

CHAPTER V

THE BIBLICAL PROVISION FOR SANCTIFICATION

The Practical Question: "Is Sanctification An Experience, A Relationship, Or A Person?"

The answer to this practical question is that sanctification is all three, but in the reverse order. Primarily, sanctification finds its source in the Person of Jesus Christ. He has been made our "sanctification" (I Corinthians 1:30).

No Christian can cleanse himself from sin and no Christian can produce holiness entirely by his own effort. Only God through His grace can do that. Many earnest Christians have met with great frustration and disappointment in attempting, through a lack of understanding, to sanctify themselves.

This in no way may be taken as an excuse to live a careless, carnal, indifferent Christian life. The believer is under the solemn obligation to live free from sin by learning how to go to God in confession for cleansing and to live in holiness of life by learning how to make decisions of faith in appropriating the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

When these two interrelated truths are learned and practiced, then He Who is our Sanctification will fulfill His will " ... even your sanctification ... " (I Thessalonians 4:3).

Holiness in daily life is not produced, therefore, by resolutions, self-discipline, or any clenching-of-the-teeth attitude alone. Determination and committal are important but are not enough. Holiness is produced by God through His grace.

Sanctification is therefore the result of a relationship. When Jesus Christ, our Sanctification, is given His rightful place in our life, the effect of His presence and grace will be evident.

Sanctification is not automatic. The daily life of many Christians testifies to that. It is also evident that sanctification is not a once-for-all decision such as salvation. It was shown earlier that the benefits of sanctification must be earned, they are possessed in a variety of degrees, they are transitory benefits, and they also depend on our cooperation with God. To summarize this would indicate that sanctification is progressive. Our growth in grace is a daily matter. The basic issues of the Christian life must be maintained by daily decisions.

What are these daily decisions which we must make? Christianity, we have seen, is demanding. We have been commanded to surrender ourselves, as a person, to God. The issue is not our money, time, pleasures, or even our sins. We are to surrender ourselves as a living sacrifice (Mark 8:34; Romans 12:1). Sanctification does not pertain primarily to our money or sins. It has to do with the person who spends the money and commits the sins. It is the person who is in need.

We are to surrender ourselves to God. Not to the church, nor to Christian service, nor to a certain way of life. We have been commanded to give the control, the authority, the rule of our persons to Another. It is not enough to mouth a few words and to shed a few tears.

This surrender to God is the most important decision in progressive sanctification. Many Christians have done so only superficially. They have made a hasty, shallow, partial surrender and have been deceived as a result. In such cases

a Christian may give up some particular sin or habit, he may yield a certain area of his life to God, may accept some activity of his church as important, or he may resolve to live a better life. All of this is important but irrelevant to the basic issue. The Biblical command is inescapable. There is no substitute for the total surrender of the self.

To be a sinner means to be one's own authority. It means to arrogate to ourselves the position of God. This must be recognized, confessed and reversed. We may no longer play God in our own lives or the lives of others. For sanctification to be meaningful in our life it must grow out of a relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship is rooted and grounded only in a complete and honest surrender.

Once this decision has been correctly made it must be maintained on a daily basis. The relationship must now be translated into a daily practice. To surrender ourselves to God not only means that we give Him the control of our inner life, but that all areas of life must be recognized as belonging to Him. Our surrender to Him must be maintained in our motives, ambitions, pleasures, thoughts, evaluations, beliefs, and activities. This is why daily decisions which acknowledge divine Lordship are so important.

And now it is evident that sanctification is also an experience. One must accept the authority of God as He has spoken in His Word and learn how to put the Bible into practice in daily life. Sanctification must be a part of our total experience.

The relationship we have is depicted in Diagram 9.

The Key To Success: Is A Person - Jesus Christ.

