



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

TRANSCRIPT

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

The Theological Aspects of the Work, part I”

Let’s begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful, again, to Thee for this opportunity to study the Scriptures, to consider Thy teaching on some of the great doctrines of the Christian faith. And, Lord, we pray that as we study together tonight that the one whom we are studying, whose ministry we are studying, the Holy Spirit, may be our teacher and our guide into all the truth. We know, Lord, that as long as we are in the flesh, we shall not know Thy truth perfectly. We look forward to the day when we shall know as we are known. But in the meantime, build us up and strengthen us in the faith that the purposes that Thou hast for us while we are here may be accomplished. And this we pray, Lord, for each one of us who are here. Now, we commit this time of study to Thee and pray that we may be taught and responsive.

For Jesus’ Sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject tonight is The Holy Spirit’s Work of Sanctifying Believers. And this is the first of our studies in this particular general title, and our subtitle for

tonight and next Tuesday night, the Lord willing, will be The Theological Aspects of the Work. And in a moment, when I put the outline on the board, you will see the title and be able to copy it down if you like.

What I would like to do tonight, before we begin, is to read two or three verses, which have to do with the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. And the first is in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, 2 Corinthians chapter 3, and I want to read verses 8 and 18. And then we want to look at Galatians 5:22 and 23. But first, 2 Corinthians chapter 3 in verse 8. And I want to make a comment on this verse, just a simple comment. Paul writes “How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” Now, looking at the context, it becomes evident that Paul has used this expression “the ministration of the spirit” for the present age. In other words, the age today is an age of the ministration of the spirit. What Paul is saying, in effect, is that everything that is accomplished here in this age is the work of the Holy spirit to such a degree that we may call the present age “The Ministration of the Spirit.”

But now, the text that has particular reference to sanctification is the 18th verse of this chapter, the last verse in which Paul says “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed (Literally, are being changed) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Now, what is expressed in this text is, obviously, a continuous ministry of the Holy Spirit in the changing of believers into the likeness of Jesus Christ. And this is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the present age.

Let’s turn over to Galatians 5, now, in verse 22 and verse 23, for an expression of much of the same truth, but with some different aspects emphasized. Galatians 5: 22 and 23. Here the Apostle writes “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, Meekness, self control: against such there is no law.” Now, you’ll notice, that Paul says that all of these virtues, which make up the fruit, are the products of the Holy Spirit. “The fruit of the Spirit is.” And so the virtues that, in a sense,

sum up all of God’s requirements of Christians, these virtues are expressed products of the Holy Spirit and that is his sanctifying work in the present age.

So now, we come to the ministry of sanctification. Now, I have been talking for a long time last year and this fall about the Spirit’s work in the believing community. And remember, when we got to the Spirit’s work in the believing community, we began with the doctrine of regeneration. We pointed out how the Holy Spirit regenerates. We, also, turned to the baptizing ministry and we discussed how the Holy Spirit baptizes believers into the Body of Christ. This is not water baptism but spirit baptism by which we are united to Christ and to one another in Jesus Christ. Then his ministry of permanent indwelling in which he permanently indwells every believer in the Lord, Jesus Christ. This is a ministry which pertains to every believer in the present age; every Christian is indwelt permanently by the Holy Spirit. We talked about that.

We talked about his teaching ministry, how in the present time he instructs us in the things that concern Jesus Christ. In this teaching ministry, of course, he is either helped or hindered by our own spiritual condition; for we may be carnal or spiritual. We talked about two types of carnality: carnal weak, new Christians, carnal willful, Christians who have been Christians for sometime but who are disobedient, out of fellowship. They also are hindered in understanding the word as the Spirit teaches. He teaches, we just don’t respond. And then the spiritual Christian is the one rightly related to the Holy Spirit, the mature Christian who is able to take the deep things of the Spirit of God.

We talked then about his ministry of giving gifts and we spent a good deal of time on this, three nights just on the gift of tongues, remember. And then we also spoke of the permanent gifts and the temporary gifts. So we spent at least five hours on the ministry of the Holy Spirit and giving gifts, largely because of the confusion that exists in the present day on this topic.

Now, last time, I discussed the “filling” ministry. Now, this is the traditional outline of the teaching ministry of the Spirit, but what I tried to point out last time was

this, that the term “the filling of the Spirit” is not a proper term to describe either the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life today as his primary work. That is, it’s not a proper term to describe the primary work of the Spirit in the believer’s life, nor is it a proper term to describe the believer’s response to the work of the Spirit.

