfill the holy purposes for which we have been set apart. As we do this, we are progressively made holy. Included in the process of sanctification there is separation, dedication, and purification.

God is the author of the sanctifying process. It is because of His own holiness that we understand the need for sanctification. God intends to fully sanctify our whole being—spirit, soul, and body. His purpose for this is that we might be free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

As we have seen, in sanctification we put off the old self and put on the new by the power of the Holy Spirit. This means that we bring our sinful and willful self-life into subjection. We “put to death” that part of us which rebels against God and holiness. And, in addition, we try to express the new life that we have received in Christ Jesus. This new life is the new self or new nature. What Paul calls *putting off* and *putting on* (Colossians 3:9–10) are ongoing experiences in our lives. They are not crisis experiences that occur “once for all” in a Christian’s life.

Application

- 6** Circle the letter of each TRUE statement below.
- a)** Sanctification means separation from sin and nothing more.
 - b)** In sanctification people dedicates themselves to fulfill the holy purposes for which they has been set apart.
 - c)** God’s purpose in sanctification is to prepare us for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - d)** Sanctification involves both a putting *off* of the old self and the putting *on* of the new life we receive in Christ Jesus.
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As you examine the scriptural teaching on sanctification, notice how it touches every area of your life and every relationship, both human and divine.

1. See how a person acts with respect to God. He or she acts with reverence (Proverbs 1:7) and love toward God (Matthew 22:37). The person joyfully submits to the will of God and seeks to conform his or her will to the will of God (Hebrews 13:20–21). Furthermore, he or she longs for fellowship and communion with God (1 John 1:3) and seeks to do everything for His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31).

2. As concerns Christ, sanctification results in self-denial as we acknowledge the Lordship of Christ (Matthew 16:24) and keep Him before us as our example (1 Peter 2:21). Like Paul, we must strive to be changed into His likeness (Philippians 3:8–10) more completely each day. Should we fail, however, we may come to Him for cleansing (1 John 1:9).

3. With respect to the Holy Spirit, sanctification involves living as the Spirit directs and walking under His control (Romans 8:4,5), being careful not to grieve Him (Ephesians 4:30) nor restrain Him (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

4. As concerns sin, sanctification produces in us a hatred for sin as well as sorrow for it (Romans 7:24). His grace operates in us. “It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age” (Titus 2:12), and it also creates in us a desire to be totally free from sin.

5. Finally, in relation to others, sanctification enables us to manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). As one walks in the Spirit, then, that person produces the fruit of this relationship.

Application

- 7** Which is correct? We can say that sanctification most correctly
- a)** embraces every aspect of one’s life, touching and affecting all relationships as well, as a person lives under the control of the Spirit.
 - b)** is distinguished by a person’s efforts to become holy, pure, and acceptable to God on the basis of his or her own actions.
 - c)** concerns the immediate death of the old self and the installment of the new self at the center of control in one’s life, making him or her sinless.
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A number of terms are used to describe sanctification. Among the more common descriptions, you will hear these words: *the deeper life*, *the victorious life*, *life on the highest plane*, *holiness*, and *a pure heart*, among others. Here we must point out an important feature of the word *sanctification*: it does not mean the same thing to all groups. For example, some groups teach that sanctification is the same as the baptism in the Holy Spirit (or the filling of or receiving of the Holy Spirit). But as we shall see, these terms concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit don’t refer to sanctification.

Application

8 Read the following Scriptures and indicate what the accompanying signs were as believers received or were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

- a) Luke 24:47–49
- b) Acts 1:8
- c) Acts 2:4; 4:31
- d) Acts 19:1–6



In none of these Scriptures is there any indication that the experience of receiving, being filled with, or being baptized in the Holy Spirit refers to sanctification. The Spirit baptism gives power to witness, spiritual boldness, and ability to preach effectively. It is accompanied by speaking in other tongues, which is a sign that the experience has taken place. The experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit will affect a person's separation to God and his or her conformity to the likeness of Christ. However, it is not the same experience as the progressive work of sanctification that is ongoing in the believer from the new birth until he or she stands in the presence of the Lord.

