

The Doctrine of Sanctification

Brian Hedges | Annual Conference | Reformed Baptist Church | Kalamazoo, MI

Session 1: Sanctified by the Trinity *The Trinitarian Structure of Sanctification*

Introduction

Sanctification is concerned with the restoration of the divine image in us (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 4:22-24).

Q. 35. What is sanctification?

A. 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.¹

The Importance of the Trinity

Herman Bavinck:

“[I]n the confession of the Trinity we hear the heartbeat of the Christian religion: every error results from, or upon deeper reflection is traceable to, a departure in the doctrine of the Trinity”²

1. The Work of the Father

i. In God the Father we behold the nature of holiness and hear the call to holiness. (1 Peter 1:14-16)

Stephen Charnock:

As his power is the strength of [his perfections], so his holiness is the beauty of them. As all would be weak, without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them . . . [holiness] is the rule of all his acts, the source of all his punishments. If every attribute of the Deity were a distinct

¹ Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 35

² Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2: God and Creation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), p. 288

member, purity would be the form, the soul, the spirit to animate them. Without it, his patience would be an indulgence to sin, his mercy a fondness, his wrath a madness, his power a tyranny, his wisdom an unworthy subtlety. It is this gives a decorum to all.³

ii. The character of the Father therefore sets the moral and ethical standard to which our character must be conformed. (Matthew 5:48)

iii. The Father is also the great architect of our salvation, and therefore, of our sanctification. (2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 1:4)

2. The Work of the Son

i. In Christ we see “fully realized human holiness,” the perfect model of incarnate holiness, the one truly sanctified human being. (Hebrews 7:26)

ii. We are, therefore, to imitate Christ, to seek to conform the contours of our character to his holy image. (1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Cor. 3:18)

iii. The Son is the source of our sanctification. In fact, he is our sanctification. We are sanctified in him, the supremely sanctified One. (John 17:17-19; 1 Cor. 1:30; Heb. 2:9-11; 10:10, 14)

Sinclair Ferguson:

Christ *is* our sanctification. In him it has first come to its fulfillment and consummation. He not only died for us to remove the penalty of our sin by taking it himself; he has lived, died, risen again, and been exalted in order to sanctify our human nature in himself for our sake... Jesus lived his life of perfect holiness in our frail flesh set in a world of sin, temptation, evil and Satan.... When he cried out on the cross ‘It is finished’ (Jn 19:30; see also 17:4) and with royal dignity committed his spirit into the hands of his Father, he was the first person to have lived a life of perfect obedience and sanctification... Sanctification is therefore neither self-induced, nor created in us by divine fiat. Like justification, it has to be ‘earthed’ in our world (that is, in Christ’s work for us in history) if it is to be more than a legal fiction. To change the metaphor, we can only draw on resources which have already been deposited in our name in the bank. But the whole of Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and exaltation have, by God’s gracious design,

³ Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books) pp. 113-114.

provided the living deposit of his sanctified life, from which all our needs can be supplied.⁴

3. The Work of the Spirit

- i. The Spirit is the agent of our sanctification in Christ, the “bond of our union” with Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)
- ii. The Spirit is the author of regeneration, the one who indwells us as the Spirit of Christ, giving us new life in him. (John 3:1-8; Titus 3:5-6; Rom. 8:9-10)
- iii. Furthermore, the Spirit is the One by whose strength we are empowered and through whose energy we produce the fruit of Christlike character. (Eph. 3:16; Gal. 5:22-23, 25)

Conclusion

The doctrine of the Trinity shows us that sanctification isn't merely about sin-avoidance or moral reform. Sanctification is inescapably relational.

C. S. Lewis:

In Christianity God is not a static thing—not even a person—but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance. . . . The whole dance, or drama, or pattern of this three-Personal life is to be played out in each one of us: or (putting it the other way round) each one of us has got to enter that pattern, take his place in that dance. There is no other way to the happiness for which we were made. Good things as well as bad, you know, are caught by a kind of infection. If you want to get warm you must stand near the fire: if you want to be wet you must get into the water. If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life, you must get close to, or even into, the thing that has them. They are not a sort of prize which God could, if He chose, just hand out to anyone. They are a great fountain of energy and beauty spurting up at the very centre of reality. If you are close to it, the spray will wet you: if you are not, you will remain dry.⁵

⁴ Sinclair Ferguson, “in “The Reformed View” in *Christian Spirituality: Four Views on Sanctification*, ed. Donald Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: IVP) pp. 49-50.

⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: HarperOne) p. 176

Session 2: Sanctified in the Son
The Christological Roots of Sanctification

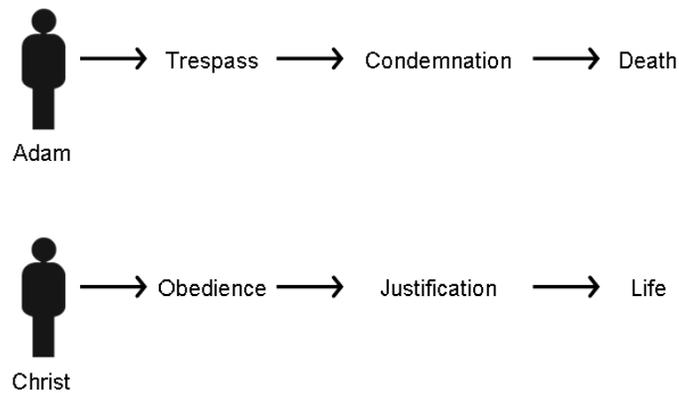
1. We are Justified in Christ: Freed from Condemnation

“The gift of righteousness”

i. The need for the gift: sin and death (v. 12)

ii. The character of the gift: free, gracious, abundant (vv. 15-17, 20-21)

iii. The source of the gift: “The One Man” (vv. 15-19)



iv. The results of the gift: justification, reign, life (vv. 16-21)

v. The reception of the gift: receive – v. 17

Why is justification is so crucial for sanctification?

(1) This is the only way to peace with God.

(2) The doctrine of free justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, inclines the heart to God in thankful worship, love, and praise like no other doctrine.

(3) When we by faith grasp Christ for our justification, we are united to him in a life-changing way.

2. We are United to Christ: Freed from the Dominion of Sin

Paul's basic point is that sin has no authority over the Christian. We are freed from the dominion of sin.

i. The objection – v. 1

ii. The answer – v. 2

iii. The logic – vv. 3-10

DEATH	RESURRECTION
<i>Christ died (v. 9-10)</i>	<i>Christ was raised (v. 4, 9)</i>
<i>Christ died to sin. (v. 8-10)</i>	<i>Christ lives to God (v. 10)</i>
<i>We are united to Christ in his death. (v. 3-7)</i>	<i>We are united to Christ in his resurrection (v. 4, 5, 8)</i>
<i>Therefore, we have died to sin. (v. 2)</i>	<i>Therefore, we are alive to God and walk in newness of life (v. 4, 11)</i>

iv. The response – vv. 11-13

(a) Consider – v. 11

John Stott: *So the major secret of holy living is in the mind. It is in knowing (6) that our former self was crucified with Christ, in knowing (3) that baptism into Christ is baptism into his death and resurrection, and in considering (11, RSV) that through Christ we are dead to sin and alive to God. We are to recall, to ponder, to grasp, to register these truths until they are so integral to our mindset that a return to the old life is unthinkable. (Stott, Romans, p. 180)*

(b) Refuse – v. 12

(c) Yield – v. 13

v. *The summary* – v. 14

What about the Law?

The law can show us what sin is, it can even show us what holiness is. But the law can't make us holy. The law can diagnose but not cure. It can reveal, but not heal. If anything, the law only makes the disease worse. It stirs up sin, arouses sin, makes us want to sin all the more.

Romans 7:6: *But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.*

John Calvin:

We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ [Acts 4:12]. We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else. If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that it is 'of him' [1 Cor. 1:30]. If we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in his anointing. If we seek strength, it lies in his dominion; if purity, in his conception; if gentleness, it appears in his birth. For by his birth he was made like us in all respects [Heb. 2:17] that he might learn to feel our pain [cf. Heb. 5:2]. If we seek redemption, it lies in his passion; if acquittal, in his condemnation; if remission of the curse, in his cross [Gal. 3:13]; if satisfaction, in his sacrifice; if purification, in his blood; if reconciliation, in his descent into hell; if mortification of the flesh, in his tomb; if newness of life, in his resurrection; if immortality, in the same; if inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom, in his entrance into heaven; if protection, if security, if abundant supply of all blessings, in his Kingdom; if untroubled expectation of judgment, in the power given him to judge. In short, since rich store of every kind of good abounds in him, let us drink from this fountain, and from no other.⁶

⁶ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book II, Chap. XVI. 19 (p. 527-528)

Session 3: Sanctified in the World

The Eschatological Context of Sanctification

Romans 13:11-14: *Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*

1. We live in the overlap of the ages

In Jewish thinking human history was divided into two great ages: the present age and the age to come. All of the great promises relating to the Messiah, the kingdom of God, and the nation's spiritual renewal and return from exile, along with the promise of future resurrection and more, were things that would only happen in the age to come, when the Messiah came.