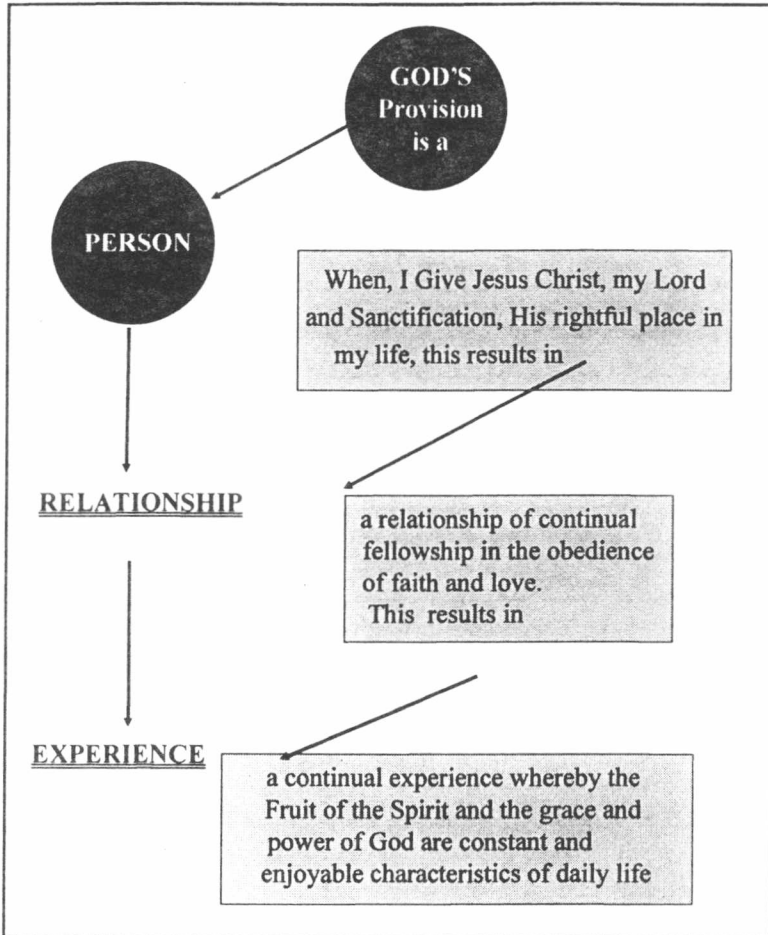


Diagram 9: A Christian has a Relationship with God - Jesus Christ

This does not mean that we become enslaved to rules. The opposite is true. The Christian who has surrendered Himself to God and has learned to practice the principles of sanctification is under servitude only to God. He is free. This, on the other hand, does not make him irresponsible to the Bible, the church, Christian service, and the needs and feelings of others. In all these ways he will learn to express his love to God. Love for God and obedience to the Word of God, as we have seen, are inseparable (John 14:15; I John 5:3).

The Doctrinal Question: "How Is Sanctification Related To The Work Of Christ?"

Every benefit of the gospel, including sanctification, has been provided for the Christian by Jesus Christ through His Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

It is important to understand that, in each of these historical deeds, Christ provided for more than the believer's initial salvation.

In the Crucifixion the believer has been justified, delivered from condemnation, and reconciled to God (Romans 5:6-11). All of this pertains to the gift of salvation. Jesus Christ died as the believer's substitute. He took upon Himself the condemnation and judgment which had been justly passed upon mankind. He died under the wrath of God so that the believer may never experience that wrath. Redemption has been obtained. There is a complete, legal forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 2:13; Hebrews 10:17).

However, Jesus Christ not only died that man may be redeemed. He died that the believer may be able to live a successful Christian life. And this is what the Scriptures call "sanctification."

In His Crucifixion, Jesus Christ has provided a cleansing from the power, influence, and effect of the believer's sinful nature. This nature is called in Scripture the "old man" (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9). In His death, as the believer's representative, Jesus Christ brought the fallen nature of man under the judgment of God (Romans 6:6). A cleansing has therefore been obtained, so that the believer may be free from the sinful nature which he yet

possesses and which is the source of so much of his spiritual defeat (Romans 6:6-22).

