

# **THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION *by Arthur W. Pink***

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Meaning of Sanctification**

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Having dwelt at some length upon the relative or legal change which takes place in the status of God's people at justification, it is fitting that we should now proceed to consider the real and experimental change that takes place in their state, which change is begun at their sanctification and made perfect in glory. Though the justification and the sanctification of the believing sinner may be, and should be contemplated singly and distinctively, yet they are inseparably connected, God never bestowing the one without the other; in fact we have no way or means whatsoever of knowing the former apart from the latter. In seeking to arrive at the meaning of the second, it will therefore be of help to examine its relation to the first. "These individual companions, sanctification and justification, must not be disjoined: under the law the ablutions and oblations went together, the washings and the sacrifices" (T. Manton).

There are two principal effects that sin produces, which cannot be separated: the filthy defilement it causes, the awful guilt it entails. Thus, salvation from sin necessarily requires both a cleansing and a clearing of the one who is to be saved. Again; there are two things absolutely indispensable in order for any creature to dwell with God in Heaven: a valid title to that inheritance, a personal fitness to enjoy such blessedness -- the one is given in justification, the other is commenced in sanctification. The inseparability of the two things are brought out in, "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength" (Isa. 45:24); "but of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30); "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye

are justified" (1 Cor. 6:11); "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

"These blessings walk hand in hand; and never were, never will be, never can be parted. No more than the delicious scent can be separated from the beautiful bloom of the rose or carnation: let the flower be expanded, and the fragrance transpires. ~y if you can separate gravity from the stone or heat from the fire. If these bodies and their essential properties, if these causes and their necessary effects, are indissolubly connected, so are our justification and our sanctification" (James Hervey, 1770).

"Like as Adam alone did personally break the first covenant by the all-ruining offense, yet they to whom his guilt is imputed, do thereupon become inherently sinful, through the corruption of nature conveyed to them from him; so Christ alone did perform the condition of the second covenant, and those to whom His righteousness is imputed, do thereupon become inherently righteous, through inherent grace communicated to them from Him by the Spirit. 'For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ' (Rom. 5:17). How did death reign by Adam's offense? Not only in point of guilt, whereby his posterity were bound over to destruction, but also in point of their being dead to all good, dead in trespasses and sins. Therefore, the receivers of the gift of righteousness must thereby be brought to reign in life, not only legally in justification, but also morally in sanctification" (T. Boston, 1690).

Though absolutely inseparable, yet these two great blessings of Divine grace are quite distinct. In sanctification something is actually imparted to us, in justification it is only imputed. Justification is based entirely upon the work Christ wrought for us, sanctification is principally a work wrought in us. Justification respects its object in a legal sense and terminates in a relative change -- a deliverance from punishment, a right to the reward; sanctification regards its object in a moral sense, and terminates in an experimental change both in character and conduct -- imparting a love for

God, a capacity to worship Him acceptably, and a meetness for Heaven. Justification is by a righteousness without us, sanctification is by a holiness wrought in us. Justification is by Christ as Priest, and has regard to the penalty of sin; sanctification is by Christ as King, and has regard to the dominion of sin: the former cancels its damning power, the latter delivers from its reigning power.

They differ, then, in their order (not of time, but in their nature), justification preceding, sanctification following; the sinner is pardoned and restored to God's favor before the Spirit is given to renew him after His image. They differ in their design: justification removes the obligation unto punishment; sanctification cleanses from pollution. They differ in their form: justification is a judicial act, by which the sinner is pronounced righteous; sanctification is a moral work, by which the sinner is made holy: the one has to do solely with our standing before God, the other chiefly concerns our state. They differ in their cause: the one issuing from the merits of Christ's satisfaction, the other proceeding from the efficacy of the same. They differ in their end: the one bestowing a title to everlasting glory, the other being the highway which conducts us thither.

