



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“The Holy Spirit’s Work of Sanctifying Believers, part III:

The Theological Aspects of the Work, part II”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we turn again to Thee with thanksgiving for the Scriptures and for the message that they contain. We thank Thee for the way in which they point us to Jesus Christ and to the saving work, which he has accomplished, which meets our needs spiritually. We thank Thee that when we were lost and undone in our sins, the Holy Spirit brought home to our hearts the love of Christ and his death for us and brought us to faith and trust in him.

We thank Thee for the new life that was communicated to us. And we thank Thee that we have a Savior who is our high priest, who lives to nurture the new life that he has implanted in us. And as we study this great doctrine of sanctification, may, Lord, we come to know and experience its meaning in our lives. And we commit this hour to Thee and pray that it may be a means to that end.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] Now, we are engaging in a series of about six studies in the doctrine of sanctification. Specifically, “The Holy Spirit’s Work of Sanctifying Believers,” which is, in one sense, the climactic work of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life. And we studied, first

this fall, the problem of the filling of the Spirit. And I tried to point out that the term “the filling of the Spirit” is really a specialized term and when we think of the Spirit’s work in the believer’s life, we should not think of his filling work as the climactic work, but rather his work of sanctifying us. Now that that work of filling is in the Scriptures, primarily, a doctrine that relates to the corporate aspects of the church’s life. And we discussed, particularly, Ephesians, chapter 5 in verse 18. It may not have occurred to you that this expression “the filling of the Spirit” is largely associated in the Bible with enduement with power for specific tasks and is, so far as I can tell, never in the New Testament, it is never said to be the expected daily experience of the believer.

But on the other hand, the believer is to be guided by the Spirit. He is guided by the Spirit. He is to walk by the Spirit. And the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying us is a continuing work, designed to bring us to likeness to Jesus Christ. And so if we were to express what the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives, primarily, the divine side is his sanctifying work, the human side is our own life by the Spirit or our walking by the Spirit. And so the aim of the Christian is not to be filled with the Spirit, but, rather, the aim of the Christian is to walk by the Spirit. And if he walks by the Spirit, he will receive to the fullest and experience to the fullest the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying influence in his life. So, I think we ought to get off of this kick of trying to be filled with the Spirit. And it would be good for us if we would just go to our Concordances and open them up and see what the New Testament has to say on that subject. Now, if you are in further doubt about the subject, I suggest you get the tape and listen to that. We will refer to it again from time to time.

Last time, particularly, we came to the theological aspects of the Holy Spirit’s work of sanctification. We will, later on, touch the practical aspects and walking by the Spirit. And then we shall deal, finally, with growth and maturity. And, the relation of these teachings to the sanctifying work and that will conclude our study of the doctrine of the

Holy Spirit. And then we will launch out into another subject, if that seems to be the leading of the Lord.

Last time, we began by pointing out that there exists considerable confusion over the doctrine of the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit. For example, Roman Catholics believe that sanctification is a process of improvement, which enables God to justify men. In other words, they confuse sanctification with justification and do not really teach any significant difference between them. As you can see, that is a doctrine of works salvation. It is that the Holy Spirit or God infuses grace which enables us to improve to such an extent that, finally, he is able to justify us or to save us. Well, that is a doctrine of salvation by works.

The Wesleyan view, which is very popular in Methodistic circles, such as Methodist Churches, which try to teach the Bible, many of them as you know do not try to teach the Bible in the twentieth century, but those that do, plus the Pentecostal types of groups, the Nazarene Church, and so on, these churches are all Methodistic or Wesleyan in their teaching. And they teach that sanctification is a process of improvement, which may be completed while we are here on the earth. In other words, there may come a time when you and I are able to say we are now sanctified. And by that, they do not mean positional sanctification, but they mean practical sanctification that we really do reach a state of holiness and of acceptance in that sense with God. Now, if the Catholic view is “legalism,” this has been known by theologians as “perfectionism.” That is, that it is possible for us to reach a state of perfection while we’re here in the flesh.

Then we said that the third view and probably the most common view among the strongest of the evangelicals, at least in the western world, the Reformed view, sanctification is a process of improvement, which is completed only at the death of the believer. And I said that this was biblical, so far as it went. It does not, of course, teach -
- tell us everything about the doctrine of sanctification, but it does tell us the essential

thing about one aspect of sanctification, which is the common man’s view of the doctrine of sanctification anyway.

