

# SANCTIFICATION



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The root idea of this word is setting apart from what is common and unclean, and all persons and things thus separated are termed 'holy.' In the Old Testament sanctification is more frequently spoken of in regard to things, while in the New it is, with but few exceptions, treated of in connection with persons. Man in his morally fallen state is guilty and unclean; these are the two main characteristics of his condition as responsible to God.

How is this twofold condition met? God justifies the guilty and sanctifies the unclean. Sanctification in its source is traced to the will of God, as indeed is every Christian blessing ( I Thess. 4. 3; Heb. 10. 10); it is accomplished through the "one offering" -its ground {Heb.10.14; 10.10); by the Spirit of God the agent (I Cor. 6. 11; I Peter 1. 2; 2 Thess. 2. 13); the Word-the instrumental means (John 17.17); then Christ on high-the object presented to the soul (2 Cor. 3. 18) .

It is **Absolute, Progressive, and Positional.**

**Absolute.** The instant a person utters the new-born cry "Abba, Father," one can say he is set apart, or sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. I. 2), perfectly and for ever, to God; to Christ also, and to His obedience on earth and moral likeness in glory. In this first blessed aspect of sanctification there can be no improvement or progress. It is an accomplished act by the Spirit of God, and is not repeated. "Ye are sanctified" (1 Cor. 6. 11; Acts 26. 18; Heb. 10. 14).

**Progressive.** Thus not only are we sanctified, but we are being sanctified; this latter is the carrying out in daily life what we are as true before God. The former is true position, the latter real practice. Progressive sanctification, with which most Christians are familiar, is taught in John 17. 17; 1 Thessalonians 5. 23; the measure of this is Christ on high (John 17. 19), and is effected, not by dwelling on personal experience, but by the application of the truth, i.e., that contained in both Testaments, and by the unfolding of Christ to the soul.

**Positional sanctification** is taught in Hebrews 10. 29 and 13. 12; that is, all who take the ground of Christianity are set apart by the blood of Christ from the rest of the world. It is an outward, external position in this world. Christendom is on that ground and responsibility before God, in contrast to Judaism and Paganism. It is no question whatever of the state of the soul before God, or of a purged conscience, or of eternal life. It is simply Christian profession, which may or may not be real that is regarded in these verses. In this outward or external thought of sanctification persons (1 Cor. 7. 14) and things (1 Tim. 4. 4, 5) are embraced. Whoever or whatever is separated from the mass to God, brought into external privilege, is sanctified. It is not internal, but an external position in this world

towards God. It is interesting to note that both sanctification and cleansing are ascribed to the Word (Eph. 5. 26). The former is setting apart to Christ on high, the latter is the removal of defilement.

Sanctification and justification when treated of in systematic theology ever reverse the scriptural order, making justification precede sanctification. In I Corinthians 6. 11 and I Peter I. 2 sanctification precedes justification.