We looked at the one passage in Paul in which the “filling of the Spirit” is referred to and we saw that contrary to common interpretation of that text that it did not mean to be “filled with the Spirit” as if the Spirit is the content of the filling. We pointed out that Greek construction is never found with that sense. It rather means “be filled in the sphere of the Spirit” and the stages of that filling, or the evidences of that filling were seen in the context as speaking in psalms and hymns, singing, making melody, giving thanks and submitting yourselves to one another; that the filling of the Spirit is really a more minor aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit and has particular reference to the local church in the relationships that exist among believers.

So that when we talk about Paul’s “be filled in the Spirit” we are not addressing an exhortation to a Christian as if this is your major responsibility to God. It is one of your responsibilities. It is primarily a corporate responsibility and it is only an aspect of the major ministry of the Holy Spirit in this age, which is his sanctifying ministry.

Now, that is what we want to spend time on. And, as I say, last time pointed out the teaching concerning the filling of the Spirit because it is my own personal feeling that a great deal of misunderstanding of the spiritual life is bound up in misunderstanding of what Paul meant when he said “Be filled in the Spirit.” Christians are going around trying to be filled in the Spirit when they don’t even understand what that text means. The one word that most accurately expresses the work of the Holy Spirit with reference to the believer in this age, so far as his daily life is concerned, is the word “sanctification.” It is the work of the Spirit in sanctifying believers that is the important doctrine.

Now, that word will cover a great deal of other words besides just the simple term “sanctifying,” such as, the one we referred to in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, our constant

change. That’s sanctification. So that’s the word to express the Holy Spirit’s work, his sanctifying ministry. Our response, again, is not fill or be filled, but our response is the response of, the biblical expressions are we are to live in the Spirit and we are to walk by the Spirit. And so the divine bestowment of blessing is effectively described, accurately described as sanctification, the believer’s response is “life by the Spirit” which we can also call walking by the Spirit. Now, I hope that we are clear on that. The term filling is too narrow a term, then, to express either God’s work or man’s response.

Well now, let’s come to “The Holy Spirit’s work of sanctifying believers, the theological aspects of the work.” And this will be the first of two parts on this particular thing. And we will try to cover through Roman III in the outline tonight.

But first, a few words of introduction. When we come to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, we come, then, to the climactic work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the present life of the believers, his work of sanctification. Paul puts it this way in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 23 and 24.

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

That is the ultimate aim of the Holy Spirit in the present age. It is to bring us to this place of entire sanctification. Now, that will not take place until we come into the presence of the Lord. But all of the work of the present age is preliminary to that.

Now, I said that there is a great deal of confusion in connection with some of the doctrines of the work of the Spirit. We think of the doctrines that concern the gift of tongues, for example, and there are very, very few people today that really understand what the New Testament has to say about the gift of tongues. I think it is also true to say that in the realm of the doctrine of the sanctification of the Spirit, as clear as it is in

Scripture, there still exists considerable confusion, as an acquaintance with the competing viewpoint will show. For example, let me just list three views, by way of showing the confusion that exists. And first we will take the Roman Catholic view.

Now, the Roman Catholic view of sanctification is something like this. In the first place, they do not distinguish justification, clearly, from sanctification. Justification is accomplished by an infusion of grace through the sacraments, for example, through baptism, through penance, through the other sacraments. And this infusion of grace enables the soul to be lifted to a new level of being. This grace, which is the product of the treasury of merit, produced brought to pass by Jesus Christ, is imparted through the seven sacraments. It secures the forgiveness of original sin.

For example, when a Roman Catholic is baptized as an infant that is understood by them to be the removal of original sin. It secures or imparts a habit of righteousness. It carries within itself the possibility of perfection. This work, in the Roman Catholic, may be neutralized or destroyed by mortal sin but the sacrament of penance removes that sin. And so, if a Roman Catholic, having received this infusion of grace, through the sacraments, sins in such a way that he commits mortal sin, it is his responsibility to go to the priest and make confession to the priest, which is an aspect of the sacrament of penance. He will also often be required to make some form of penance. It may be some good work. It may be in some cases, in the past, a payment of a certain amount of money. It may be other things. And then that mortal sin is removed. Venial sins, forgivable sins, sins that are of less significance, they may be removed by the Eucharist. The end of this process is justification. In other words, sanctification is a process of improvement, which enables God to justify man. Now, that, of course, as you can see, is a principle of “works” salvation. And that is why it is wrong to say that the Roman Catholic system, now, Roman Catholics may not believe all of the system.

I had a woman, last week, who was a Christian Scientist, who came to talk to me about being baptized in Believers Chapel and she did not accept all of the doctrines of

Mary Baker Eddy. There are Presbyterians who not only do not accept the doctrines of John Calvin, but sad to say, don’t even know what they are in the twentieth century.

