

Sanctification Vision / COB / 05.25.14

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: title]** Why did God choose to save you?
- Can people really change? Do we want to change? What kind of change does God want from us? What kind of lives does God want from us? If we all change to become like Christ, will we lose our uniqueness, our identity? Will we have to give up all our fun?
 - Spiritual growth is a funny phrase, isn't it? Do you end up with a long soul, or a tall spirit? What exactly grows and how can you tell? If spiritual growth is real, how does it work? Do we have to do something or is this all by grace? Why for many believers is the evidence of spiritual growth so up and down, or even all down?
 - Does God have a purpose for you? These are the types of questions we hope to answer in the next few weeks.

The Purpose of Sanctification

- † **[Slide 2: Genesis 1]** From the very beginning, God had a goal to develop a people to represent him.
- God created the first people to reflect his character and rule the Earth in his name. Most of you have seen the three circles model before. What this shows is that God's original plan was for God to rule over the human family, with Adam or some other man at the head, and the human family would reflect God's character and represent God – or rule in God's name – over the rest of creation.
 - **[Slide 3: Genesis 12]** Down the road a bit, God decided people in general had turned away from him, so he chose the family of Abraham and Sarah to become the nation of Israel who would be his people. The second set of circles show that God would rule over Israel, with a patriarch or king at the head, and Israel would reflect God's character and represent God to the rest of the nations, and when Christ returns as king, to rule the rest of the nations in God's name.
 - **[Slide 4: 1 Peter]** As we have been learning in the gospel of John, Israel rejected Jesus as God the Father's Messiah-savior. So God created the church to be his people. For this time period between Christ's two advents [his two comings], God chose us to be his church to reflect his character and represent him to all other people. Here we have a third set of circles showing God rules over the church, with Christ at the head, and the church reflects God's character and represents God to the rest of the world.
 - **[Slide 5: 3 models]** When Jesus returns as the king of Israel, to rule over the Earth, he will fulfill God the Father's plans and all three of these models. In the meantime, we are in the third stage, and that means God has intentions for us as his representatives.
- † **[Slide 6: Romans 8]** To be "sanctified" is to be separated out for God. If you have become a Christian, then it has always been God's plan that you would be separated out of the world to become useful for God, as one of God's people in the church, so you could reflect his character and represent him well.

- Romans 8.29 says that God predestined you to become conformed to the image of Christ. Since Christ as the Son of God is the complete image of God the Father, in our process of becoming like Christ, we will become the image of God we were intended to be from the start.
- So God's goal remains what it was at the start of creation: to have people as his image bearers, reflecting his character and representing him here on Earth. We should always keep those two related goals in mind: reflect God's character and represent God here on Earth.

† **[Slide 7: Ephesians 2]** One reason God saved us was so we could be sanctified for God's purposes.

- Ephesians 2.10 [NET]: "For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand so we may do them."
- God created us and then recreated us in Christ, saved us, so we can do the good works, the ministry, he has prepared for us! God has ministry work prepared for you!
- **[Slide 8: Titus 2]** Titus 2.11-14 [NET]: "For the grace of God ... trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age... [Christ] gave himself for us to set us free from every kind of lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are truly his, who are eager to do good."
- So Christ died for us, to set us free from the power of sin and evil, so as to purify for himself a people who are eager to represent him and God the Father by doing good.
- Christ trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires, to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, so we can reflect his character and represent him well.
- And we can see that there are divine elements in that Christ died for us and he purifies us by the Spirit, while there also is a human element in that he trains us to live like himself.

† **[Slide 9: Matthew]** Many of you met my godson, Matthew, last week, along with his parents. When Ray and Jessica adopted Matthew, do you think it was their plan to allow Matthew to grow up guided by his flesh and the world with its evil influences, so he would be powerless, lazy, stuck in personal bad habits and traits he couldn't break, or worse?

- No! Of course not! They have great hopes for Matthew, and so they will do everything in their power to raise him up to know and walk with Jesus, to help him develop into a godly man, a Christ-like man, who will have victory over life's challenges and victory over personal battles, and work hard to reflect God's character and represent God well.
- So it is with God the Father who adopted you and saved you for his own good purposes! He wants to raise you up to know and walk with Jesus, to help you develop into a godly person, a Christ-like person, who will have victory over life's challenges and victory over personal battles, and work hard to reflect God's character and represent God well.

