

“Practical Theology – Sanctification” (6.11.17)

I like to think of **our faith development plan—process of becoming like Jesus as being almost being like a BALLOON.**

There are **TWO WAYS** to keep a balloon afloat.

1. If you **fill a balloon with your own breath**, the only way to keep it in the air is to continually smack it upward. *That's how religion keeps you motivated:* it repeatedly "hits" you. "Stop doing this!" "Get busy doing that!" "Be more generous!" "Volunteer more hours!" "Attend this study!" "Listen to this podcast!" Filling your balloon with your breath/smacking it up in the air is tiring/**fruit of going thru religious motions** = unhealthy pressure & guilt—literally exhausting.

OR

2. **But there's** another way to keep the balloon afloat, fill your balloon w-helium, then it floats on its own, no smacking required. It's much easier with helium and a reminder of how much we need the Holy Spirit to keep us spiritual afloat = **sanctification process—becoming like Christ.**

Today, we are going to think thru a biblical lens concerning Salvation:

Last week = **Justification**

This week = **Sanctification**

**Last weekend God's word reinforced:**

- 1) Salvation is God's free gift to us **PERIOD**. We are justified only by the blood of Jesus; we can't personally do anything to earn this privilege ~ only accept it!

- 2) **EMPHASIZE** ~ Justification is what God does **FOR US!**

✚ "...a one-time event; *Justification*" happens instantaneously the moment you confess your sins & ask Jesus to be the Lord & Savior! (**Romans 10: 9**)

- 3) **EMPHASIZE** ~ Sanctification is what God does **IN US!**

✚ *Sanctification* is the continual work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer to conform us into Christ's likeness. (*in court of law it'd be concrete proof*).

(*Sanctification is not*) a common term (seldom used in everyday conversation = it is somewhat irrelevant—it comes from two Latin words:

- *Sanctus* which means holy,
- AND
- *Ficare* which means make.

✚ So to sanctify means to make holy. But, of course, **the word "holy" isn't much more relevant today than sanctification**—with all the words holy now enhances the Cubs Harry Carey "**holy cow**" and Batman & Robins' "**holy bat-trap**" we've just about lost the meaning of one of the most critical words in the Bible.

✚ *As irrelevant as the word/term sanctification may be where you work & in social life, when you see it in action there's no denying its game-changing effects.*

- **Suppose you've always concealed private sources of income** when filling out your tax returns. Then you place your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and you begin to tell the truth on your tax returns—*that's sanctification*.
- **Suppose you've always argued with your spouse**, and then of day the Word of God pricks your conscience and you begin to nit pick less and look for ways to show respect and support them—*that's sanctification*.
- **Suppose you're living with your boy-girlfriend**, and then one day you meet Jesus Christ and get the courage to move out—*that's sanctification*.

When you see someone who has been **SANCTIFIED**—**transformed from the inside out**, you'll recognize it—hard to deny someone who's made a positive change!

✚ There are **living images of sanctification** in our current world. Malcolm Muggeridge  
takes Mother Teresa as an example:

- ✓ “[I] think a person like her comes into the world, not by chance, and radiates the Christian faith at its most simple, most pure, most effective level. She takes any baby that is given to her and looks after it. *She brings in dying people from the streets who might live for only a quarter of an hour.* When they leave this life

with a loving Christian face beside them instead of one of rejection, she would say that it is well worth it. *She is diametrically opposed to the spirit of the age*— abortion is a horror to her, and all the attitude of mind associated with it.”  
(*Eternity*, April 1984, p. 27)

## I. Biblically, here's the truth about Sanctification

A. 1<sup>st</sup> Sanctification is a joint project *between us* and God.

✚ ® Philippians 2: 12-13 or p. 900

✓ “*Work hard to show the results of your salvation,*”  
= which means **YOUR ROLE** is important.

**BUT**

✓ Paul goes on to say, “*For it is God who is at work in you.*”  
**YOU ARE NOT** doing this project on your own.

✚ Sanctification is empowered by God; *it's impossible without him.*

✓ Paul uses the phrase to refer to a **HUMBLE attitude of DEPENDENCE**. *He's suggesting we have a role to play,* but we **DO NOT CONTROL IT!**

✓ *Some things we can control.* We can make phone calls, drive a car, watch a ballgame. *But some things we can do nothing about.* Like the weather – only God can change the weather.

✓ **But there is a third category. Think about going to sleep. You can't make yourself go to sleep the way you can make a phone call. But you can get in a dark room, lie down on a soft mattress, turn out the lights, & sleep will come.**

✓ **[INSERT]** Balloon analogy

✚ When talking about transformation, Paul generally uses certain grammatical form.

✚ ® Romans 12: 1-2 or p. 866

- ✓ When talking about transformation, Paul often uses a passive imperative.
- ✓ Paul doesn't say, "TRANSFORM yourself."
- ✓ Instead, he uses a passive imperative containing command that generally starts with "Let. . ."
- ✓ It is an imperative, *but he does not say*, "Transform yourself." Instead he says, "Let God transform you."
- ✓ Something ONLY GOD can do for you = no religious motions can do it.
- ✓ "Let God transform you."

B. 2<sup>nd</sup> Sanctification is God's will.

✚ ® | Thessalonians 4: 3 or p. 906

AND

✚ "For this is the will of God, *even your sanctification*, that ye abstain from fornication" (ASV) translates '*Holiness*' (hagios) as '*Sanctification*'

1) The truth is everybody is in the process of being formed spiritually.