But if a Roman Catholic is a true Roman Catholic, in the sense that they accept all of the teaching of the church, then this is what they must believe. Sanctification is a process of improvement, which enables God, ultimately, to justify man. As I say, that is a “works” method of salvation and, I believe, is thoroughly contrary to the teaching of Paul when he says “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

The Wesleyan view, lest you think I’m jumping on the Catholics tonight, the Wesleyans who are Protestants, believe something like this. They say sanctification is a process of improvement, which may be completed while we are here in the flesh. If a Catholic view is legalism, and it is, this is perfectionism. In other words, they believe that sanctification is a process, which while we are in the flesh may reach its climax.

Now, John Wesley, himself, believed that this was theoretically possible. And, in that sense, this view is an accurate representation of him. It is true, to Wesley, however, to say that he did regard sanctification as a progressive thing. But he regarded the process of sanctification as possibly being completed while we are here in the flesh and, as a matter of fact, went on to say that this was something that Christians should pray for and expect, entire sanctification. Again, that, I think, is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. John says, in his first epistle, and he is writing to believers in the first chapter of that first epistle. The 8th verse, he says “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

He says in the 10th verse of that same first chapter of 1 John “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” So if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. And it is a standard practice of all who believe in some form of perfectionism in the present life, to tone down the character of sin. When you talk with them and say “Listen, do you really believe that it’s possible for us to reach the state

when we do not even sin?” They say, “Oh, yes, it’s possible to reach entire sanctification. “You mean, not even have an evil thought?” “Oh, no, that is not what I mean. I mean known sin.” And then as you talk on other types of more obvious failures on the part of us all are eliminated too. Until, finally, it’s only a certain kind of sin in which we have entire sanctification.

The Reformed view is that sanctification is a process of improvement, which is completed only at death. Now, this is the biblical view, as far as it goes. I think it is in harmony with Scripture. It is the view that Paul expresses when he says in 2 Corinthians 3 that we are in a process of constant change. But our entire sanctification does not take place until we come into the presence of the Lord. Now, the Pauline usage of the term “sanctify” is broader than just this progressive aspect. And we shall see that in a moment when I put the diagram on our projector that we had last spring. Some of you may remember it. But we will do that in a moment.

Well, let’s turn now to our outline and Roman I - The history of the doctrine of sanctification and capital A - Before the reformation. It’s helpful to have a perspective when you study biblical doctrine. And that is why, in these doctrines, I often start out with a word about the history of the doctrine, so you can picture exactly what people have thought about this doctrine down through the centuries. So let’s think about the history of the doctrine of sanctification for a moment. And we’ll go back to the time before the Reformation. As a matter of fact, let’s go all the way back to the apostolic fathers; that is, men such as Ignatius, Polycarp, Barnabas, Plymouth, and others.

Now, these men were men who followed the apostles. Ignatius’ death was around one hundred and twelve or one hundred and seventeen, one hundred and seventeen was his date of martyrdom. Polycarp died around the same time. Pothinus and others were early. And then Plymouth wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians in ninety-five A.D. These were men who followed the apostles. Some of them knew men who knew the apostles. There is little clarity in their writings. Sometime, if you want to see

the distinction between the New Testament and the apostolic fathers, get a copy of the Apostolic fathers, and read Ignatius’ seven epistles, which he wrote on the way to his martyrdom. You have to admire that man’s faith, but when you study his doctrine, you will discover that his doctrine is not nearly so clear and “pullusive” to use a good word, as the apostles’ doctrine. They did not understand the principles of grace as the apostles did. As a matter of fact, many of the church fathers taught that men were to depend on their salvation on the basis of faith and good works. In other words, they fell into the trap of legalism. Justin Martyr, for example, said that “Men were regenerated by water baptism.”

So the apostolic fathers were not very plain on the doctrine of salvation. So far as sanctification is concerned, they wrote very little about sanctification. And it’s not surprising that out of these faulty views of what salvation consisted of, they should have defective views of sin as well as being infected with legalism and sacramentarianism and priestcraft, and other abuses. Asceticism came to be one of the greatest virtues of the early church. In other words, if we could abstain from meats and eating this and doing that, then we should attain to spirituality. That motif reached its climax in the times of Luther, just before the Reformation.

Augustine, who came along in the fourth and fifth centuries was the first to develop definite ideas of sanctification. He thought of it as a new supernatural infusion of life. But this supernatural infusion of life operated only within the church and only through the sacraments. Even Augustine, as clearly as he understood the principles of grace, was confused over how this gracious work of salvation came to us. He said it came to us through the Church and, specifically, through the sacraments such as baptism. And it’s a little disheartening to read in Augustine, such clear statements as how we are saved by grace and not by works, and then to have him say that we are saved through baptism. That seems very contradictory to us but he never seemed to sense that. He did not clearly distinguish between justification and sanctification. But out of Augustine’s

views developed the views of Thomas Aquinas and any Roman Catholic, of course, admires and likes the teaching of Thomas Aquinas because it is really the source of much of Roman Catholic teaching still today. Now, the teaching of Aquinas is what I spoke of a moment ago as the Roman Catholic view of sanctification.