I put a chart on the board -- this one. And we pointed out from this chart that there are actually four types of sanctification from the biblical standpoint. There is primary sanctification by which the Holy Spirit guides us to the Cross, through efficacious grace, and we are saved. Now, that is the sanctifying ministry of the Spirit. It is called that in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 13 and 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 1 and 2.

Now, that aspect of sanctification is not commonly called sanctification. It is usually called the work of the Holy Spirit in efficacious grace. But, it is primary sanctification. It is the sanctification that brings us to Christ. But, once we are saved, then, of course, that aspect of the work of sanctification concludes. But the moment that we believe in Jesus Christ, we are also positionally sanctified; that is, we have a standing before God of holiness, 100%. The moment I believe in Jesus Christ, I stand before him 100% holy, because I stand in my representative, Jesus Christ. And he is 100% holy. He is my representative and so, since I am in him, I stand in him before God, holy.

Now, that’s my position. That’s not my practice. That’s not my experience yet. But that is my position. That is why the Bible addresses Christians and calls them “saints.” As I said, you can call me Saint Lewis, if you like. That would be scriptural. And I may call you Saint Abraham, or Saint Herbert, or Saint Herman, whatever your name may be.

But, we are saints; we are holy ones. That’s what that means, holy ones. Positionally -- Now, our experience is quite different.

And, we talked about the third aspect of sanctification, which is the most -- is that aspect of sanctification that is most often associated with the doctrine of sanctification. It is progressive sanctification.

And, as you remember, I put on the board the chart or the diagram of Howard Pryor’s Christian experience, up to about here. And he is a wonderful elder because he doesn’t mind my doing that. He said go ahead and put it up there but leave one or two

of those things out if you don’t mind and I did. And so this is his experience, and he’s making progress, you will note.

Now, the final aspect of sanctification is prospective sanctification when the Lord Jesus Christ comes and we are caught up to meet him in the air, at that time, our sin nature will be eradicated and our position will be the same as our practice. We will be holy in experience and holy in position before God. Now, these scriptures on the side over here are, of course, the passages that support each one of these four aspects of sanctification. Now, since this is the important aspect of this doctrine, for us, progressive sanctification, I said that from now on we would be speaking of progressive sanctification. So when we’re using the term sanctification, now, we are talking about that aspect of sanctification in which we are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord.

I put this outline on the board last time and we managed to reach down about to Roman IV. And so if you are following in your notes, I think it was Roman III, actually, and B. And remember that Roman III is the nature of progressive sanctification. We talked about its supernaturalness under capital A. That sanctification is not a holy arraignment of ones own weaving. It is not a human achievement. It is the work of God.

Then I was commenting on its twofold aspect. That sanctification from the standpoint of God is a twofold operation and involves mortification and quickening. Now, when we talk about mortification, we are talking about the “death” that we have died in Jesus Christ. For, you see, he was our representative, and he was our representative in his death, in his burial, and in his resurrection.

Let’s turn to one of the passages that sets this forth and just read it. We won’t expound it tonight. It’s Romans chapter 6, and let’s read just a few verses beginning with the first one. Romans chapter 6, and I want you to notice that Paul is saying that all believers have been identified, united with our Lord in his death, burial, and resurrection. He says verse 1 of chapter 6 of Romans.

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“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with him, [Now, “is crucified” is the Old English perfect, I have modernized it a little bit] has been crucified with him. [Not is to be crucified with him, has been crucified with him] that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.” And in the 11th verse, Paul says “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, [That’s mortification] but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

So that the great experience that the Christian has had by the reckoning of God is that we are reckoned to have died with Christ, to have been buried with Christ, and to have been raised with Christ. Now, the process of sanctification involves a recognition of this in our Christian experience; a realization of it. And so Paul calls us to reckon ourselves, to regard ourselves as having died in Christ, and regard ourselves as being alive in our Lord, Jesus Christ. And we were talking about these two aspects of sanctification.

Now, this is the work of God. It is he who has united us to Christ. It is he who has brought us into his death. It is he who has brought us into resurrection. So we live in newness of life.

And may I also say this, at this point, that this grace of God by which Jesus Christ dies for us, for our sins, and we die in him and thus are united with him in his resurrection. This is the work of God; both aspects of it are the work of God. And it is the result of his irresistible grace. It is something that he has done for us.

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Now, the response to it is expressed in a passage such as Colossians chapter 3. So let’s turn over to Colossians chapter 3 and read the verses there. If it is true that we have objectively been identified with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, this is to be subjectively our experience. And Colossians expresses it. Colossians says, in the first verse, of chapter 3.

