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# Sanctification

## Exodus 29:38-46

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**Introduction** We have been thinking together over the last several weeks on the words of our salvation. These are the key Biblical terms that God uses to describe the fullness of what He has done in our salvation. Each of the words has had its own unique contribution to the whole. Yet, each word has also overlapped with others to some degree.

*REDEMPTION* – God’s buying us out of the slave market of sin by paying the price to purchase us so that we are owned by God.

*PROPITIATION* – God’s satisfying His own wrath against sinners and their sin by pouring it out on Christ on the cross in their place.

*RECONCILIATION* – God’s bringing his enemies back to Himself by restoring the relationship with them and entering into a relationship with them.

*JUSTIFICATION* – God’s declaring the sinner righteous by putting the righteousness of Christ to their account and putting their sin on Jesus’ account.

*REGENERATION* – God’s act through the Word and Holy Spirit to give life to dead depraved sinners so that they are made alive, born from above and come into possession of eternal life, the life of God in their souls.

There are many other words that will be taken up at a later time, words like: forgiveness, adoption, cleansing, and circumcision.

This evening, we want to conclude this edition of our study by taking up the word, sanctification.

## Its Biblical Definition

Let's begin as we have with a working definition.

### Our Initial Problem

As I read the standard texts on this topic, I was amazed by the difficult, convoluted definitions for what appeared to me in the Bible, as a simple, salvation concept. It struck as I read, that part of the reason for this was the attempt in the definitions to include the idea of *progressive sanctification*. In other words, a framework, a theological presupposition, was being read back into the texts.

### Our Working Definition

Sanctification is primarily the definitive work of God at conversion when He moves sinners from the realm of the flesh and places them in the realm of Christ so they are set apart from sin and set apart unto God.

There are two key elements to this definition.

It is a work of God that moves us from, sets us apart from sin. There is a distinctive, movement from something. All of the texts that we will study have this *from* aspect.

It is a work of God that moves us into, sets us apart to God. There is a distinctive movement towards God. Most of the texts that we will study have this *unto* aspect.

David Peterson in his definitive work on sanctification, *Possessed by God* (p.27) says, "Sanctification is commonly regarded as a process of moral and spiritual transformation following conversion. In the New Testament, however, it primarily refers to God's way of taking possession of us in Christ, setting us apart to belong to him and fulfill his purpose for us. Sanctification certainly has present and ongoing effects, but when the verb 'to sanctify' and the noun 'sanctification' are used, the emphasis is regularly on the saving work of God in Christ, applied to believers through the ministry of the Holy Spirit."

My own study of the Bible has led to me to agree with Dr. Peterson that the Bible's emphasis, its primary use, is of a definitive, one-time act of God. I will take some considerable time to talk about this in just a moment. But I want to do that after we have seriously considered the Biblical data.

## Its Biblical Development

I want us to follow the Redemptive-Historical development of the idea of sanctification in the Bible. In other words, how does God, through the story line of the Bible, progressively reveal what sanctification is?

### The Word Group

Linguists recognize that words exist in a domain, a circle of meaning. It is possible for words that are not really synonyms to be in the same circle of meaning and thus fill out the concept behind them. This is true with the word *holy*. This root word in both Hebrew and Greek can be a noun usually translated “holiness”.

It can be an adjective, usually translated “holy” or “consecrated”. It can be a verb, usually translated by “sanctify” or “consecrate”. Then there is another word in the group often translated “set apart.” Only a dozen or so uses of this word fit in this group.



At the center, the hub of the word group, holy means *to be apart from*. Thus God is holy both in that He is separate from all that is made and that He is separate from all that is contrary to His character. Holiness is as close to a meta-attribute as there is. Many if not most of God’s attributes are, at some time in the Bible, modified by the word, holy. This God’s love is holy, His deeds are holy, His

Spirit is holy, His saving arm is holy, and so on.