Now, secondly - At the Reformation. In other words, up to the time of the Reformation, there was no clear teaching on the doctrine of sanctification. It was either ignored, or misunderstood, frequently by being identified with justification. At the Reformation, the Reformers were led by the Holy Spirit into an understanding of the distinction between justification and sanctification. They regarded justification as a legal act of grace, which affected a man’s status before God. Now, you know, I hope, that the Reformers believed that a man was justified before God through his faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ, and the work that he did on the cross.

The Reformers believe that when we came to understand that Christ died for us through the shedding of his blood; and when we, in faith, committed ourselves to that for time and for eternity that was an act by which we were identified with Jesus Christ. He became our representative in fact and we participated in all that he did for us. We were declared righteous before God on the basis of our faith. In other words, what Christ did was imputed to us. Our sins were imputed to him, his righteousness was imputed to us. And so, consequently, we are justified before God; that is our legal standing. The Reformers taught this and thus recovered the doctrine which Paul and the apostles had proclaimed. Now, that was a great teaching because, you see, it caused them to see again that salvation was not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but by God’s mercy and grace. The Reformers saw that. They saw it, then, justification as a legal act of God in justifying us before him, the Great Judge of the universe.

Sanctification, they saw, as a moral or re-creative work, changing man’s inner nature. They saw it inseparably connected with justification, for justification is the route and sanctification is the fruit. The route, the implantation of life comes when we exercise

faith in Christ. The growth of that life within us is the product of the Spirit’s work of sanctifying. And so they saw that sanctification followed justification. It is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, primarily, through the word, and, secondarily, through the sacraments, by which we are brought into conformity to Jesus Christ. So sanctification, the progressive work of the Holy Spirit in conforming us to Jesus Christ through the word of God and through the sacraments, that was the Reformers’ doctrine. That is, essentially, the doctrine of the Christian church today, with one exception. I think there is less emphasis on the sacraments today than there was in the Reformers. Perhaps that was because the Reformers came out of a church in which there was an overstress of the sacraments and it was only natural that they should stress at least baptism and the Lord’s Supper as being sanctifying agents.

Now, I’m not against that as long as we understand the limits of the rite of baptism and the limits of the rite of the Lord’s Supper. I do believe that baptism does not save. It is simply a means of expressing our faith, which we have in Jesus Christ. But, at the same time, I do believe that obedience to the command of Jesus Christ here is an uplifting and edifying thing for a Christian. I feel that every Christian who obeys the word that Jesus Christ has given, that we should be baptized in testimony to our faith, is built up through the obedience to that sacrament. At the same time, I also believe that the observance of the Lord’s Table is a means given by God to lead us into a deeper relationship to him. It does not do anything of itself, but it is a means to an end and the times that we spend sitting at the Lord’s Table are times when we are reflecting upon the ministry of the Lord, which he accomplished, and they are times of spiritual edification. And the observance of the Lord’s Supper is designed to be a means of grace to us. But it is, of course, not the only means. The greatest means for sanctification is the word of God in our lives.

After the Reformation – capital C. John Wesley virtually separated justification and sanctification and he spoke of entire sanctification as a second work of grace, following justification after a longer or shorter period. Wesley, in many ways, was one of our great

men. But at the same time, he did not understand the doctrine of sanctification. He spoke of it, I said, as a process. But he believed that one should pray and look for full sanctification at once by a separate act of God. And that, of course, is impossible. As a result, this idea has penetrated, not only certain of the more Methodistic sects, but has gone into the Pentecostal movement. And there are people today who do pray and pray and pray that they may be entirely sanctified through the special gift of the Holy Spirit following their salvation, not realizing that they already have the Holy Spirit and already have in their salvation, potentially, every spiritual blessing available for us.

Now, liberal theology today simply conceives of sanctification as the redemption of man’s lower self by the domination of his higher self. Liberal theologians today do not really know what sanctification means biblically, and when you pick up a liberal theology and read anything on sanctification, it usually boils itself down to a redemption by human character. And that is their essential teaching.