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”

By the way, that’s why we’re not under any laws as law. That’s why we are not under any ascetic rules, such as “taste not, handle not” and so on, expressed right up above in verse 21 of chapter 2. We now, live in a new sphere of life, just as if when we cross the border into Canada, we are no long subject to United States laws because we are in a different sphere, so since we have died in Christ and have been buried in Christ and have been raised in newness of life, we are no longer subject to the old laws. And any ascetic principles of man are not our principles. So Paul says.

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” [That really reads, “you have died and your life is hid with Christ in God.”] “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

So, we have died, we are now risen with Christ, and we’re to seek the things that are above. This is our position. Now, what do we do in the light of this? Well we recognize our position. And Paul says “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.” Now, a Christian might say “If he really knows his heart, I cannot do it. I know I should, but I cannot do it.” Now, Paul said in Romans 8:13 “If ye by the Spirit put

to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” And so the Holy Spirit has been given to us to be the power by which we do mortify our members which are upon the earth.

Now, it is my belief that in the New Testament, and we will point this out in more detail shortly, that in the New Testament all of the work of God is work of grace through faith. And so here, this is a work of grace and it is a work in faith; and it is he who in grace gives us the faith to mortify. But he exhorts us, nevertheless.

“So put to death your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, [They belong to the old sphere of life.] inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, [Now, we would agree with everything up to this point, but it seems strange that Paul should put with these more heinous sins] and covetousness [which is idolatry] For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. [That’s your old life.] But now ye also put off all these; [Why put them off? Well, because we have died to the old life. We are now risen] anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. [Every time that you get mad, it’s just a sign that the old man is manifesting himself. All of these sins are expressions of the old man.] Lie not one to another, [So when you lie, that’s not the work of the Holy Spirit. That’s not the work of the new man. That’s the work of the old man. And Paul says ‘Lie not one to another.’ [Why, Paul? Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds] And have put on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”

One of the most wonderful blessings in the Christian life is the knowledge that God “is” sanctifying us. And even amidst our failures, he is still sanctifying us because he’s going to accomplish his purpose. And if we resist as Christians and resist and resist, he still is going to sanctify us. Now, it may come, of course, I took the diagram off, but it

may come only at the second coming of Christ, but it shall come. And every one of you is going to be sanctified, if you are a Christian. But why wait until the Rapture?

Now, Paul says in verse 12, the positive “Put on, therefore, as the elect of God.” That Paul, there he is mentioning the doctrine of election again. Poor fellow, he really overdoes it. [Laughter]

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.” [And so on]

Now, this is the twofold aspect of sanctification, our position in Christ risen, which involves our death and our resurrection with him, and our response to it is to realize this through the reckoning of faith. I’ll say, this is an irresistible work of God by which he brings us to the ultimate likeness to Jesus Christ.

Abraham Kuyper, who has written an excellent book on the Holy Spirit, has said, “God’s child remains the old man’s grave digger, until the hour of his departure.” And so that is really our work is the old man, which has been crucified, is in the grave. And we are to just throw dirt on him for the rest of our lives until we meet the Lord in the air.

Now capital C- Its pervasiveness, sanctification its pervasiveness. Now, by this, I mean simply that sanctification touches the whole man, his body and soul. It touches his intellect. It touches his emotions. It touches his will. Beginning in the inner life, it spreads to the outer life. So the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, which begins in the heart, pervades the whole of the man. Just like a little baby growing up, it may be imperceptible. Mothers complain often about how often they have to buy clothes for

their children. They say “I just bought this dress, it seems, yesterday, and now she has outgrown it or, he has outgrown it.” Well really, it didn’t happen that way.

There is hardly a time that you can remember that you took off a garment off of a child the night before and the next morning you tried it on and it didn’t fit? Is it? It was imperceptible growth. Now, that is the kind of growth that the Holy Spirit produces in the heart of the believer. It is a pervasive thing. Further, you hardly ever see a child, unless there is something radically wrong, suddenly begin to grow in one arm and grow to maturity and then a few years later the other arm start to grow. Everything grows at once. In other words, there is a unity in the growing.

Now, I saw some differences in one case, in one of our children. My son, when he was about thirteen or fourteen, he was not the strongest young man. And naturally, he looked at me and saw how strong and powerful I was. And he wanted to be like me and so he got himself some weights to lift. And he is a very determined kind of a person. In that respect, he’s not like me but like the other side of the family. [Laughter] And so he worked with a great deal of determination and he built up quite a chest and arms and legs. And one day I went down to buy some shirts for him at the men’s store and he bought a shirt. And he wore about a 14 ½ neck, and he had about a 34” sleeve.