Application

- 9 Below are statements concerning the meaning of sanctification. Circle the letter in front of each statement that is TRUE.
- a) Because of God's holiness, He cannot tolerate sin.
 - b) To be sanctified means to be set apart for service to God.
 - c) Sanctification means that we are not capable of committing sin.
 - d) Sanctification includes both separation from sin and dedication to God's service.
 - e) Sanctification is a spiritual process which does not involve an act of the will.
 - f) Sanctification affects every aspect of our lives: our attitudes toward God, His Son, His Spirit, sin, and other people.
 - g) Sanctification means that we are becoming more and more like Jesus.
 - h) Sanctification involves allowing our new nature to take control over the old nature.
 - i) As the process of sanctification takes place, our old nature dies out completely.



Two Aspects of Sanctification

Objective 3. *Differentiate between positional and progressive sanctification.*

In this section we consider a prominent concept in our study of sanctification. We must understand that sanctification is both positional and experiential; that is, it is a position the believer occupies in relation to God, and it is also an ongoing experience in his or her life. Sanctification is both instantaneous (or sudden) and progressive. Positional or sudden sanctification is not related to a person's spirituality, and in it there are no degrees. For example, one person is not more sanctified positionally than another. *Positional* sanctification means a change of position by which a corrupt sinner is changed to a holy worshiper. It is one finished work, for Christ Jesus has become our holiness

or sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30). On the other hand, *progressive* sanctification is directly related to a person's spiritual development. Moreover, in progressive sanctification there are degrees: one person may be more sanctified than another.

Application

10 For each of the following Scriptures, tell which of the two *aspects* of sanctification is discussed: positional or progressive. Also, state what the *means* of sanctification is in each. Use your notebook for this exercise.

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| a) Romans 8:13 | g) 2 Corinthians 7:1 |
| b) Romans 12:2 | h) Ephesians 2:1–6 |
| c) 1 Corinthians 1:2 | i) Colossians 3:3–4 |
| d) 1 Corinthians 6:11 | j) Colossians 3:5 |
| e) 2 Corinthians 3:18 | k) 1 Thessalonians 3:12 |
| f) 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 | |

11 Based upon the above Scripture references, when does positional sanctification occur?

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These Scriptures make clear that *positional* sanctification is a position that God has provided in Christ for those who are born again. It is not presented as an experience we are encouraged to seek *after* our conversion, for it is part of the conversion experience.

Two Scripture portions present the complete biblical position on positional and progressive sanctification. In the first portion (1 Corinthians 6:9–20), Paul speaks of what the Corinthian believers were before they came to Christ. He reminds them that at the time of their conversion they were washed, sanctified, and justified (v. 11), which brought about the *necessity* for pure living as well as the *possibility* to live pure lives. Notice that he speaks of the washing, sanctifying, and justifying work in the past tense; for these actions were the result of their salvation experience. In

Colossians 3:1–10, however, Paul links the believers' *position* with the finished work of Christ and asserts that this experience *must* result in godly living in contrast to their former lifestyle. Their new lifestyle, their walk according to the Spirit, is one marked by *progress* in Christlikeness as they move toward a more complete knowledge of God.

Application

12 Identify the time when each of the experiences mentioned in the left column occurs by placing a 1 in front of those that occur “at the time of salvation” and 2 in front of those that occur “in a progressive way.”

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| . . . a | “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord” (2 Peter 3:18). | 1) At time of salvation |
| . . . b | “We have been made holy (sanctified) through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). | 2) In a progressive way |
| . . . c | “Christ Jesus has become our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). | |
| . . . d | “May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else” (11 Thessalonians 3:12). | |

Progressive sanctification has several implications. First, it is developmental, since the Christian is admonished to become progressively more Christlike. Second, since it is a progressive experience, the implication is that it is a lifelong process. Therefore, it does not lead to absolute perfection in this life.

