



# FEED MY SHEEP

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## Phase Two of Salvation: Sanctification

**O**ur recent studies have shown how the plan of salvation is laid out for us in type form in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. The Outer Court corresponds to our justification. We presented the basics of justification in two earlier issues of FMS.<sup>1</sup> We are now ready to discuss the doctrine of sanctification.

Sanctification is the second phase of our salvation and it corresponds to the Holy Place in the Tabernacle. Since hundreds of volumes have been written on the doctrine of sanctification, we can only hope to present the essentials along with perhaps some investigation of the various perspectives regarding this fundamental doctrine.

In this issue, we will focus on the essentials of sanctification as we attempt to answer several key questions. Later issues of FMS will investigate various denominational and/or movements' perspectives on such issues as a "second blessing," a "second work of grace," "entire sanctification," "perfectionism," "baptism of/by/in the Holy Ghost," "charismatic gifts," etc. The key questions are:

1. What is sanctification?
2. What is the purpose and goal of sanctification?
3. When does sanctification commence and end?
4. How is one sanctified?
5. Who does the sanctifying?

### What is sanctification?

Sanctification is that work of God's grace in us whereby we are made holy. Grace is generally defined as "unmerited favor." The word sanctification derives from the Latin *sanctus* (holy) and the verb *facere* (to make). What exactly then is meant by holiness? First, notice that God declared to Israel in

**Leviticus 11:44 For I am the YHWH your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves [i.e., "make yourselves holy"], and ye shall be holy** [Notice that state-

ment is a prophecy.]; **for I am holy...**

The apostle Peter reiterated this command and prophecy to Israel in the New Testament (1 Peter 1:16). God Himself is ultimate perfection in all things. Absolute holiness, therefore, is one of His attributes. He declares that we also should be holy because He is holy. Why? Because God wants fellowship with His creation.

But man cannot approach a holy God unless man himself is holy. Thus, to make a renewed fellowship with fallen man possible, God took the initiative and gave man right standing before Him by a judicial declaration of imputed righteousness (our justification). He simultaneously provided for our sanctification. However, neither justification nor sanctification brings about absolute holiness in this life, but by His grace we are granted limited fellowship and union with God.

Holiness encompasses several concepts: separation, consecration, cleanliness and purity. Holiness can be applied to people, animals, plants and inanimate objects (e.g., the holy vessels dedicated for Tabernacle service). The people of Israel were chosen for special service to God. That "chosen-ness" means that they were set apart, separated from all the other families of the earth. God separated them as a nation in the wilderness of Sinai for 40 years. At Mt. Sinai when the law was given through Moses, Israel was dedicated and consecrated for their special service.

All of the facets of holiness were and are defined by God's Law: the commandments, statutes and judgments. Even physical cleanliness was part of holiness. No unclean things were to pollute individual Israelites or the nation collectively. When such pollutions were part of normal human living (e.g., bodily discharges), specific instructions were given for proper disposal and for the cleansing of the body. Cleanliness is part of sanctification. Although

it is not a quote from the Bible, this is probably the origin of the old proverb: “cleanliness is next to Godliness.” In order to approach God, one needs to be holy and holiness includes physical cleanliness.

Without losing sight of the merely physical aspects of purity and cleanliness, by the time of King David and the Psalms, the greater truths of moral and ethical purity and cleanliness were being stressed: do justice, love mercy, have clean hands and hearts, etc. The same concepts of holiness apply to us on an individual level under the New Covenant. For example, in Paul’s letter to the believers in Corinth, he is speaking of sanctification when he says —

**2 Corinthians 6: 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,**

And also —

**1 Thessalonians 4:7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.**

However, in the New Testament, (while not negating or abolishing the physical) the emphasis is almost exclusively on the moral and ethical aspects: separation from the carnality and sin of worldly living; cleanliness and purity in thought, word and deeds; all for greater service to the Lord.