And so he put on this shirt that was 14 ½ in the neck and he couldn’t button it or I take that back, he put this on and it was just fitting in the neck, but when he tried to get it on, he couldn’t get it on because of his muscles. And if he turned or moved it was, well, it appeared as if he was going to split that shirt. And he discovered that he was really not a normal human being. He had the body from his neck down of a powerful man, but his neck was still small. And that really perplexed me. I didn’t know exactly what to do until, finally, I realized what it was. I said “You haven’t been taking any neck exercises.” [More laughter] And he said “That’s right, I haven’t.” And so he immediately launched into a series of neck exercises to build up his neck so he could buy a larger shirt that would fit the rest of his body.

But now that is not the ordinary way in which we grow, and I could, really it would be funnier if my wife told it because she was the one that really gave him a beautiful tongue lashing over the stupidity of such a thing as that. But anyway that is not the way a person grows. The whole body grows at once and there is a unity about it. And so in sanctification it is pervasive, it touches the whole of the man. Now, that’s all I wanted to say. We’ll probably say something more about that later.

Let’s go on to Roman IV which is the characteristics of progressive sanctification. And with this, we come to the heart of the teaching on sanctification and capital A - Its author. Sanctification, like salvation, as I’ve said, is the work of God. And yet, just as in salvation, man is responsible to use the means for salvation, so in sanctification man is [Inaudible] salvation is a work of God. It is Jesus Christ who has died for us. It is the Holy Spirit who brings us to Jesus Christ. And it is he who communicates new life to us. It is the work of God. We cannot save ourselves. Well the same principle holds in sanctification. We cannot sanctify ourselves. It is the work of God to sanctify us. He is the author of the work.

Now, let’s turn to John, chapter 17, and I’ll read a passage from our Lord’s priestly prayer, which stresses this side of the truth. The Lord says in John 17, verse 15 in the Lord’s Prayer, par excellence, John 17:15.

“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

And so it is the Father who sanctifies in answer to the prayer of the Son. “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” So the word is one of the means of sanctification but sanctification is the work of God.

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By the way, in case you wonder about sanctification being holiness, necessarily, in verse 19, Jesus said “And for their sakes I sanctify myself.” And so there is a case where sanctify clearly does not mean to make holy, for our Lord was already holy. It means “to set apart.”

But coming to our point, sanctification is the work of God, not of man. But we are responsible to use the means that are available to us. I preach the Gospel constantly and I say to audiences, I say, now the work of salvation is the work of God. He has provided the necessary saving work through the atonement of Jesus Christ, which he has accomplished, his redemptive work. And then as a preacher, we call upon men to repent and believe. Now, that is man’s response. But that, too, is something that we learn that is produced by God. Salvation is wholly the work of God, but we are responsible to respond. And so in sanctification, we are responsible to respond.

Capital B - Its means. This sanctifying ministry, this progressive sanctifying ministry, is done by the immediate operation of the Spirit in the inner life. You do not see the work of the Spirit in sanctifying you. I do not see his work in sanctifying me. He does the work of sanctification in my inner life. It is he who plants the new nature within me and he does that at regeneration. And it is he who nurtures its dispositions and sanctification. And so the work of bringing a man into conformity to Jesus Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit. He plants the new life within us when we believe in the Lord who died for us and then he nurtures it. And he does this through means.

Now, there are three means: There is, first, the word of God. Now, we saw a moment ago that Jesus said “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Let’s turn to another passage, which says much the same thing in 1 Peter chapter 2 in verse 2. 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 2. This is the aspect of the sanctifying ministry, which touches our conscious life. God works within in the unconscious, in the inner man. But we consciously study the Scriptures, respond to their ministry. That happens in our conscious life.

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Now, it is the word that the Holy Spirit uses to give direction to us and to excite activity and holiness by setting forth motives and inducements. Well this is the work of the Spirit, through the word. Now, the word is his ministry, his means.

Now, notice, verse 2 of 1 Peter chapter 2, he has said “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” Now, there is the sanctifying ministry of the Spirit through the word. We are to be like “newborn babes.” By the way, this text does not say we all are newborn babes. It says simply that we are to always have a desire for the word like a baby does for milk.