As the word is used, this core idea of being set apart then is filled out and made richer and deeper by the context in which it is being used. But it does not change its core meaning. This is very important as we think about this subject.

## Sanctification under the Old Covenants

There are so many texts using this term that I can only give you a representative sampling.

### The Canonical Trajectory

The movement through the Old Testament starts with the consecration of all the first born to the Lord. It picks up at Sinai where sanctification is identified with God’s people being set apart and cleansed for God. It moves through Exodus and Leviticus in the establishment of the priesthood, the Tabernacle, and sacrificial systems. The sanctification of the priests, implements of worship and the Tabernacle are accomplished with the symbolic anointing by oil. Then it moves to violations of that sanctified state through the wicked attitudes and actions of God’s people. The failure of the people to maintain in practice their sanctified, consecrated status eventually leads to their condemnation and eventual exile.

## **The Sanctification of God**

In a cluster of texts, God sanctifies Himself in the sight of His people. Here God is calling for the people to recognize and respond to a reality. God is sanctified, consecrated, holy. Man cannot sanctify God. We can acknowledge God's holy, sanctified reality with the resulting change in our attitudes and actions.

In Leviticus 10:3, Moses speaks to Aaron when his sons, Nadab and Abihu are killed for offering strange fire. He says that God will be sanctified among those who are near with the effect that He is glorified before all the people. God must be acknowledged as set apart and holy in order for Him to be seen as glorious, as great, weighty and bright. When God's people acknowledge the holy apartness of God, His being set apart from creation and from sin, then He is sanctified in their eyes.

*God is sanctified in His position and purity, a truth we must affirm.*

## **The Sanctification of the First Born**

God required that the first born be set apart, consecrated to Him. Exodus 13:2, which says, "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine," makes it clear that this act of sanctification makes the first born a unique possession of God. Every household who had children learned through this object lesson, this act of sanctification, that the first born child was God's. (Exodus 13:2; Numbers 3:13; 8:17)

*Christ is God's set apart first born.*

## **The Sanctification of the Levitical System**

Those serving in the Levitical system, the priests, are sanctified, consecrated. They are set apart from ordinary work and set apart to serve and minister in the Tabernacle. Among the priests, the High Priest is set apart from his brother priests and serves to mediate between God and His people. All of the priests then were set apart unto God to serve God alone. In a very real sense, they were God's. (Exodus 19:14,22,23; 28:41; 29:1)

The Tabernacle and all that is used in the Levitical system of worship is also sanctified and consecrated. It is set apart from ordinary use and set apart to be used solely and exclusively for worship. The Tabernacle, the furniture, the utensils, the tools – everything was consecrated to God. But it was consecrated only once – it was sanctified, set apart through the anointing of oil marking it as God's for use in His service alone. (Exodus 29:36-44; 40:9-10; Leviticus 8)

The sacrifices were consecrated, sanctified unto the Lord. There were offerings that were consumed like the burnt offering. There were offerings that were slain for the outpouring of blood. Some sacrifices were waved before the Lord and then partaken of by the people or the priests. In all cases, the sacrifices were examined to see if it met the requirements of being without blemish. Then, they were sanctified and sacrificed. (Exodus 29:26-27;

The Levitical portion was sanctified, set apart for the exclusive use of and by the priests. God here marked both the priests, their position before Him and their portion and provision from Him, as being set apart from common use. Through the declaration of God and the dedication of the portion, they were definitively identified as belonging first to God, and then to the priests. (Leviticus 2:9-16; 7:33-35; 18:8)

*In the Old Covenant system, which points to Christ's work on the cross, each facet had a definitive consecration and on-going cleansing.*

### **The Sanctification of God's People**

God declares that He will sanctify or consecrate His people. As a result of this work by God, they are to respond to it by sanctifying, consecrating themselves to God. What God has done in sanctification is responded to by personal and corporate acts of consecration, setting ourselves apart unto God for holiness. (Leviticus 20:7-8) This act by God and our response to it launches transformation, growth and change. As Exodus 19:10-14 puts it, the people are consecrated and then they are cleanse their clothes.