- The question is not if you're going to be formed spiritually; the question is by whom will you be formed?
- If you're not formed by God, then you have a spiritual adversary – the Evil One – who will be happy to do the task.

2) We should not be a people with a peacetime mentality. Satan is fighting with his forces to resist the Gospel and expand his own deadly kingdom.

- ✓ The way to gain victory over evil in the power of Christ is to maintain a wartime mentality.
- ✓ A sanctified person will be prepared for every fiery dart the enemy fires at you.

✚ ® | Hebrews 12: 12-14 or p. 928

- 3) **Are you pursuing your Faith Development with full resolve?** People will pursue other things with full devotion, but not sanctification.

C. **3<sup>rd</sup> Sanctification is a painstaking process not an event.**

✚ **SANCTIFICATION = LIFE-LONG PROCESS OF BECOMING LIKE JESUS =** *We believe the Bible teaches that once a person has received God's grace by putting faith in Christ, **the life-long process of sanctification begins,** with the individual repenting of their sins and being baptized by immersion.*

- ✓ Think of a time when you took a long vacation with kids. What's the first question they ask? "**Are we there yet?**" Some people impatiently wait for an elevator, pressing the button repeatedly. Somehow they believe the elevator is going to say to itself, "*That guy on the fourth floor is in a big hurry. I better skip all the other floors and head right down there for him.*"
- ✓ **We want it to happen now = Sanctification does happen that way.**

✚ **® Philippians 3: 12-21**

- ✓ It's guaranteed you'll slip; the danger is when you slip you'll get discouraged and give up. Paul urges us to keep going and to forget what is behind. Sanctification is a process. So don't give up.

✚ **It was a process for John Newton—do you remember him?** John Newton was a slave trader. He bought and sold thousands of men, women and children from Africa into slavery. *In 1748 he was on a slave ship,* and a storm rolled in and it threatened to sink the ship. He fell to his knees on the ship and he prayed out to God for mercy. **It was that night, John Newton says, that he turned his life over to Christ.** But here is the thing. Here is the thing: **He didn't immediately stop slave trading. For awhile, he kept trading slaves.** But transforming grace was at work in his life. He repented and he turned away from this horrible sin, and he became an abolitionist, a preacher, a hymn writer. In 1772 he wrote a hymn that you know very well, "Amazing Grace." It became probably the most popular song in all of history. The message was simply that grace has the power to transform. It has the power to right your wrongs. It even has the

power to take a man who once traded slaves and turn him into a man who fought for their freedom. Grace transforms.

II. The goal of sanctification = **in a single word—is love.**

A. There is a huge difference between being sanctified and being sanctimonious. The **goal of sanctification** is to become loving persons.

B. ® Titus 2: 11-114 or p. 918

C. The goal of sanctification = **in a single word—is love**

*“I think a person like her comes into the world, not by chance, and radiates the Christian faith at its most simple, most pure, most effective level.”*

✚ Which reminds me of one of my favorite = I don't know the name of the lady, but I do know her story. She was being pushed along by an angry mob, and the mob was made up of the spiritual leaders of Jesus' day. This lady covered herself in nothing but a bed sheet. She had yanked it off the bed as she was pulled out of the house. She was thrown in the dirt at Jesus' feet. One of the spiritual leaders in the mob says to Jesus, “We've caught this woman. We've caught her in the act of adultery. The law says we stone her. What do you say? She is guilty.” Jesus kneels down and He starts to write something in the dirt with His finger. We don't know what it was. The spiritual leaders in the mob grow impatient. “The law says we stone her! Jesus, we caught her in the act. We caught her.” He continues to write in the dirt. Eventually, He straightens up. “Well,” He says, “if any of you is without sin, you can cast the first stone.” He bends back down and begins to write again. Some commentators speculate that He was writing the sins of the accusers in the dirt. We don't know. Whatever it was, it got their attention, because one-by-one they dropped their rocks and they walked away until it was just Jesus with this woman. For the first time she looks up into His eyes and for the first time that day she sees eyes that don't condemn. And Jesus speaks to her and He says, “Woman, where are your accusers? Is there anyone left to condemn you?” She must have thought, “There is still one. There is still one who could condemn me.” And then Jesus says, “Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin. You're forgiven. Now go and change your life.”

- ✓ **If there were a spiritual growth chart, what would it say about you?** If you were to lay that spiritual growth chart against your chart from last year or five years ago, how would things be different? If there was a category for patience, how would you have changed? If there was a category of joy and peace and kindness, generosity, gentleness, self-control, compassion; if there was a category for you as a father, a husband, a mother, as a wife, what would it say about you? You see, there should be this transformation that is taking place. Let's just be clear: God is not wanting to just modify your morals or simply adjust your attitude. He doesn't want to just polish up your personality or fine tune your manners. He doesn't look to just make a few tweaks in your life when you walk in that door. He wants total transformation.
  
- ✓ **[INSERT]** Balloon analogy
  
- ✓ I think the bow that makes the analogy most complete is the fact that the air balloon is filled with our own air = anything we try to do ourselves, on our own, in addition to being justified, all the trying we do. guilt and pressure we put on ourselves. Seeing the helium = Holy Spirit!
  
- ✓ Balloon float peacefully and easily up in the air is a great and stark contrast. Maybe the incomplete part could be filled in by knowing how to fill your balloon with the Holy Spirit?