Now, babies love milk, as you know with infants around. An infant, when it gets used to its bottle, is a most pitiful little thing, because you can bring a warm bottle into a room, now, I used to do this. This is really mean. [Laughter] I want to tell you that when I did this, I was not a Christian. But I think I would have done it whether I was a Christian or not. I’m just that mean. But I used to take a bottle, take the bottle, and say “Mary, let me take the bottle to Sam.” And so I would bring the bottle in, and he was in his crib and I would just take it and pass it over him like this. And I can still remember how he would see it. [More laughter] You know, and I would bring it down like this and just watch him. And his eyes would follow that bottle all around the room, you know. And that is an illustration of the love that a Christian should have for the word of God. As newborn babes desire, that word really means “to long for.” “Long for the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” Now, the word is the means of the growth, but it is the Holy Spirit who uses the means to conform us to Jesus Christ in his sanctifying ministry.

One of my favorite Bible teachers, who is now with the Lord, was Dr. Northcote Deck. And I know Mr. Pryor has heard him a number of times. And he used to tell an illustration. He was a doctor. And he used to tell an illustration of the disease of myxoedema. Now, that is spelled, M-Y-X-O-E-D-E-M-A. Myxoedema. Now that disease

was long a mystery to doctors. The patient, when he had myxoedema, became monkey like with swollen face and scanty hair and scaly skin and finally his brain became dulled. And then the doctors notice that it was the atrophy of the thyroid gland that caused myxoedema. It had been thought unimportant for a long time because it had no apparent function. But its vital business was to pour a kind of secretion into the blood that was vital to the health of a man. And when it failed to produce this internal secretion, the patient sickened, became monkey like, and if nothing was done for it, he died. Well, just as there is a pathology of the body, there is a pathology of the soul, and if the Christian does not feed upon the word of God, he is not going to be able to cope with the trials and struggles of life.

This week, a young lady came to talk to me about a problem and, always, this comes out in conversation with Christians who are having serious problems. Finally, after we had discussed the problem for some time, I asked her, what was her relationship to the word of God. And her eyes kind of fell, which is typical. And she said “Well, I must say, I have neglected the word of God for a long time.” Now, one of the chief reasons we have difficulties and problems is that we neglect the word of God. And so we have done in our inner man, our inner spiritual man, just as the person who has myxoedema. We have, in a sense, become weaker and weaker and weaker. And while the spiritual life, if it is really there, will never die, ultimately, we can come to the place where we are so weak that when the trials and tests of life come, we fail and fall and fall into sin. So that is one of the ways in which God, through the Spirit, sanctifies us. That’s one of the means. The word of God. It is essential.

Then secondly, there are the ordinances. This is the second means. Now, these are the means above all other means to the Roman Catholic Church. But to Protestants, they are subordinate to the word of God. Baptism is the ordinance by which we express our identification with Christ, in his death, burial, and resurrection, or our salvation.

Now, any Christian who hears the word of God that he should be baptized in testimony to his faith and is baptized, experiences the sanctifying work of the Spirit through that obedience to the word of God. And then the other ordinance is the Lord’s Supper. And that, our Lord said, without laying down any specific legalistic requirements, he said “This do, as often as ye eat, in remembrance of me.” And so we are encouraged to observe the Lord’s Supper. The verb is present tense, frequently. Well, whether you think that is once a week or twice a week or once a month or once a quarter, well, that is for your own conscience as you listen to the word of God. I know the apostles observed the Lord’s Supper one a week. The early Church also did.

But we should not make that a legalistic thing. The important thing is that this is a means for sanctification. It is through the experience of sitting at the Lord’s Table and reflecting upon these active words, which is really what an ordinance is, reflecting upon these acted words of God, the bread and the wine, by which we are reminded of the foundations of our Christian life. And through meditation upon them, the Holy Spirit works and sanctifies us; sets us apart, further, in his service, 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 23 through 26, express Paul’s words on the Lord’s Supper.

The third means of sanctification is the providence of God. With the work of the Spirit in the inner man and through the guidance of the word, the providential experiences of the believer force home the truth of God and deepen us in the faith. We know in the Bible that we read Romans chapter 8, verse 28 “That all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” And those experiences of our lives are designed by God to be means of sanctification. It is through the experiences of life that he deals with us. Sometimes, he must chastise us and we are to be exorcised by our chastisement. Sometimes he gives us experiences that cause us to worship and praise him. All experiences should do this, but especially, worship and praise him for the new revelation of truth; the education that has come through our experiences. And so all of the experiences of life are designed by God to be

means of sanctification. These are the things that he does to nurture the life that he has implanted within us. All of our experiences are designed by God to do that.