Application

13 Read the following Scriptures and name the particular aspect of Christian perfection being described.

- a) Hebrews 10:14
 - b) 1 Corinthians 2:6; 14:20
 - c) Galatians 3:3
 - d) Colossians 4:12; Matthew 5:48
 - e) Colossians 1:22; Philippians 3:12
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These Scripture references teach that perfection is both positional and progressive. We stand perfect or complete in Christ because of His gracious provision. And we are counted perfect because we have a perfect Savior and perfect righteousness. But in our own experience we continually strive for perfection (Philippians 3:15; Hebrews 6:1).

In the New Testament we have the command of Jesus to be perfect (Matthew 5:48). If this refers to sinless perfection, then no one has reached that position. However, it is clear from the context that Jesus means for His followers to be like their Heavenly Father in showing love to friends and enemies alike. Notice the way Paul treats the idea of perfection in Philippians 3:12, 15. At one moment he says perfection is not possible, and then in the next he claims it. This is easily understandable when we recognize that *positionally* he was perfect the moment he accepted Christ, but in his daily, ongoing experience he was still striving for perfection. Colossians 1:28, 4:12, and Hebrews 12:23 represent perfection as a future goal to be reached in the end, but not in this life.

Application

14 Jesus' challenge to "be perfect" refers to

- a)** the necessity for us to become instantly and absolutely perfect now.
 - b)** the need for Christians to demonstrate love for both friends and enemies as God does.
 - c)** the need to seek an experience after conversion that will make us absolutely perfect.
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Those who believe that a person is capable of sinless perfection place too much emphasis on a person's ability to live perfectly. They also place too little emphasis on God's holiness and the seriousness of sin. They tend to treat sin as if it were something outside of us. But the Bible teaches that sin is primarily a result of the human spirit. My conviction is that we sin more by our ungodly thoughts and rebellious attitudes than we do by committing outward sins. Perfection is complete because we are in Him, but it is incomplete because we are still human. I believe that there are but two kinds of perfection: absolute and relative. What is absolutely perfect cannot be improved upon; therefore, only God can qualify for this type of perfection. But that which is relatively perfect simply fulfills the purpose for which it was designed. This type of perfection is possible for people.

Application

15 Circle the letter of each TRUE statement.

- a) One who believes that a person can be absolutely perfect places too much confidence in human ability to live perfectly and too low a value on God's holiness and the seriousness of sin.
 - b) The people who believe in a person's ability to be absolutely perfect believe that sin is mainly internal and therefore less apparent and serious.
 - c) As concerns perfection, God alone is absolutely perfect; however, people can be relatively perfect if they fulfill the purpose for which they were created.
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Those Christian groups who hold that Christians can be absolutely perfect in this life believe that sanctification is a decisive experience. At some point in time following their conversion, they believe, Christians receive perfection instantaneously by faith and an accompanying confirmation by the witness of the Holy Spirit. They insist that in this experience the old nature is instantly destroyed. This view is known as *perfectionism*. It is based mainly on Romans 6. However, a careful examination of Romans 6:1–11 shows that this is the *positional* experience in which the believer is identified with Christ. If this were not so, why does the apostle Paul insist (6:11) that a person yet needs to consider being dead to sin and alive to God? People who are absolutely dead do not need to “consider” themselves dead. They are dead apart from any “considering” or thinking.

In Romans 7, Paul reveals his own condition: as an unsaved man (vs. 7–13), and as a saved man (vs. 14–24). He finds victory over a life of defeat, not in the destruction of the old nature, but through the Lord Jesus Christ (7:25). In the eighth chapter, however, he shows that the Lord Jesus makes this victory real in the believer by means of the indwelling Spirit. (See especially 8:1–17.) First, the Holy Spirit delivers the believer from the law of sin and death, that is, from the control of the old sinful nature.

And then he or she is able to “live in accordance with the Spirit” and to have his or her mind “set on what the Spirit desires” (v. 5). Victory over the law of sin and death, however, does not mean the total destruction of the old sinful actions by the power of the indwelling Spirit (v. 3). This is something that each believer has to do repeatedly—whenever the desires of the sinful nature arise to tempt him or her. “Putting to death” refers to the weakening of the power of sin. It also means putting to death our sinful actions so that we do not continue in habitual sin. For victory in this area the grace of God and the enablement of the Holy Spirit are necessary. (Compare Romans 8:13 with Colossians 3:5, 8–10.)