The word "holiness" and "sanctification" are used in our English Bible to represent one and the same word in the Hebrew and Greek originals, but they are by no means used with a uniform signification, being employed with quite a varied latitude and scope. Hence it is hardly to be wondered at that theologians have framed so many different definitions of its meaning. Among them we may cite the following, each of which, save the last, having an element of truth in them. "Sanctification is Godlikeness, or being renewed after His image." "Holiness is conformity to the law of God, in heart and life." "Sanctification is a freedom from the tyranny of sin, into the liberty of righteousness." "Sanctification is that work of the Spirit whereby we are fitted to be worshipers of God." "Holiness is a process of cleansing from the pollution of sin." "It is a moral renovation of our natures whereby they are

made more and more like Christ." "Sanctification is the total eradication of the carnal nature, so that sinless perfection is attained in this life."

Another class of writers, held in high repute in certain circles, and whose works now have a wide circulation, have formed a faulty, or at least very inadequate definition of the word "sanctify," through limiting themselves to a certain class of passages where the term occurs and making deductions from only one set of facts. For example: not a few have cited verse after verse in the Old Testament where the word "holy" is applied to inanimate objects, like the vessels of the tabernacle, and then have argued that the term itself cannot possess a moral value. But that is false reasoning: it would be like saying that because we read of the "everlasting hills" (Gen. 49:26) and the "everlasting mountains" (Hab. 3:6) that therefore God cannot be "everlasting" -- which is the line of logic (?) employed by many of the Universalists so as to set aside the truth of the everlasting punishment of the wicked.

Words must first be used of material objects before we are ready to employ them in a higher and abstract sense. All our ideas are admitted through the medium of physical senses, and consequently refer in the first place to external objects; but as the intellect develops we apply those names, given to material things, unto those which are immaterial. In the earliest stages of human history, God dealt with His people according to this principle. It is true that God's sanctifying of the Sabbath day teaches us that the first meaning of the word is "to set apart," but to argue from this that the term never has a moral force when it is applied to moral agents is not worthy of being called "reasoning" -- it is a mere begging of the question: as well argue that since in a majority of passages "baptism" has reference to the immersion of a person in water, it can never have a mystical or spiritual force and value -- which is contradicted by Luke 12:50 and 1 Corinthians 12:13.

The outward ceremonies prescribed by God to the Hebrews with regard to their external form of religious service were all designed to teach

corresponding inward duties, and to show the obligation unto moral virtues. But so determined are many of our moderns to empty the word "sanctify" of all moral value, they quote such verses as "for their sakes I sanctify Myself" (John 17:19): and inasmuch as there was no sin in the Lord Jesus from which He needed cleansing, have triumphantly concluded that the thought of moral purification cannot enter into the meaning of the word when it is applied to His people. This also is a serious error -- what the lawyers would call "special pleading": with just as much reason might we insist the word "tempt" can never signify to solicit and incline to evil, because it cannot mean that when used of Christ in Matthew 4:1 and Hebrews 4:15!

The only satisfactory way of ascertaining the meaning or meanings of the word "sanctify" is to carefully examine every passage in which it is found in Holy Writ, studying its setting, weighing any term with which it is contrasted, observing the objects or persons to which it is applied. This calls for much patience and care, yet only thus do we obey that exhortation "prove all things" (1 Thess. 5:21). That this term denotes more than simply "to separate" or "set apart," is clear from Numbers 6:8 where it is said of the Nazarite, "all the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD," for according to some that would merely signify "all the days of his separation he is separated unto the Lord," which would be meaningless tautology. So again, of the Lord Jesus we are told, that He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26), which shows that "holy" means something more than "separation."

That the word "sanctify" (or "holy" -- the same Hebrew or Greek term) is far from being used in an uniform sense is clear from the following passages. In Isaiah 66:17 it is said of certain wicked men, "They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh." In Isaiah 13:3 God said of the Medes, whom He had appointed to overthrow the Babylonian empire, "I have commanded My sanctified ones, I have also called My mighty ones for Mine anger." When applied to God Himself, the term denotes His ineffable majesty, "Thus saith

the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy" (Isa. 57:15 and cf. Psa. 99:3, Hab. 3:3). It also includes the thought of adorning and equipping "thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it" (Exo. 29:36 and cf. 40:11); "anointed him, to sanctify him" (Lev. 8:12 and cf. v. 30), "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use" (2 Tim. 2:21).

