

SALVATION AND THE PROCESS OF SANCTIFICATION

*Adapted from Foundations of Pentecostal Theology by Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave.
Chapter Five: The Doctrine of Salvation / Soteriology*

The primary meaning of sanctification is the process of dedicating, consecrating, or setting apart someone or something for a specific and holy purpose.

The secondary meaning of sanctification is the progressive process of cleansing and purging someone from moral defilement. Unlike justification, which is a one-time experience, sanctification is both an event and a process. The cleansing process of sanctification has three distinct phases or aspects.

Aspects of sanctification

1. Positional sanctification

The moment people are born again, they are sanctified. Paul wrote, “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11; see also 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 10:10; 13:12).

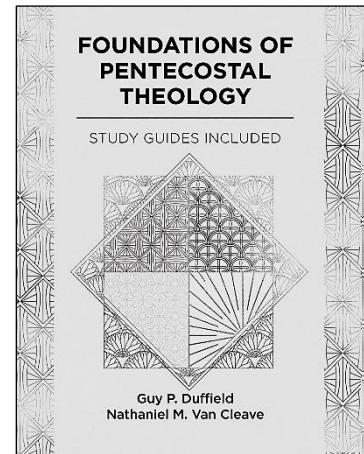
2. Practical sanctification

Paul spoke of the Christians at Thessalonica as being “sanctified” (2 Thessalonians 2:13), but he also prayed for their sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23). He recognized that they were sanctified positionally but needed holiness to become progressively part of their daily Christian living. In this manner, sanctification is a continuing process throughout a Christian’s lifetime.

It is important to note that the Bible does not say that in this life Christians will reach a place where they no longer sin. In fact, John wrote, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).

3. Complete and final sanctification

The complete expressed sanctification of all believers (is the) resurrection of all who believe. “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20-21). Resurrected believers will experience sinless perfection: “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).



Means of sanctification

As with many other aspects of the Christian experience, there is both a divine and human side to the means of sanctification.

The Divine side

1. The Father

Jesus prayed to the Father concerning His disciples: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17). Paul acknowledged the sanctifying work of the Father when he prayed, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). The perfection of the believer is the work of the Father: "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

2. The Son

Jesus has sanctified believers through the sacrifice of His own body and by the shedding of His own precious blood (Hebrews 10:10; 13:12). "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

3. The Holy Spirit

The indwelling power and anointing of the Holy Spirit provides believers victory over the sins of the flesh. "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13). In Galatians 5, Paul contrasted the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. The works of the flesh are evident, such as "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like..." (Galatians 5:19-21). In contrast, "...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). Those who live according to the Spirit produce good fruit. When believers receive and walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, they receive the ability to overcome "the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). Through yielding to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, believers "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory..." (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The human side

1. By walking in faith

By faith in Jesus Christ, believers are sanctified by His blood (Hebrews 10:10; 13:12).

2. By obeying God's Word

The Word of God is powerful and cleansing when it is received, believed, and obeyed by believers (John 15:3; 17:17; Ephesians 5:26; 1 John 1:7).

3. By yielding to the Holy Spirit

As believers submit to the work of the Holy Spirit, they are given the desire and power to obey God's word (John 16:13).

4. By intentional personal commitment

Believers experience the sanctifying work of God when they separate themselves from worldly pursuits and commit to pursuing God's perfect will for their lives. In this deep, personal commitment, believers acknowledge that Jesus is not only their Savior but also their Lord. When believers surrender to the rule of God and daily seek His holiness, they grow in the fruit of practical sanctification (Romans 6:13, 19; 12:1-2).

*Philippians 1:6 ...being confident of this very thing,
that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it
until the day of Jesus Christ;...*