Now, if we were exorcised by them and respond to them, we shall grow rapidly. But if we are not, resist, we shall have difficulty. But be assured of this, God is going to do his work because, you see, he is a Father. And just as parents will do anything to see that their children are properly nourished, and grow, and disciplined if they are good parents; so, the best parent of all, our Father in heaven does not hesitate to discipline us when we need it and to minister to us. So he is going to do his work and we are going to be sanctified.

Now, we can resist and fight and struggle like lots of young people do with their parents. And maybe it’s not even until their parents are gone that they realize “Well, you know, my father really did the kind of fatherly work in my life that I needed. I just did not respond.” Now, we may be that way with God, but the time is coming when he’s going to succeed and he’s going to be able to say “I have sanctified you in spite of all your strugglings and all of your resistances because he’s going to do that.” And I’m glad I have that kind of Father, because I’ll tell you, I resist an awful lot. And it’s good to know that in the end, he is going to succeed over my resistances.

Now capital C - Its completion. The work of sanctification is usually a lengthy process. I have very few friends in which I can say the work of sanctification in your case was rather short. Some have said that with regard to some unusually holy saints of the past that God did a quick work in them. And that may be true. But for most of us, it is a lengthy process. It may be completed in a moment, only in the sense in which a man believes in Jesus Christ and walks out of the building and is run over by an automobile and is in the presence of the Lord. That happens rather quickly. The old nature is gone in a hurry. But that’s not the normal thing. It’s usually a process that takes a considerable length of time and is never completed in this life, until we come into the presence of the

Lord, never completed while we are in the flesh. Now, it is completed at death for the spirit, and at the resurrection for the body.

And I must hurry on. I have another whole page here of notes or outline. All right, Roman V - The relation of progressive sanctification to other stages in the Ordo Salutis. Now, if you were in Dallas Seminary, I would stop at this point and say “Now, please tell me, Mr. Richard Parker, what is the Ordo Salutis?” And he’d say “I’m sorry, Dr. Johnson, I don’t know.” Now, maybe Richard knows. I don’t know. He probably, he’s very smart, and it’s just entirely possible that he knows. But incase you don’t know, let me tell you what the Ordo Salutis is.

Remember, when we were talking two years ago, about some of the things that God does in salvation, we said that there is an order in salvation. That’s the meaning of the Latin expression, Ordo Salutis, the order of salvation. And in the order of salvation, we’re thinking about things like election and predestination and justification and sanctification and glorification; how it all begins in the predestination of God, the election of God and the predestination of God and it concludes with our glorification. And whether we put six or seven or eight steps is insignificant at this point. But the Ordo Salutis is what God does to bring us to the end of the saving process.

Now, so I am asking or seeking to discuss here for a moment, the relation of progressive sanctification to the other stages in the Ordo Salutis. Now, we have to be clear in the relating of this doctrine to the other aspects of God’s saving process.

Capital A - Its relation to regeneration. What is the relationship of sanctification to regeneration? Well, regeneration is accomplished at once. One cannot be more or less born again. We wouldn’t say of a friend of ours “Well, he’s more or less born again.” Any more than we would say of you in the physical life, that you are more or less living, you’re either living or you’re not living. And so when we speak about regeneration, we’re talking about something that has happened. It is accomplished at once. It’s like natural birth. You are born.

Now, sanctification is a process. Positional sanctification is immediate, like regeneration. But progressive sanctification is a process. There are degrees in it. And yet, sanctification is the continuation of regeneration. Or regeneration is the beginning of sanctification. New life is the beginning of growth in life, and so the beginning of life is regeneration; the growth in life is sanctification.

A strong Baptist theologian has said “It, sanctification is distinguished from regeneration as growth from birth or as the strengthening of a holy disposition from the original implantation of it.” So when we are born again, God implants within us a holy disposition, the new nature. Then he nurtures it, and he nurtures it through the word, through the ordinances, and through our experiences. And that nurturing is progressive sanctification. It follows justification.

And that’s capital B - It’s relation to justification. Justification is the judicial basis for sanctification. In other words, sanctification could not happen did not justification already happen. By the way, since justification is a work of grace, well that suggests what we’ve already been saying that sanctification is a work of grace, also.