But from the NT we learn that God's future kingdom arrives in the middle of human history with the first coming of the Messiah, the Christ. The kingdom is inaugurated. But it's not consummated until Christ's second coming. The amazing thing this means is that the "last days" are already here.

The writer to the Hebrews says that in “these last days God has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb. 1:2); and speaks of those who have “tasted the powers of the age to come” (Heb 6:5); and says that that Christ “has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb 9:26).

And in 1 Corinthians 10:11, Paul says that the “end of the ages” has come upon us.

The age to come has arrived. The future has invaded the present through the exaltation of Christ and his gift of the Spirit, and we are now people of the future who live in the overlap of the ages, in the already and the not yet.



We are already justified and sanctified, but not yet glorified. We are saints, but not perfect. We are new, but not fully renewed.

The already:

1 Cor. 6:11: *And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

The not yet:

1 John 3:2-3: *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

2. We are assailed by many foes

i. The world

John 15:18-19: *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

John 17:14-19: *I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sake I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.*

James 4:4: *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

1 John 5:19: *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

ii. The flesh

1 Peter 2:11: *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*

Galatians 5:17: *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.*

Romans 7:14-25: *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I*

agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

John Owen:

If it came upon the soul only at certain seasons, much obedience might be perfectly accomplished in its absence; yea, and as they deal with usurping tyrants, whom they intend to thrust out of a city, the gates might be sometimes shut against it, that it might not return,—the soul might fortify itself against it. But the soul is its home; there it dwells, and is no wanderer. Wherever you are, whatever you are about, this law of sin is always in you; in the best that you do, and in the worst. Men little consider what a dangerous companion is always at home with them. When they are in company, when alone, by night or by day, all is one, sin is with them. There is a living coal continually in their houses; which, if it be not looked unto, will fire them, and it may be consume them.⁷

iii. The devil

1 Peter 5:8: Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Ephesians 6:10-12: Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

3. We, therefore, live as...

i. Pilgrims on a journey

⁷ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 6 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth) p. 166.

1 Peter 2:11, NKJV: *Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*

Hebrews 11:13, NKJV: *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

ii. Athletes in a race

Hebrews 12:1-2: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

1 Corinthians 9:24-27: *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. 27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*

Philippians 3:12-14: *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

iii. Soldiers in a Battle

2 Timothy 2:3-4: *Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.*

2 Corinthians 10:3-4: *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.*

Ephesians 6:13-17: *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate*

of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God...

Application: These pictures teach us several things:

i. Growth is a process

ii. Effort is required

Philip. 2:12-13: Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

J. I. Packer

“The Christian’s motto should not be “Let go and let God” but “Trust God and get going!”⁸

iii. Conflict is normal

J. C. Ryle:

There are no promises in the Lord Jesus Christ's epistles to the seven churches, except to those who “overcome.” Where there is grace there will be conflict. The believer is a soldier. There is no holiness without a warfare. Saved souls will always be found to have fought a fight

iv. Watchfulness is needed

1 Cor. 6:13: *‘Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.’*

v. Faith is essential

Gal. 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

⁸ J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 155-157.

vi. *Victory is sure*

Rom. 7:24-25: *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

1 John 5:4-5: *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

William Gurnall:

If Christ's grace reigns in you, victory is assured! That is why putting on the armour of God is so important - it guarantees you will persevere and overcome at last. True grace can never be vanquished. Scripture promises that everyone ' . . . born of God overcometh the world' (I Jn. 5:4). Victory is sown in our new natures - the very seed of God, which keeps us from being swallowed up by sin or Satan.

Martin Luther:

This life, therefore, is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness; not health, but healing; not being, but becoming; not rest, but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it. The process is not yet finished, but it is going on. This is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified.

Session 4: Sanctified by the Gospel The Gospel Pattern of Sanctification

One of the biggest misunderstandings many people have about Christianity is thinking that becoming a Christian basically means becoming a better person. Christianity is confused with morality. The good news is confused with good advice.