Well, now, let’s look, secondly at the biblical terminology and concept of sanctification. And first of all, we want to look at the terminology of the Hebrew Old Testament. We want to be sure that we understand these key terms because we’ll not understand sanctification if we don’t understand them. And the first term is the Hebrew, *qadash*. Now, I put the transliteration on the board. And if you don’t know Hebrew, why then, write down that. If you know Hebrew and you’re a Hebrew scholar, then you can write down the Hebrew word. And if you want to fake it and write down the Hebrew word. Now this word *qadash* originally had the idea of separation or withdrawal. To sanctify meant to set apart, to separate, to withdraw from a gathering and thus to separate. So the key idea of the term “to sanctify” is to separate or set apart. Now, it does not have any necessary moral connotation, for to use the term “set apart” may not necessarily imply any morality one way or the other. As I’ve often said here in illustration, I may take this pen and I may say, I am going to reserve this pen for special use. And so I may say, in the biblical language, I have sanctified this pen.

Well now, it’s not any holier than before. But I have set it apart for use, for a particular use. That’s the meaning of the term sanctify. That, of course, is why every Christian is called a “saint” in the New Testament times. Paul addresses his epistles to the “saints” which are at Ephesus. That does not mean they have already died and they’ve been canonized by the universal church as being saints to be worshiped. He means, simply, that they have been set apart through their faith to the service of God. Every Christian is a saint. As I’ve often said to you, if you want to look at a saint, why you’re looking at one right now, Saint Lewis. [Laughter]

Now, the other day, my wife was speaking to someone from Fort Worth who attends the meetings over here, and she said “Your husband is the one the young people call ‘Saint Lewis’ isn’t it?” They say they are going over to hear “Saint Lewis” today. And they are referring to me because I refer to myself that way. Last Sunday, I referred to myself as a bishop because I am an elder in Believers Chapel. And as I left Sunday morning, somebody greeted me outside and said “Hi, Bishop.” [More laughter]

But that, of course, is true. We are, all of us, saints. And of course, elders are bishops and bishops are elders; they are synonymous terms.

So, the Hebrew term “to separate” to set apart, is the word to sanctify. It does not have any necessary moral connotation. As a matter of fact, it may surprise you to know that in the Old Testament, temple prostitutes are called ‘sanctified ones.’ Now, isn’t that an amazing thing? Let me read the text. Deuteronomy chapter 23 in verse 17. “There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel.” And did you know that the terms used are the terms in the first place, *qadeshah* from *qadesh*. “There shall be no female sanctified one, as a whore, of the daughters of Israel, nor a male, *qadesh* Sodomite, sanctified one of the sons of Israel.

As you know, in ancient times, it was customary frequently for the heathen religions to have prostitutes who were attached to a temple and in their doctrine, part of their doctrine was that through intercourse with the prostitutes of the temple, representing

this religion, they were able to have fellowship with God. Now, that horrible teaching is reflected in the use of these terms. And God says “There shall be no sanctified prostitutes.” No sanctified females, no sanctified males, in connection with the worship in Israel. So the term “sanctify” then means, “to set apart.” That’s its meaning.

Now, the Greek word. The Greek word is *hagiazō*. *Hagiazō* connotes the same fundamental idea. In the New Testament, wherever you see the term sanctification, holiness, saints, we are talking about the same root word, *hagiazō*. Sometimes it’s a noun form such as *hagiasune*, *hagiasmas*, *hagiasase*. Sometimes it is an adjectival form such as *hagios*. Sometimes it’s the verb *hagiazō* which I have put here, which means to set apart. But all of these terms have the same idea of “to be set apart.” Holiness is another rendering of the word “to sanctify.” Sanctification and holiness in the New Testament are the same.

Now, this word means to set apart for God. So that holiness is a condition of being set apart for God. When we say God is holy, we not only mean that he is inherently pure, but we mean he is different from everything human. He is holy. He is set apart. He is the holy different one. That, by the way, is why holiness is the fundamental attribute of deity; for he is different from us and he’s different from us in his love. He’s different from us in his grace. He’s different from us in his justice. He’s different from us in every aspect of his being. And that’s why holiness is the basic character of God, not love. People often think because the Bible says “God is love” that that’s his basic character. Well that’s one of the reasons we have such softness in the twentieth century and a failure to understand the righteousness of God. The basic character of God is his holiness; for that marks him off as different in every way. His love, even, is different from our love. So to sanctify is to set apart for God.

Now, the idea of moral holiness is involved in the usage of the term. Obviously, if a person is set apart for the use of God or the service of God then that involves a holiness. Because, you see, God does not have fellowship with evil. And so if a saint is a

saint of God, then that necessarily means that he must become pure, either through legally, through the saving work of Jesus Christ or practically in his life. There can be no indwelling of the Holy Spirit of an impure being. And that is why we must be justified before we are indwelt by the Spirit. So to sanctify, then, is to set apart for God. It is not mere moral rectitude, but moral renewal by God the Spirit, to God and the Father for the service of God.