### **What is the purpose and goal of sanctification?**

We have already stated the ultimate goals are complete salvation and eternal union and fellowship with God. This is alluded to in Paul’s prayer for the saints in Thessalonica —

**1 Thessalonians 5:23 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.**

Salvation is not merely about “saving souls.” Complete salvation of spirit, soul and body are the goal. Complete salvation occurs when the Feast of Tabernacles is fulfilled in us personally — at the resurrection to immortality. Paul’s prayer is nothing more nor less than a prayer for fulfillment of the first great commandment: to love Yahweh, our God, with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Union with God is accomplished in measure as we tread the path of salvation. At our justification, we are placed “in Christ,” and while we are genuinely a “new creation,” we are not yet fully and completely made new. The path to perfection is just beginning. It is only imputed at this point, not actual perfection. The path of sanctification involves suffering and chastening. The letter to the Hebrews, chapter 12, verses 9 & 10 makes clear that the

purpose is so “...that *we* might be partakers of his [God’s] **holiness**.”

The more proximate purposes of sanctification include growth, leading to spiritual maturity for increased service to God. Growth necessarily involves hearing and knowledge of the Word of God, along with wisdom and understanding on how to apply it. By our correct application of the principles of the Word in humility and love, we grow towards spiritual maturity.

Knowledge is necessary but insufficient by itself. We all know Christian brethren who display their immaturity by demonstrating how much they know about the Bible, or specifically, about God’s laws — and then use that knowledge to browbeat their brother or sister, to constantly find fault with anyone and everyone.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8 that knowledge without love puffs us up; it makes us arrogant — and obnoxious and unpleasant to be around, I might add. But when the marvelous knowledge of God’s Word is filtered through the fruits of the Spirit in us, then we are truly equipped to serve God by ministering to others.

**2 Timothy 2: 21 If a man therefore purge himself from these [iniquities], he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto [for] every good work.** [That is, for service to others].

### **When does sanctification commence and end?**

Previously in our teachings, for purposes of simplification, we have stated that *first* comes our justification and *then* comes our sanctification, and *finally*, we will receive our glorification — all as seen in the geometry of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. This is true in a chronological and progressive sense. But there is another sense in which all three occur at once. It is often called the definitive sense. And then that is itself also subdivided into an objective and subjective sense.

Here is what this means. It is not hard to understand. In fact, it is the definitive sense of salvation that is presented to most sinners by someone “witnessing” to them. When a sinner comes to Christ, he receives the free gift of salvation. In the definitive sense, he is saved then and there. He is told that he now has his ticket to heaven and he should go out and witness to others so they can get their ticket, too. Even though this person will still die in his mortal body, he is assured he is saved and will inherit an immortal body.

It is this “simple” salvation — definitive salvation — that is taught to most Christians. Many never become aware of the progressive nature of their salvation, and thus we have focused almost exclusively on the progres-

sive (three-phase) path of salvation in these monographs.

In direct answer to the question heading this section, then, we say that technically, from the definitive aspect, our sanctification commences at the moment we are justified (“saved”). However, since sanctification is a life-long process, it is also progressive. From the progressive aspect, the degree of sanctification varies with the believer. Some progress very little.

In a graphical sense, they are Outer Court Christians all their lives. “I believe in Jesus and that’s all that’s important” is their attitude, which in reality is often just a smokescreen for lack of commitment to spiritual growth. Meanwhile, God leads others to progress very rapidly and to achieve (by His grace) a high level of spiritual maturity and service in this life.

As for the second half of the question-heading — when does sanctification end — the answer is very simple: at physical death. There are some who hold to the doctrine of perfectionism, and they might believe their sanctification is complete in this life, perhaps even years before their death, but we do not agree with that viewpoint, and we will examine perfectionism in a subsequent FMS.

What then about “objective” and “subjective?” These terms can be applied to both salvation as a whole or to any of its components: justification, sanctification, glorification. Objective refers to Jesus’ historical acts of death, burial and resurrection. When His sacrifice was completed, salvation was *objectively* accomplished then and there (for the whole world! John 3:16, 17 *et al.*). It applied both backward and forward in time. In the objective sense, salvation for all who ever lived or will live was a “done deal” in 33 A. D.

*Subjective* salvation (or subjective justification, or subjective sanctification, etc.) refers to the point in time when you or I are caused by the Spirit to appropriate by faith the benefits of His work for us. My *objective* salvation occurred in 33 A. D., but my *subjective* justification occurred in October of 1976.

My definitive, objective salvation occurred in 33 A. D. My definitive, subjective salvation occurred in October of 1976. In contrast, my *progressive* salvation has been in process ever since then and will not be completed until I am raised immortal and incorruptible (or translated into such a state — oh, what privilege that would be, praise God!).