What happens when a man is justified? I was going to ask Dick Park about that, but he left. So I’ll have to answer it myself. What happens when a person is justified? Well, when a person is justified through faith in Christ, he is, now, come on, theologians, he is what? Declared righteous. Right that’s the term. Declared righteous. Now, he’s not inherently righteous yet. But he is declared righteous. That is his position before God. That’s his legal standing. He is declared righteous. In other words, there is imputed to him a righteous standing, a righteousness that is acceptable to God. And so if you are a believer in Christ, you are justified. You can say “I am justified. I have a righteousness that is acceptable to the Lord.”

Well now, after God has justified us legally and judicially, then he imparts to us a practical righteousness to harmonize with our imputed righteousness, our reckoned righteousness. Now, that is the process of progressive sanctification and it is not complete

until our Lord comes. Then, the imparted righteousness is the same as our imputed righteousness. So the process of progressive sanctification is the process of God’s work through the Spirit imparting righteousness to us, completed when we stand in the presence of the Lord. That’s the whole story of Romans chapter 1 through chapter 8. We start out in the first three chapters as a sinner. Then Paul speaks of the justification and then he speaks of sanctification and glorification. For, it is justification that declares us righteous. It is sanctification by which we have righteousness imparted to us, which is not completed until we enter the presence of the Lord and are glorified.

So capital C - Its relation to faith in relation to justification, justification is the judicial basis for sanctification, capital C - Its relation to faith. What is the relationship of progressive sanctification to faith? Well now, you would know this if you’d been listening carefully to what I’ve been saying. But let me say it again. When a person is converted, when a person believes in Jesus Christ and is justified, we say he is justified on the principle of grace through the instrumentality of what? Faith. Through the instrumentality of faith on the principle of grace. In other words, it’s free and our means of appropriation, the instrument by which it comes to us, is the exercise of faith.

Now, what about sanctification? Well strange to say, most people who are Christians who have not been taught very much in the Bible automatically think that “Well, now that I’m saved by grace, I must work like the dickens to grow in grace.” And you work, yourself. And so the average Christian is struggling and working and doing everything he can in order to make himself acceptable to God. And so he attends church all the time. He attends meetings and he does this and he does that and he’s told he must pray and he’s told he must witness and he’s told he must do this and so he does all these things hoping that by all of these activities, he can make himself acceptable to God.

And so, he must learn the sad experience that he should have learned when he was unconverted that he cannot do anything to please God. Even when he has the new nature, he still has that old nature, which apart from the divine activity, brings us into

captivity to itself. That’s what Paul says in Romans chapter 7. He says, I’m a Christian but I’ve discovered that apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit, there’s another principle that is at war with my new nature and my life and it is constantly bringing me into captivity to the law of sin and death. And then we learn the sad experience that we cannot sanctify ourselves. And that we must be sanctified the same way that we are justified, by faith, responding to the ministry of the Holy Spirit within us. So faith is the mediate cause or the instrumentality of both justification and sanctification. And if I may, just for a moment, elaborate on this. Faith means simply trust in what God is doing in our lives.

Now, let’s go back to the Old Testament for a moment and I want you to turn with me to a beautiful illustration of a man who did not respond in faith. His name is Ahaz. He has been called the king of no faith. You may remember the story in Isaiah chapter 7, Ahaz was the king of Judah. Pekah was the king of Israel. Rezin was the king of Syria. And Rezin and Pekah made a confederacy by which they determined that they would go south and attack Ahaz, the king of Judah. And so word came to Judah, through Judah’s G-2 that this confederacy had been made and that trouble was coming. And we read in verse 2 “And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.”

In other words, he panicked. He thought of these two kings coming down, he knew he was the king of Judah, he knew he was in the messianic line, he knew Jehovah was their God, but when he heard they were coming down to besiege the city of Jerusalem and his territory, he panicked. Now, at that time, God spoke to Isaiah the prophet. And he said “Isaiah, I want you to go out to meet Ahaz at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field.” Because, you see, Ahaz would be there. And he was out there examining the water supply in preparation for the siege that was coming, apparently, as I say more in panic than in prudence, but he was

there. And so Isaiah arrived and he said unto him in verse 4, chapter 7 that is the Lord said he was to say unto him “Take heed, and be quiet.” Now, living prophets translates this “Tell him to quit worrying.” And that’s not bad.

“Take heed and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.” And so, Isaiah was to tell Ahaz that. Now in verse 9 he was to go on to say “And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.”