Now, when we look at the term sanctify in the New Testament, we discover that it is used in more senses than the Reformers thought. They thought of sanctification as simply being progressive sanctification. Now, I’m by this outline diagram trying to show you in essence what we studied last year or year before last, when we studied the doctrine of sanctification. Now, I want you to notice two, three, things about this original work of mine. I drew this up many years ago. I never had seen it before and I’ve used it through the years. It’s not a diagram that expresses all of the truth but, nevertheless, it expresses what needs to be expressed, I think.

Now, before a man comes to Jesus Christ, he is lost. And I am seeking to represent this by the cross, the coming to Christ. And, consequently, as we come to the Cross, that is the work of the Holy Spirit preceding our salvation. This one hundred percent holiness is the standard of God. No man shall ever see God who does not have perfect holiness and righteousness. This is the old plane of life. Now, when a man comes to Jesus Christ at the cross, we know that he begins to grow in grace, if he is genuinely born again. Now, he will have, of course, his ups and downs. But he should progressively become more like Jesus Christ until, ultimately, when our Lord comes again, he will become practically what he is positionally.

But now, let’s go back and let me stress the four aspects of it. I said that there is a work of the Holy Spirit in brining us to Jesus Christ. Now, all of you have heard me enough to know that one of my favorite doctrines is the doctrine of efficacious grace. It is expressed to us in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 13. You need not look it up because

I’ll read it and I know you will accept my reading of this text. 2 Thessalonians 2:13. Paul says “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and believe of the truth.” You’ll notice this is sanctification that precedes belief of the truth and it represents the means whereby God saves us. He chooses us with a view to salvation through the means of the sanctification of the Spirit and by belief of the truth.

Now, the belief of the truth is the human response, and sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing us to Jesus Christ. That is efficacious grace. That is primary sanctification. Every Christian has been the recipient of primary sanctification. He calls it sanctification, setting sanctification of the Spirit. Now, that is a setting apart work, which the Holy Spirit does, irresistibly, bringing us to faith and consequently, salvation. Sanctifying work of the Spirit. If you want another text, 1 Peter 1:2 is there.

Now, I want you to turn to another text. 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 2, because we want to look now at positional sanctification. 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 1 and verse 2. Now listen as I read while you’re finding it, page 1211 in my edition, just before 2 Corinthians.

“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus.”

Now, there it is. As a matter of fact, the Greek text says “to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus.” And the tense he uses is the perfect tense, which refers to an action in the past time the results of which continue. In other words, Paul says, you Corinthians have been sanctified.

Now, I thought sanctification was something that went on as a process? Well, that’s the way the Reformers taught it. But, you see, they overlooked these texts in viewing with the breath of this doctrine of sanctification that expresses this one-and-for-all character of sanctification. So I’ve tried to represent this on my diagram by pointing out that the moment I come to Jesus Christ, my practical life begins down here where I’m living on the old plane of life. But positionally, that is, before God, immediately on my faith in Jesus Christ, I am sanctified. I am considered holy, set apart for God. That’s why he calls me his saint.

Now, if you remember, the Corinthians were anything but practically sanctified. You can see how important this is. Why they, in the 3rd chapter, Paul says that they were among other things, they were carnal, there was envy and strife, and divisions among them. He later on mentioned how there was adultery taking place in their midst, actually incest. How they were going to war with one another. How they were sinning in the matter of meat sacrifice to idols. How they were not straight on the doctrine of the resurrection and all these things. But still, they were sanctified, holy sanctified. Now, that obviously means they were positionally sanctified. That was their standing before God. In other words, it’s like justification. Positional sanctification is very similar to justification.

Then, as you begin your Christian life, you begin to make progress. Now, this is the third aspect to sanctification and it is expressed in passages like 2 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 1, where Paul says.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Perfecting sanctification in the fear of God. Well, now, if we are totally sanctified the moment we believe, positionally, how can you perfect sanctification? Well, you

cannot in a positional sense. You can only do it in the practical sense. And that is what Paul is speaking about. He is talking about the growth in grace that should be manifested in a believer’s life, as he makes progress in the faith. So that’s the third aspect of sanctification.

Now, as I say, this is a chart of the Christian life. In case you’re wondering whose chart this is, this is Howard Prier’s chart. And so I mentioned last time and you’ll notice how he began very well, after he was converted and everything was wonderful. He was on a higher plane of life every day, until he reached this spot right here and then something happened. I need not go into these personal experiences [laughter], but he went, he had a fall, and then he managed to make recovery by means of confession of sin and made remarkable progress right there. Ann was helping him then. And then again, the same old sin entangled him and he fell.