Application

16 Place 1 before examples of positional sanctification and 2 before examples of progressive sanctification.

- ... **a** Sarah, who was a defiled sinner, is now a holy worshiper.
- ... **b** Philip has grown in his understanding of spiritual life and now teaches others.
- ... **c** Paul described his life in the Spirit as a reaching forward or striving for excellence in his service to God and in the development of Christian love and grace.
- ... **d** Paul said that Corinthians had been drunkards, immoral, thieves, and liars but that they had been purified from sin, dedicated to God, and put right with God by Jesus Christ so that he could address them as “saints” (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).
- ... **e** John, after his new birth experience, stands complete in the finished work of Christ. He is ready to begin living for Christ.
- ... **f** James is a conscientious Christian who strives to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit so that he may fulfill the purpose for which he was created. He is obviously maturing in the things of the Spirit.




RECEIVERS OF SANCTIFICATION

Objective 4. *Identify those who can receive sanctification, and state the purpose of sanctification.*

The people who are sanctified are the chosen or elect of God. Those whom He chooses in eternity, He sanctifies in time. Those who are elected and redeemed are also sanctified. Those who are a chosen generation become God's holy people.

Sanctification involves the total person: intellect, emotions, and will (1 Thessalonians 5:23). "You were taught . . . to be made new in the attitude of your minds" (Ephesians 4:22–23); thus the renewed mind is progressively made more Christlike, upright, and holy. The *emotions* or *affections* are made holy: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love" (Romans 12:10). And finally, the *will* is surrendered to the will of God and this gives the believer the power to achieve God's purpose, "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13). In addition, Paul exhorts the believers at Rome: "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God . . . and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness" (Romans 6:13). Sanctification is for all those who make up the church. As the bride of Christ, the church is the subject of this work: "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word" (Ephesians 5:25–26). This was fitting and proper so that he might present the church to Himself in all its beauty—"radiant . . . without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (v. 27).

Application

- 17** The receivers of sanctification may be identified as
- a)** all human beings; that is, sanctification is for everyone.
 - b)** those who are especially worthy to be set apart for God's use.
 - c)** all those who accept Christ, who make up His church.
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Experience of Sanctification

The Bible clearly teaches that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience that normally follows regeneration (Acts 2:38). We see a variation to this pattern in Acts 10:44–46, however, in which the household of Cornelius experienced both on the same occasion. The purpose of the baptism in the Spirit is to give power for service (Acts 1:8). In contrast to this, the purpose for sanctification is to produce in Christians the kind of right living that reflects their relationship to God and causes them to grow spiritually.

Some people, however, view sanctification as a separate *crisis* experience that occurs in a person's spiritual nature. They believe that some time after the new birth a person is made instantly perfect from all sin. They claim that this experience, which involves a *decision* to be sanctified, brings the soul into a state of perfected holiness, and includes freedom from sin and corruption, and perfect dedication to God. They insist that this instant perfection is the result of the baptism in the Holy Spirit (which they say is the same as sanctification). Let us examine their claims.

These “perfectionists” refer to 1 John 3:8–9 in support of their position. Read this Scripture reference. It is clear that John is speaking about a person who continues in or repeatedly practices sin. No true Christian can possibly do this. But John does not say that a Christian *never* sins. By comparing this Scripture with 1 John 1:8–2:2 we see what John meant. John's purpose is to challenge Christians to walk in the light and to strive for an obedient and purposeful relationship with God. As if to prevent any misunderstanding, John says to his Christian audience: “If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar” (1 John 1:10). And in 1 John 2:1–2, he notes that “Jesus Christ, the Righteous One . . . is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” (Note that John includes himself with other believers.)