Now, this was addressed to a king of Judah, a man who stood for in the messianic line, a man who was to be a faithful representative of the messianic king. By the way, those words in verse 9 are a tremendous refrain in the Hebrew text. You can even hear it if I say it to you. You can notice there is a play on words by which God is trying through this unique rhythm to stress the need for trust in the heart of Ahaz. “Im lo ta aminu ki lo te amenu” which we could render something like this, “If in God you do not confide, surely in power, ye shall not abide” or “surely if ye will not believe, neither blessing shall ye receive.” And so the point that God brought home to Ahaz was this; the secret to victory in the experiences of life is “trust in me.” Not you doing things, Ahaz. He didn’t give him a few clues as to how he might fortify the city and defeat the enemy. But he told him to trust in the Lord.

Now, that’s the principle of sanctification. That’s the principle of the Christian life. To trust in the power of God that is working in our hearts. I think the Lord, Jesus Christ is the perfect realizer and exemplar of faith. If you will study our Lord’s life, you will

discover that this was the thing that characterized him. We think of our Lord as a great miracle worker who out of his own strength accomplished his victories. That was not the way our Lord accomplished his victories. He accomplished his victories through his dependence upon the power of his Father. And you can begin, in our Lord’s life, from his birth and notice the exercise of faith. And, of course, it reaches its climax in the Garden of Gethsemane when he says “Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.” And, finally, on the Cross, in his last words, he said “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” Now, that is the exercise of faith. He did not struggle. He did not use his divine power. He allowed God to work and he trusted in God and three days later he was alive from the dead.

By the way, have you ever carefully studied that expression that our Lord used in his statement? “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” If you will study that, you will discover that it, like the other statements that our Lord makes when he died on the cross, is a citation from the Old Testament. And if you go back to Psalm 31 where it is found and read the background of that psalm and read the historical background of it, you will discover, surprisingly, that that was a Psalm that little Hebrew children were taught to pray every night when they went to bed. It was their, “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. And if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take,” which I prayed for years and years before I saved. Well, it was their prayer. That is not a prayer in which our Lord says “Well, I’m going to die, I’m just going to give it all up, Lord.” But it really was a prayer of faith, in which he committed himself to the Lord, knowing there was a day beyond this present day. “Into thy hands I commit my spirit.” And so it was, in a sense, the completion of the life and faith of our Lord.

Now, it is through faith that we are sanctified. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, knowing that our Lord is the great illustration of faith, says when he finishes the great chapter on faith, he says “Now, we’ve got a lot of witnesses here, but the supreme

illustration of faith is our Lord, Jesus Christ, and I want you to look off to him, He says, in chapter 12, verses 1 and 2.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, [So, Christian life is really running for your life, isn’t it? And how are we to do it? Well, he says] Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”

So, what is the Christian life but a looking off unto Jesus. Do you remember that Peter on the water was able to walk as long as he looked at our Lord? Why? Well because you see, by that look, there was something of the virtue of our Lord, something of his power that left our Lord and came into Peter. And as long as contact was made with our Lord, and this of course is in the physical sphere as an illustration, something of the virtue and power of Jesus Christ was in Peter and he was able to do what Jesus Christ, himself did, the miracle of walking on the water. When he looked away, he began to sink.

Now, our Lord is not like Peter. He can walk on the water whether he looks at Peter or not, because he is the Son of God. But Peter could do the impossible as long as he looked at our Lord. Now, that is an illustration of faith. That’s an illustration of looking unto Jesus. It is the expression of faith by which in the experiences of life we look off to the Lord, to continue his work of sanctification. And no matter what the experiences are, if we are trusting in him, they shall ultimately turn to our sanctification.

In a west European city, some years ago, there was a royal visit and the streets were crowded with people. And one mother had brought her little child there to see the king. And as all of the pomp passed by, finally, she saw the king coming. And so, very enthusiastically, she stretched out her arm and pointed to the king and turned down to

the young boy and with a loud voice she cried out “Look at him and never forget it all your life.” And that really is the kind of look of faith that a Christian is to have. It’s a look at our Lord, which is to be a continual thing. That is the expression of the means by which we are sanctified.

Now, progressive sanctification and the problem of perfectionism. And it’s eight thirty so that means we have to stop. Now, next time, I’m going to say just a word about this because I think we have already referred to it. But I will say a word about that and also about good works and progressive sanctification. But we will continue our study.

Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word and Thy truth. And we thank Thee for the great truth of sanctification; that Thou art working to bring us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, and Thou shalt do it. And Father, out of gratitude for Thy work may we respond in praise and trust. We commit each one present to Thee.

In Jesus’ name and for his sake. Amen.