A careful reading and comparison of Romans, chapter 6 with chapter 8 reveals that chapter 6 is referring to our definitive salvation, whereas chapter 8 concerns our subjective salvation. ...Which leads us to ask:

### **How is one sanctified?**

The first and all-encompassing answer is that we are sanctified by being in union with Christ. It is our mystical union with Christ which brings about our sanctification, because He is our sanctification.

**1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption**

By that union, we die to sin in ourselves. Paul describes it in Romans 6. (Please read all 23 verses; it is too much to quote, but here are some highlights). In verses 2-5 Paul describes how we are identified and in union with Christ through our baptism. Therefore, Paul says —

**Romans 6: 6 ... henceforth we should not serve sin.**

**11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.**

**14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.**

**15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.**

**17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.**

**18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.**

Secondly, we are sanctified by faith. Due to the great familiarity that Christians have with the rallying cry of the Reformation “Justification by faith alone,” we might be surprised to learn that our sanctification is also by faith. Here in recounting his encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus, Paul is quoting the words of Jesus to Paul himself:

**Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me [Jesus].**

Thirdly, we are sanctified by truth. In his great prayer as our High Priest, Jesus beseeched the Father:

**John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: ...** And immediately He added “thy word is truth.” Therefore we understand that the Holy Scriptures are a means of sanctification for us. If so, then not only are God’s commandments, statutes and judgments (the Law) to be our guide to holiness, but indeed all of God’s word is for our progressive sanctification. (Cf. 2 Timothy 2:15.)

Fourth, we are sanctified by growing up into Christ.

It is a maturation process. In Ephesians, chapter 4, Paul speaks of how God gave the various ministries (v. 11) —

**Ephesians 4:12 For the perfecting [maturing] of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying [building up] of the body of Christ:**

so that we —

**15 ... speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:**

It is self-evident that the corporate body of Christ cannot grow into maturity unless its individual members do. All of these points beg for greater elaboration. We are merely sketching the broadest outline of the essentials of sanctification here. The final key question is:

### **Who does the sanctifying?**

In other words, whose work is it: God's or ours? Our salvation is God's work from beginning to end, including our sanctification — and yet we are not mere passive bystanders or onlookers. It sounds like a paradox, but let us explain. Ephesians 2, verses 8 - 10 summarizes it very well.

**Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:**

Can anything be clearer? Our salvation (including sanctification) is a gift from God by His grace through faith. And so that we do not get the idea that faith is something we can claim the credit for, he adds "and that not of yourselves." Then to totally eliminate any possibility of our even thinking of claiming credit, he adds yet more:

**9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.**

No matter what activities we might do or whatever role we play in the process of salvation, it is absolutely clear that we have no reason to boast for any of our works. All the works that we do, we do them because we were predestinated (foreordained) to do them.

**10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.**

Many often say (and I myself have been guilty of this) that we cooperate in our salvation. However, that word seems to imply that we have some kind of veto power over God's predestinated plan, as though we could independently choose not to be saved. Question: Did Paul make an independent (freewill) choice on the road to Damascus? I don't think so! He was on his way there to round up and kill Christians. Becoming one of them was the furthest thing from his mind.

But when the fullness of time came for Paul to be converted, God did not consult Paul on the matter, but by a rather jolting experience, He caused Paul to be con-

verted. So instead of saying that we cooperate in our sanctification (and salvation), I choose to say that we actively participate in it. Sanctification is not something we do by our own strength and efforts. We are God's workmanship. He does the sanctifying.

God the Father does the sanctifying because Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:17 for the Father to sanctify the disciples by His truth. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews also alludes to the Father's role in sanctification. He speaks of how our earthly fathers discipline us for our own good, and in like manner our heavenly Father (the Father of our spirits) chastens us through trials and suffering "that *we* might be partakers of his holiness." (Heb. 12:10)

Jesus Christ, God the Son, also does the sanctifying:

**Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;**

**26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,**

**27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.**

We had noted earlier that in 1 Cor. 1:30 we learn that Christ is our sanctification.

Finally, God the Holy Spirit also does the sanctifying.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13 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 belief of the truth:**

**1 Peter 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.**

This issue has provided a snapshot, a brief summary of the essential points of our sanctification. More later.

### **Endnote**

1. Issues #11 and #12. They are still available from us.

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