We see, then, that sanctification is neither a decisive crisis experience, nor an experience in which the believer is made perfectly sinless. And it is not empowerment for service. The purpose of sanctification is to bring the believer ever closer to

the state in which his or her nature will be conformed to the likeness of Christ. As he or she walks with the Lord, the believer continues to grow and develop, and the Holy Spirit continually gives him or her light (1 John 1:7). As we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus purifies us from every sin. As the glory of the Lord is reflected from us, gradually we are changed. For we are in the process of being transformed in His likeness in an ever-greater degree of glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). So we might say that sanctification is not a certain *experience*, as is the baptism in the Spirit, but it is a *process* in which our new nature develops in us a likeness to Christ.

Application

18 The purpose of sanctification is to

- a)** empower believers for service and destroy their sinful nature in a crisis experience.
 - b)** bring about a change in the believer by which he or she becomes progressively more Christlike.
 - c)** produce Christians who reach absolute perfection in this life.
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Means of Sanctification

Objective 5. *Describe the means of sanctification.*

Two parties are involved in a person's sanctification: God and humanity. From the divine side, God the Father sanctifies (1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Peter 5:10). The Son also sanctifies (Hebrews 2:10–11; 10:10; 13:12), and His Holy Spirit sanctifies us (1 Peter 1:2; Romans 8:13). He produces in us the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). From the human side, we cannot sanctify ourselves. Paul declares that even in the believer God takes the first step (Philippians 2:13). Nevertheless, there are definite means a person may employ in the work of sanctification. First, a person must place his or her faith in Christ (Acts 26:18). When one believes in Christ, that person is sanctified *positionally*. This occurs at the moment of regeneration, for Christ is made unto us sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30).

The next step is to pursue holiness. We are solemnly warned that without a holy life we cannot see God (Hebrews 12:14). The pursuit of holiness will lead us to the Word of God, for it will reveal the state of our hearts and point out the remedy for failure (John 17:17). The preached Word also has its part in pointing out the need of holiness (Ephesians 4:11–13) and challenging believers to pursue it (1 Peter 1:15–16). The surrender of our life to God is the supreme condition for practical sanctification (Romans 6:13, 19–22; 12:1). To surrender completely to God means that a person must separate from the world so that “he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work” (2 Timothy 2:21).

Another means God uses to purify us is affliction (Hebrews 12:10,11; Psalm 119:67, 71). God permits painful experiences to overtake us. Yet difficulties produce the fruit of goodness in us. God does it, the writer says, “for our good, that we may share his holiness” (Hebrews 12:10).

Application

19 Answer these questions in your own words without looking back at the preceding section.

- a)** Who is involved in a person’s sanctification?
.....
- b)** What two things are necessary for a person to experience sanctification?
.....
- c)** How does God’s Word help us in the process of sanctification?
.....
- d)** What is involved in a complete surrender to God?
.....
- e)** In what way does difficulty help in our sanctification process?
.....



Sanctification brings about increasing victory over sin. This in turn results in greater power in our life and greater fruitfulness. But we must cooperate in maintaining the spiritual progress. We must abide in Christ in obedience and devotion. Sanctification is not a concept but it involves a living person, Jesus Christ, and our continuing relationship with Him. As we remain in fellowship with Him, we are to continue to progress in sanctification.

A little chorus that we sometimes sing expresses what happens as we allow God's Spirit to take control of our lives and conform us into the image of Christ. Let us make this our prayer to conclude this lesson.

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,
All His wonderful passion and purity.
O, thou, Spirit divine,
All my nature refine,
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.

self-test

Circle the number in front of the statements that are TRUE.

1 The purpose of sanctification is to produce in Christians the kind of right living that reflects their relationship to God and causes them to grow spiritually.

2 The nature of sanctification is such that it represents not only separation from the world but also separation unto God.

3 Sanctification refers to a decisive or crisis experience in a believer in which the *old self* is destroyed and the *new self* totally controls his or her life.

4 Sanctification is the work of God's grace in us by which we are renewed in our total being in the image of God.

5 As the Holy Spirit performs His work in our lives, we are enabled to overcome our sinful nature more and more and to live uprightly.

6 What Paul refers to as "putting off the old self" and "putting on the new self" are crisis experiences which occur *once for all* in a Christian's life.