But he recovered himself fairly quickly this time and made further progress and was so happy with this exalted, rarified atmosphere at this point that he again fell. But, here, he managed to fall into a more steadier pattern and so on. And, this is generally his diagram and, I am happy to prophesy that the day is coming when he is finally going to, in his practical life, touch this second line up here. And it so happens, I’ll be with him at the same time. Because, you see, that is our prospective sanctification, and it is expressed in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 in verse 23, where we read, the text that I read earlier “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.”

Now, that was Paul’s prayer. Well, why did Paul have to pray this? Someone might say “Well, how do you pray that the Thessalonians be sanctified wholly, when you wrote the Corinthians that they were already sanctified?” He’d say “Oh, well, I’m talking about the time when the practice of the believer is equal and the same as his position. And that will take place when Jesus Christ comes again.”

Now, these are the four aspects of sanctification: primary, efficacious grace, positional, very close to justification, progressive sanctification which is our daily growth

in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord, and, finally, the prospective sanctification that comes at the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

All right, let me put my outline back on the board and we want to pick up from where we were. Let’s go over now to Roman III - The nature of progressive sanctification. From now on, we’re going to be concerned with progressive sanctification, because that is the chief aspect of this doctrine of sanctification. And, in that sense, the Reformers were correct. So we are going to confine our attention to progressive sanctification for the rest of tonight and, also, for the rest of this series of studies on the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

And capital A - Its supernatural-ness. Sanctification of a progressive nature is often regarded by believers as something that we do. It has even been regarded as a kind of holy arraignment of ones own weaving. We are inclined to think that we are justified by grace, through faith, but when it comes to sanctification or growth in grace, well, it’s a matter of human activity. And so we think of sanctification as what we do as Christians, rather than what God does for us. Sanctification is not a human achievement. It is not a human achievement in any of its aspects. It is totally a divine work. We shall stress that later on a little bit more but it is a work of God.

And even our daily progress in holiness is a work of God. It is not something we do. Sanctification is not a garment that we put on because we have woven it with out goodness and our obedience to the Lord. There is a sense in which our faith is the means by which God does his work, but sanctification like salvation is a work of God. It is something he does. It is something he provokes, he also is responsible for our responses. He is the one who works in us to faith to respond to his work. It is totally a work of God. And, he will accomplish it, too.

The idea that sanctification is a work that we do is a very comfortless kind of teaching. If it is true that we must have holiness before we enter the presence of the Lord, and Hebrews says that “no man shall see the Lord without holiness.” And if it is

something we do, then I must confess, I am greatly puzzled over the experience of humanity. I do believe infants, for example, are saved. That is, if they die in their state of infancy. They are not, I believe not accountable. So as long as they die before the age of accountability, they have reckoned to them the benefits of the work of Jesus Christ.

But if sanctification is a work that we must do, then how are they able to have a work of sanctification? And yet “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” It should be obvious to us that holiness is a work of God. Or, take a person who has lived a long life of disobedience to the Lord and on his death bed, he accepts Jesus Christ as his savior. If holiness is a requirement for the presence of God, and it is, and we must do it ourselves, then where shall such a man obtain his garment of holiness? That is a very comfortless doctrine. Not only that, it’s a wicked doctrine because, in a sense, Jesus Christ is not a sufficient savior. If salvation is something that we receive as a gift but sanctification is something that we do, and it’s a necessary thing for the presence of God, then Jesus Christ has not done everything.

So it seems to me that we must ultimately come to the conviction when we study the Bible, that sanctification is a work of grace, it is a work of God, it is not a work of man. And any who are not clear on this point and do not understand that this sanctification is a work of God and a work of grace, well, then, in my own humble opinion, you are headed toward a very disappointing experience in the Christian life. For you will soon discover that you are unable to produce any holiness before God. It is something that he does for us.

Capital B - Its twofold aspect: mortification and quickening, or renewing. Now, this is the subjective aspect of the objective atonement. When we look at the saving work of Jesus Christ, there are certain objective facts about it. For example, he went to the cross, he died. Then remember, he was placed into the grave. He was buried. And then the great climactic event is that he was raised from the dead. He was resurrected. Now, these are the objective facts of the atoning work of Christ. But, isn’t it interesting how the

apostles when they look at the Christian life, they describe it in terms of the objective work of Christ? They say that we have died with him. They say that we have been buried with him. They say that we have been raised together with him. So the objective facts of Jesus Christ’s experience have become the subjective facts of our experience.