That the word "holy" or "sanctify" has in many passages a reference to a moral quality is clear from such verses as the following: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12 -- each of these predicates are moral qualities. Among the identifying marks of a Scriptural bishop, are, that he must be "a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate" (Titus 1:8 -- each of those are moral qualities, and the very connection in which the term "holy" is there found proves conclusively it means much more than an external setting apart. "As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Rom. 6:19): here the word "holiness" is used antithetically to "uncleanness." So again in 1 Corinthians 7:14, "else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" i.e. maritally pure.

That sanctification includes cleansing is clear from many considerations. It may be seen in the types, "Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes" (Exo. 19:10) -- the latter being an emblem of the former. As we have seen in Romans 6:19 and 1 Corinthians 7:14 it is the opposite of "uncleanness." So also in 2 Timothy 2:21 the servant of God is to purge himself from "the vessels to dishonour" (worldly, fleshly, and apostate preachers and churches) if he is to be "sanctified" and meet for the Master's use." In Ephesians 5:26 we are told that Christ gave Himself for the Church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it," and that, in order that He "might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but (in contrast from such blemishes) that it should be holy" (v. 27). "If the

blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh" (Heb. 9:13): what could be plainer! -- ceremonial sanctification under the law was secured by a process of purification or cleansing.

"Purification is the first proper notion of internal real sanctification. To be unclean absolutely, and to be holy, are universally opposed. Not to be purged from sin is an expression of an unholy person, as to be cleansed is of him that is holy. This purification is ascribed unto all the causes and means of sanctification. Not that sanctification consists wholly herein, but firstly and necessarily it is required thereunto: 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you' (Ezek. 36:25). That this sprinkling of clean water upon us is the communication of the Spirit unto us for the end designed, I have been evinced. It hath also been declared wherefore He is called 'water' or compared thereunto. Verse 27 shows expressly that it is the Spirit of God which is intended: 'I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes.' And that which He is thus in the first place promised for, is the cleansing of us from the pollution of sin, which, in order of nature, is proposed unto His enabling us to walk in God's statutes" (John Owen).

To sanctify, then, means in the great majority of instances, to appoint, dedicate or set apart unto God, for a holy and special use. Yet that act of separation is not a bare change of situation, so to speak, but is preceded or accompanied by a work which (ceremonially or experimentally) fits the person for God. Thus the priests in their sanctification (Lev. 8) were sanctified by washing in water (type of regeneration: Titus 3:5), having the blood applied to their persons (type of justification: Rom. 5:9), and being anointed with oil (type of receiving the Holy Spirit: 1 John 2:20, 27). As the term is applied to Christians it is used to designate three things, or three parts of one whole: first, the process of setting them apart unto God or constituting them holy: Hebrews 13:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Second, the state or condition of holy separation into which they are brought: 1

Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 4:24. Third, the personal sanctity or holy living which proceeds from the state: Luke 1:75; 1 Peter 1:15.

To revert again to the Old Testament types -- (which are generally the best interpreters of the doctrinal statements of the New Testament, providing we carefully bear in mind that the antitype is always of a higher order and superior nature to what prefigured it, as the substance must excel the shadow, the inward and spiritual surpassing the merely outward and ceremonial)- "Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn . . . it is Mine" (Exo. 13:2). This comes immediately after the deliverance of the firstborn by the blood of the paschal lamb in the preceding chapter: first justification, and then sanctification as the complementary parts of one whole. "Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy unto Me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be Mine" (Lev. 20:25-26). Here we see there was a separation from all that is unclean, with an unreserved and exclusive devotement to the Lord.

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