7 Sanctification produces in us love for God, Christlikeness, a walk in the Spirit, hatred of sin, and issues forth in the fruit of the Spirit in our relationship to others.

8 Positional sanctification refers to the change of position that occurs at regeneration when a corrupt sinner becomes a holy worshipper.

9 Progressive sanctification is linked to a person's position before God at the moment of justification.

10 It is possible to be perfect positionally in Christ because of our regeneration experience and yet to strive for perfection in our own ongoing experience with God.

11 The doctrine of those who claim that people are capable of being sinlessly perfect in this life is known as *perfectionism*.

12 Some Christian *groups* teach that sanctification is a decisive experience in which Christians achieve instantaneous perfection.

13 Certain Christian groups teach that sanctification is the same thing as the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

14 The apostle Paul found victory over a life of defeat through the destruction of his old nature.

15 The process by which the believer is sanctified includes the surrender of his or her life to the control of the Holy Spirit and the active pursuit of holiness.

answers to study questions

10	Aspect	Means
a)	Progressive	The Holy Spirit
b)	Progressive	God transforms us by the renewing of our minds
c)	Positional	Union with Christ Jesus
d)	Positional	In the name of the Lord Jesus
e)	Progressive	The Holy Spirit
f)	Positional	Our death with Christ
g)	Progressive	Living in reverence for God
h)	Positional	Our death with Christ
i)	Positional	Our death and life with Christ
j)	Progressive	Putting to death earthly desires
k)	Progressive	The Lord's help

- 1 b)** Alfred has established Christ as the Lord of his life . . .
- 11** It takes place when we accept Christ, because of our identification with Him in His death and resurrection.
- 2** The result is good deeds. These deeds are only “good” in God’s eyes in the life of one who is pure in motives and behavior—one who is being changed progressively (gradually) into the likeness of Christ.
- 12 a)** 2) In a progressive way
- b)** 1) At time of salvation
- c)** 1) At time of salvation
- d)** 2) In a progressive way
- 3** Both aspects of God’s holiness are reflected in this example.
- 13 a)** Positional perfection in Christ.
- b)** Spiritual maturity as contrasted with spiritual immaturity.
- c)** Progressive perfection.
- d)** Maturity and complete obedience in the will of God.
- e)** Ultimate perfection in heaven.

- 4 a)** Isaiah reacted to God's majestic holiness with a sense of his own insignificance or worthlessness. Moreover, he felt in an even greater way the sense of his own sin in the presence of God's ethical holiness and purity.
- b)** As one draws near to God and comes near to him, he has a deep sense of sin and great sorrow for it
- 14 b)** the need for Christians to demonstrate love for both friends and enemies as God does.
- 5 a)** The ground in that place was holy.
- b)** The human body.
- c)** A house or land dedicated to the Lord.
- d)** The firstborn sons and animals.
- e)** The holy city (Jerusalem).
- 15 a)** and **c)** are true.
- 6 a)** is false.
- 16 a)** 1) Positional
- b)** 2) Progressive
- c)** 2) Progressive
- d)** 1) Positional
- e)** 1) Positional
- f)** 2) Progressive
- 7 a)** embraces every aspect of one's life, touching and affecting all relationships as well, as a person lives under the control of the Spirit.
- 17 c)** all those who accept Christ, who make up His church.

- 8 a)** Power to preach
 - b)** Power to witness
 - c)** Speaking in tongues and boldness to preach
 - d)** Speaking in tongues
- 18 b)** bring about a change in the believer by which he or she becomes progressively more Christlike.
- 9 c), e), and i)** are false.
- 19 a)** God, through His Holy Spirit, and the individual believer.
- b)** He or she must believe in Christ to receive a new nature, and he or she must then make an effort to live a holy life, allowing his or her new nature to take control over the old, evil nature.
 - c)** The Word shows us the condition of our heart, and it shows us how we can overcome failure. It also shows the need to be holy.
 - d)** Separation from sin and unto God, being always ready to do that which is right and good.
 - e)** They purify us when we accept them in the right spirit.