In Psalm 4:3, God declares that He has set apart the godly for Himself. David affirms or confesses this as building his confidence in prayer, in God's hearing His people when they call.

The Sabbaths, the weekly setting aside of one day unto the Lord and the regular routine of Sabbath feasts and celebrations, were given to Israel so that they might know and remember that God sanctifies them (Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12). One of the functions of worship is highlight the sanctification, the consecration of God's people. We have been set apart from the world and unto God so that we are God's, God's people and possession. These Old Covenant Sabbaths and New Covenant worship ought to motivate holiness in the daily, common walk of life by reminding us that we are God's own possession, that we are a distinct people group, a holy nation, a spiritual temple, a kingdom of priests and therefore ought to live holy lives.

*God's people are sanctified in truth and enabled through worship to live out their status.*

### **The Sanctification of the Temple**

The final great act of consecration, of sanctification is that of setting Solomon's Temple apart for the sacred worship of God. (1 Kings 8:64-9:9; 2 Chronicles 7) The profaning of what was consecrated unto the Lord, the profaning of the Temple and its worship, bring the judgment of God upon Israel. It brings the destruction of Solomon's Temple. God's eventual and final judgment of sin in Christ, leads to the destruction of the rebuilt Temple under Herod.

*God has sanctified the place of His dwelling, the Temple, the Lord Jesus and His people.*

Personal and practical holiness is an integral part of having been consecrated or sanctified. What God has done in setting us apart from sin and unto Himself,

should produce holy living. God commands His people to be holy because He is holy (Leviticus 11:44; 20:7; 1 Peter 1:15-16). But there is a consecration, a sanctification which precedes and is the ground of that holiness. The people must set themselves apart unto God and then be holy. From the Old to the New, God is the active agent in sanctification.

Once again, every act of consecration and sanctification we have seen so far is a one time, definitive act. Yes the tabernacle must be cleaned and maintained. Yes the priests must bathe and wash their robes. Yes, the utensils are to be washed and cleaned. But they are never consecrated again. A principle emerges: once sanctified, often cleansed.

Finally, listen to this magnificent text from Exodus 29:38-46.

*Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day regularly. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. And with the first lamb a tenth seah of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and a fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering. The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it a grain offering and its drink offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the Lord. It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you, **to speak** to you there. There I will meet with the people of Israel, **and it shall be sanctified by my glory**. I will **consecrate the tent** of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will **consecrate to serve me as priests**. I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that **I am the Lord their God, who brought them out** of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. **I am the Lord their God.** [ESV]*

What God did in His sanctification, His consecration in the Old Testament was to meet with, speak to and dwell among the people of God so as to mark them as His own and display His glory.

## Sanctification in the New Covenant

Let us now take up the New Testament and see how the idea is developed.

### **Focused on the Person of Jesus Christ      1 Corinthians 1:30**

Here is the culmination, the high point of sanctification. All that the Old Testament points to highlights the Lord Jesus. He has been made to us our sanctification. Yes, there is a work He has accomplished at the cross. Yes, the Holy Spirit works to apply our sanctification. But our sanctification is a person in whom we are set apart from the old and placed into the realm.

*Christ is our sanctification so that we will glory in Christ.*

### **Based in Jesus' Sanctification**

**John 17:17-19; Hebrews 2:11**

In the Lord's High Priestly prayer, He prays that those who believe will be sanctified in the truth. Jesus lived a perfectly holy human life in the midst of fallenness and sinfulness. He was sanctified unto God and living in the world. His prayer is not that we would be taken out of this world, but that we would not be mastered by evil.

We are set apart unto God, yet still in the world, even sent to the world, as Jesus was. We have been sanctified, set apart from sin, yet we live in the midst of the sinful world. The transforming power of sanctification comes when we believe its truth. We are then sanctified by faith and we are being transformed by faith.