C. S. Lewis:

We must try by every medical, educational, economic, and political means in our power to produce a world where as many people as possible grow up ‘nice’; just as we must try to produce a world where all have plenty to eat. But we must not suppose that even if we succeeded in making everyone nice we should have saved their souls. A world of nice people, content in their own niceness, looking no further, turned away from God, would be just as desperately in need of salvation as a miserable world—and might even be more difficult to save. For mere improvement is not redemption, though redemption always improves people even here and now and will, in the end, improve them to a

degree we cannot yet imagine. God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man. It is not like teaching a horse to jump better and better but like turning a horse into a winged creature.

John Owen:

Holiness is nothing but the implanting, writing, and realizing of the gospel in our souls.

1. Orientation: Set Your Minds on Christ

i. The command – vv. 1-2: “Seek...Set your mind”

ii. The reasons – vv. 1-4

- a. PAST: New history: “you have died...are raised”
- b. PRESENT: Complete security: “your life is hidden in Christ”
- c. FUTURE: Glorious destiny: “when Christ...appears, you will appear with him in glory”

2. Mortification: Put sin to death

i. What? – vv. 5-9

ii. Why? – vv. 6-7

iii. How?

- a. Look to the cross (v. 1-3; cf. 1 Peter 2:24)

John Owen:

“He [the Spirit] brings the cross of Christ into the heart of a sinner by faith, and gives communion with Christ in His death, and fellowship in His sufferings Set your faith upon Christ for the killing of your sin. His blood is the great sovereign remedy for sin-sick souls By faith fill your heart with a right consideration of the provision that God has made in the work of Christ for the mortification of your sins.”

- b. Get to the root idolatries and desires (v. 5; cf. Gal. 5:24)
- c. Make no provision for the flesh (Rom 13:14)

d. Depend on the Spirit (Rom 8:12-14)

e. Replace sin with grace (vv. 10, 12-14: “put on”)

3. Renovation: Put on the new man

Be part of the humanity made new in Jesus...

Douglas Moo:

These contextual clues suggest strongly, that, for Paul, the ‘old self,’ or ‘old man,’ is first of all Adam and the ‘new self’ or ‘new man,’ is Christ. It is therefore our ‘Adamic’ identification, with its servitude to sin, that we have ‘put off’ in coming to Christ; and it is our ‘Christic’ identification, with its power over sin, that we have ‘put on.’ WE have been brought into a new realm of existence, a realm in which the ‘old self,’ Adam and all that he represents, no longer dictates our thinking or our behavior.⁹

Renovation into the image of God isn’t just about getting rid of your old bad behavior and starting to behave better now that you’re a Christian. It’s about new creation. It’s about an entirely new way of being human. It’s about becoming the real you, the you made new in Jesus, the you that belongs to the new day that has dawned in Christ’s resurrection and will be fully revealed in his return.

i. The goal of renewal: restoration in the divine image – v. 9-10

ii. The process of renewal: an ongoing, gradual, inside-out process – v. 10

iii. The context for renewal: the communion of saints – v. 11-14

iv. The means of renewal: worship, the word, and thankful prayer – v. 15-17

DEATH	RESURRECTION
<i>We died with Christ (Rom. 6:2-4)</i>	<i>We walk in newness of life (Ro6:4)</i>
<i>Put off the old man (Col. 3:9)</i>	<i>Put on the new man (Col. 3:10)</i>
<i>Cleanse yourselves from defilement of body and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1)</i>	<i>Bring holiness to completion in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1)</i>

⁹ Douglas Moo, *The Letter to Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) pp. 267-268

<i>Do not be conformed (Rom. 12:2)</i>	<i>Be transformed (Rom. 12:2)</i>
<i>Crucify the flesh (Gal. 5:24)</i>	<i>Walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25)</i>
<i>Renounce ungodliness and worldly passions (Titus 2:12)</i>	<i>Live sober, righteous, and godly lives in the present age (Tit 2:12)</i>
<i>Lay aside every weight and sin (Heb. 12:1)</i>	<i>Run the race set before us (Heb. 12:1)</i>
<i>Do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance (1 Pet. 1:14)</i>	<i>But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct (1 Pet. 1:15)</i>
<i>Mortification: Kill your sins</i>	<i>Vivification: Grow in grace</i>

Conclusion

The gospel tells us that through Christ and the Spirit, God is restoring us to his image, restoring us to our humanity.

Irenaeus:

“The glory of God is man fully alive, and the life of man is the vision of God.”