In the Scripture some aspects of both salvation and sanctification are also related to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In regard to salvation, the believer's justification (Romans 4:25), spiritual birth (I Peter 1:3), and future resurrection (I Corinthians 15:20-58) are shown to have their source in Christ's Resurrection.

The sanctification benefits of the Resurrection are also clearly stated in the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul spoke of his desire to experience the power of the Resurrection in daily life (Philippians 3:10). And he prayed for the Christians at Ephesus that they would know this same power (Ephesians 1:19, 20). What Paul is referring to is the enablement which Christ provided through His Resurrection so that the believer may live with spiritual virtue, grace, and power in his life. This is described in the Bible as being " ... *alive unto God* ... " (Romans 6:11).

The believer, therefore, need not live with doubt in his life. He may have, through Christ's Resurrection, the virtue of faith. Instead of pessimism and discouragement, he may have hope. And instead of bitterness, estrangement, and selfishness, he may have love (I Corinthians 13; I Thessalonians 1:3). Again the list of practical benefits is endless (Galatians 5:22, 23; Ephesians 4:22-32; Philippians 4:5-8; Colossians 3:10-17).

To the Ascension of Jesus Christ the Bible also attributes some benefits of both salvation and sanctification.

In the area of salvation Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven to be the believer's Forerunner (Hebrews 6:19, 20) and Inter-

cessor (Hebrews 7:25; 8:1; 9:24). The Apostle Paul also indicated that the believer has been given the position of legal authority over Satan by means of Christ's Ascension (Ephesians 1:19-23). He is "seated in the heavenlies" with Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:5, 6).

This position of authority provides daily deliverance from Satan. This deliverance must now be put into practice in the believer's sanctification. He is commanded to guard against allowing Satan some sinful opportunity in his life (Ephesians 4:27) and to deliberately appropriate all the benefits of his relationship with Christ so he may be able to resist the Devil (Ephesians 6:10-18; I Peter 5:8, 9). The Christian has not only been crucified in and with Christ (Galatians 2:20); he has been raised from the grave and has ascended in the Person of His Representative (Ephesians 2:5, 6; Colossians 3:1-3). The spiritual benefits of this position, when practiced by the Christian, are a part of his progressive sanctification.

On the Day of Pentecost the ascended Lord Jesus Christ bestowed the Holy Spirit upon all those who were believers (Acts 2:33). In a similar way to the other three deeds of atonement, the believer has a two-fold relationship to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit Who convicts the non-Christian of his sinful and lost condition (John 16:7-11). He brings the convicted person into the benefits of the New Birth through the gift of repentance and faith (John 3:3-5; II Thessalonians 2:13; I Peter 1:2). The Holy Spirit protects and preserves the new believer as His indwelling 'seal" (II Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13, 14; 4:30) and makes him a member of the "body of Christ" (Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 12:13). The believer becomes the "temple" of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 3:16, 17 6:19).

As related to sanctification the Holy Spirit resides in the believer to be his "Comforter" (Helper) in a continual anointing (John 14:16,17 26; 15:26; 16:13, 14). While Jesus Christ is the believer's Sanctification it is the Holy Spirit Who is His Sanctifier. It is He Who leads the believer in his progressive freedom from the sinfulness of his fallen nature (Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:16-18) through an understanding of the Scripture and its daily practice in obedience to God (I Peter 1:22). The Holy Spirit witnesses to the believer concerning the authenticity of the Word of God and assures him on that basis of his relationship to God (Romans 8:15,16; Galatians 4:5, 6; I John 5:9-13). He undergirds the Christian in his prayer life (Romans 8:26, 27) and gives him spiritual gifts so that he might adequately serve God (Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:1-11; Ephesians 4:7-16).

The Christian is commanded not to grieve or quench the Holy Spirit by resisting His leading (Ephesians 4:30; I Thessalonians 5:19) but to be constantly filled with the Spirit through daily obedience (Ephesians 5:18).