*We are sanctified because Christ has sanctified Himself for us.*

### **Grounded in the Work of the Cross      Hebrews 10:8-14**

Christ's work on the cross, His sacrificial death, is how sanctification is made possible. At the cross of Christ the abolishment of the old and the establishment of the new took place (v.8-9). The perfect faith and obedience of Christ as He did the Father's will in the old realm, brought it to fulfillment. Now, through His death and resurrection, in Him, we have been delivered from the old realm and have been placed into the new, so that we may live holy lives.

*We have been sanctified by the cross.*

### **Identification of God's people**

**Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Corinthians 1:2**

These verses show that we are a sanctified people. The New Testament writers have many ways to refer to believers. One of those ways is to call them, *the sanctified ones*. One of our essential identities as believers is that we have been set apart from sin and set apart unto God; we are sanctified.

*We are the sanctified.*

**Applied by the Holy Spirit****Romans 15:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2**

The Old Testament used the emblem of anointing with oil in the act of consecration or sanctification. This points us to the Holy Spirit who has applied the work, the grace of sanctification to us. Just as we saw in Jesus' prayer, you find in these verses, a close and necessary connection between the Word and the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who sets us apart from the world and places us in Christ.

*The Holy Spirit sanctifies us.*

**Associated with Being Cleansed****1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 5:26**

The priests, when they were consecrated for their work, had to wash and cleanse their garments. The act of sanctification is closely associated with being washed from our sins. This is a wonderful thing. Not only have I been moved from the old and placed into the new, but I have also been washed and cleansed from the filth and clinging stain of the old.

This is a glorious truth. Some of the saved at Corinth had lived depraved and wicked lives, including homosexuality. But they had been sanctified and cleansed. Since they had been sanctified and cleansed, then Paul can say with confidence that that was they way they were.

*Through sanctification I am no longer the sinner I was.*

**Launches a Transforming Process 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:23**

In these verses, our sanctification is not just theoretical, but is also practical. God's will is our holiness, our sanctification. That sanctification works itself out in imperatives, in commands to live pure lives. Just as the purity and holiness of God, His separateness from sin, causes Him not to sin, so our having been made holy is worked out in our lives as God's will for practical transformation and growth in holiness.

So, the Bible's emphasis is on our definitive sanctification at conversion so that we will be being transformed. Please do not hear me to be saying that we believe that Christian's do not sin, that they do not need to grow and change. Do hear me to be saying that that the Bible's words for it are transformation, growth and change. Sanctification is what God has done. Believing it to be true enables the work of being changed and becoming holy.

*Having been sanctified is the grounds and motivation for a holy life.*



## In Confessional Statements

Sanctification is grounded in:

- A deep acknowledgement of position and purity of God.**
- A personal awareness that we are owned by God who is holy.**
- A transforming affirmation of our having been moved from the realm of darkness into the realm of Christ.**

Here is a summary of our principles and lessons.

## Conclusion

- God is sanctified in His position and purity, a truth we must affirm.
- Christ is God's set apart first born.
- In the Old Covenant system, which points to Christ's work on the cross ,each facet had a definitive consecration and on-going cleansing.
- God's people are sanctified in truth and enabled through worship to live out their status.f
- God has sanctified the place of His dwelling, the Temple, the Lord Jesus and His people.
- Christ is our sanctification so that we will glory in Christ.
- We are sanctified because Christ has sanctified Himself for us.
- We have been sanctified by the cross.
- We are the sanctified.
- The Holy Spirit sanctifies us.
- Through sanctification I am no longer the sinner I was.
- Having been sanctified is the grounds and motivation for a holy life.

Brothers and sisters, here is your sanctification:

You have been set apart from sin;  
 You have been set apart to God in Christ;  
 Now, live like it, be holy and be being transformed.