As a matter of fact, they are objective in the sense that we are conceived to be in him; our representative man. But we are called upon then to subjectively experience these things in our life because we are called upon to put to death the old man and we are called upon to reckon ourselves alive from the dead. Isn’t that interesting? In other words, there shall be produced in our life the equivalent of that which was objectively produced in Jesus Christ. Now, the great passage on this is Romans chapter 6, in which we are taught that we have been crucified together with him. We have been buried together with him. We have been raised together with him. And then we are to reckon ourselves to be dead in deed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now, this twofold aspect of sanctification is: mortification and quickening and it’s expressed in those commands, which Paul loves to use of “putting off” and “putting on.” And I want you to turn with me to Colossians chapter 3, Colossians chapter 3, and listen to the apostle’s words with the 5th verse. He says, by the way, he points out in Colossians that we not only have died with him, not only have we been buried with him, not only have we been raised with him, but we are now seated with him in the heavenly places. And he says in verse 1.

“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. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore.” [Look at it mortify therefore, mortification, put to death is the meaning of the term.] “Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth.”

In other words, realize in your own experience what has been objectively realized for you in the saving work of Jesus Christ. You’ll reckon to be in him. You’ll reckon to have passed through his experiences. Now, if you have been reckoned by God to have died with him, to have been buried with him, to have been raised with him, and you are now living in the risen life of the Son of God in heaven, then what place has fornication in your experience? Uncleaness? Inordinate affection? Evil concupiscence? Covetousness, which is idolatry? “For which things’ sake cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.” So, we are called upon to put to death these things, which he mentions here. Now, notice, the 8th verse.

“Now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another (why?) seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.”

In other words, you are to realize in your experience what has happened because of your objective identification with Jesus Christ. Now, we do not go around actually and put ourselves to death. We have died with him. We have been raised together with him. But when the sins of the old man manifest themselves, we are to put them to death; mortify them. We are to put off all of these old rags, which belong to the old life.

Now, I know what you may be thinking. “I do not find it within my power to do these things.” Of course you don’t. And if you think, for one moment, that you are able to do this in your own power and weave that garment of holiness out of your own strength, that’s why you shall be sadly mistaken. You know, it’s like trying to get saved by getting to heaven on good works, you can never do it. Because, if you really look at yourselves, you’ll see that your works do not gain merit before God. They actually

condemn you. All of your thoughts condemn you. And, likewise, my dear Christian friend, all of your activity as a Christian, apart from the work of God within you, is fruitless. And if you will actually look at yourself, you will see that you are a miserable flop and failure.

Now, how are so many people satisfied with their Christian life? Well, for the simple reason that they have erected human standards of what God accepts. They, for example, erect the most obviously foolish standards are outward standards like, don’t smoke. Don’t drink. Don’t go to the movies. Don’t date girls who wear lipstick and so on.

Now, all of these human standards, we’re able to live up to. And so, we live up to them and we say we’re pretty good. We’re getting along in the business of sanctification. But in the meantime, we develop pride and hypocrisy, and all of the lusts of the inner man. And it’s this kind of thing that is so deceptive to most Christians. You see, we cannot do anything within ourselves to commend ourselves to God either for salvation or sanctification. Salvation is a gift. Sanctification is a gift. Salvation is wrought in us by the work of the Holy Spirit, who brings us to Christ and to the faith that saves. Sanctification is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, who produces within us the desires to please the Lord and he gives us the power to “put off” and to “put on” on the basis of what has been accomplished through Jesus Christ’s work as our great representative.

Now, will you turn to Romans chapter 8, and with this we’ll stop. Romans chapter 8 in verse 13. Paul says “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Now, I omitted the important phrase “by the Spirit.” “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

Sanctification, you see, is the process whereby having been created anew in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit quickens our affections, our desires, our attitudes, our emotions, our will, everything within us, he recreates that, renews it, and, by his own power, enables us to respond in faith and to do the commands of the word of God. And, sanctification is a

work of grace. So just as the Holy Spirit brings us to Christ to be saved, so in the Christian life he so renews the new man and brings us through the experiences that he, himself, gives us to the place where we are obedient to the word of God. But it is all his work.

Now, I mentioned the mortification side of it. The quickening side is the other side. Not only do we put off, but we put on, as Colossians goes on to say, these two parts of the work are successive. And they are also contemporaneous, for the new building is constructed while the old is being demolished. And this expresses the twofold aspect of sanctification.

Our time is up. I’m going to stop at this point. Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the work of sanctification, which the Holy Spirit works within us. And we thank Thee that through the years, he brings us to [Inaudible] and brings us through his wonderful grace to faithful obedience to Thy word. We thank Thee that it is not a human work, for we could never accomplish it of ourselves. We thank Thee that it is a work of God and enable us, Lord, to rest in his word.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.