If you have never asked the Holy Spirit to fill you, please consider how important it is to do that. In fact, it is so important that we are commanded to do so, as the above reference testifies. What a wonderful provision our Father has for us -- to be the home of the third person of the Trinity -- and to receive His enablement to understand the Bible, to live the Christian life, and to serve Him with fruitfulness in daily life.

In summary, then, Jesus Christ, through His atonement, has made an adequate spiritual provision for every area of the believer's daily life. He has provided a daily cleansing through His Crucifixion, a daily enablement through His Resurrection, a daily deliverance through His Ascension, and a daily anointing through Pentecost. It is very important for the Christian to understand this.

The Christian who lives and prays in ambiguity is doomed to failure and disappointment in daily life.

Diagram 10, now, depicts the relationship of salvation and sanctification to the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension and to Pentecost.

The Key To Success: Is To Understand That Sanctification Is Rooted In The Deeds Of God In History As Well As Salvation.

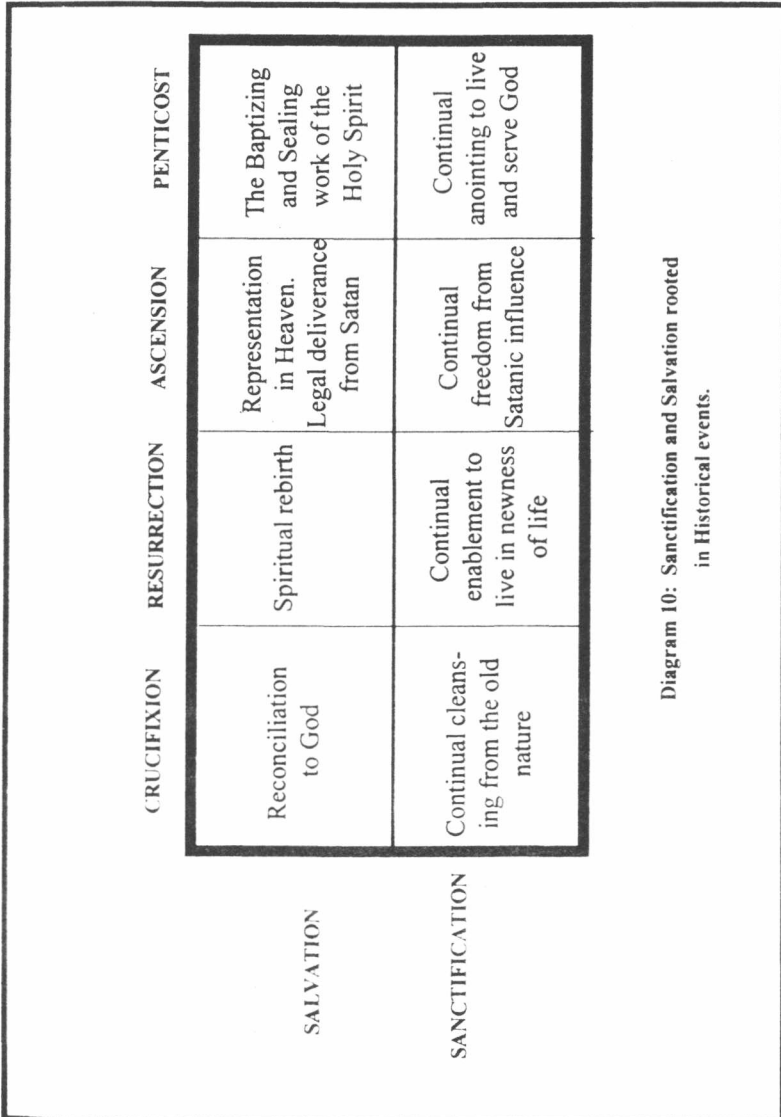


Diagram 10: Sanctification and Salvation rooted in Historical events.