How Sanctification Begins

† **[Slide 10: Hebrews 10]** Let's start with our moment of salvation. We have been learning about salvation as we have studied the gospel of John. We know that Jesus said that when we are saved, we are born again spiritually. One important aspect of being born again is that in that moment, God officially separates us out from the world and from sin to be instead a part of his people. This is a declaration by God and a legal adjustment that is by grace, totally independent of our behavior.

- Hebrews 10.10 says, [NET]: “By his [God’s] will we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”
 - To be holy is to be sanctified. But we know that we are not totally pure and godly and ready to always be God’s man or woman right at birth or at rebirth, right? That’s not what this verse is discussing. Christ has made us holy in God’s sight. God has declared us righteous in his sight because of our faith in Christ paying the penalty for our sins. We call that “justification” in religious terms.
 - **[Slide 11: Romans 3]** Romans 3.23-24 [NASB]: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...”
 - Another way of looking at it is that we were transformed in spiritual or legal position from a slave of sin to a slave of righteousness; we were united with Christ, being allotted his righteousness.
 - **[Slide 12: Romans 6]** Romans 6.22 [NASB]: “But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”
 - So we call this “positional sanctification”: in legal position, we have moved from belonging to sin and evil to belonging to God.
- † Because of our positional sanctification, we are called “saints.” Did you know that? Most of us grow up with the Roman Catholic concept of a saint being a super-good person; we say, “Oh, my grandmother was so gentle and kind, everyone said she was a saint.”
- “Saint” means “holy one,” but every believer in this room is a saint, according to the Bible, which refers to believers as saints over sixty times. Even the Corinthians, who were weak in their faith and wayward in their walk, were called saints [1 Corinthians 1.2], because they had positional sanctification as believers.
 - **[Slide 13: 1 Corinthians 6]** Let’s see what Paul said to them in 1 Corinthians 6.11 [NET]: “Some of you once lived this [evil] way. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”
- † **[Slide 14: William]** Now this will bridge us to the next thought. Let’s take our most recent church baby, William, as an example. When William was born, he was set apart from the world to be a Baillie, right? That is the name given to him, and that is the family with whom he went home. But does he know how to be a Baillie yet? Does he know how to fix an engine or install a water system? No, not yet. Peter and Shannon will train him and teach him, so he grows into his capabilities and thus grows into his responsibilities.
- The same is true for new believers, right? A brand new believer has positional sanctification – s/he is separated out for God as an adopted member of God’s family. But is this person able to reflect God’s character or represent God in all life situations yet? No. But God will train and teach every believer, so that we grow into our capabilities and thus into our responsibilities.
- † **[Slide 15: Titus 3]** This verse from 1 Corinthians shows us that in legal or positional terms, when we are born again, we become God’s people, we experience positional sanctification. But it also says we are washed. When we are born again, we also experience the start of moral change in us, because we are washed in regeneration and renewal.

- Titus 3.5-6 [NET]: “He saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us in full measure through Jesus Christ our Savior.”
 - So here again, we see that we are washed and renewed by the Holy Spirit when we are saved. This is the awakening of our spirit, our soul, to new life and new possibilities of goodness and purity.
 - **[Slide 16: Ephesians 2]** Ephesians 2.1-5 [NET]: “And although you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you formerly lived according to this world's present path, according to the ruler of the kingdom of the air [Satan], the ruler of the spirit that is now energizing the sons of disobedience, among whom all of us also formerly lived out our lives in the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest... But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even though we were dead in transgressions, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you are saved!”
 - We go from spiritual death to spiritual life, from once under the influence of Satan to now being alive with Christ. Thus, we begin the process of spiritual growth with a renewed nature that seeks after God.
- † **[Slide 17: sanctification]** This begins the process of real change in our character and thus our lifestyle. Now what we can hope for is that God will continue to sanctify us in an experiential way; that is, that God will actually change us, transform us, to be his people in experience, just as we already are in legal position. We call this transformation process “progressive sanctification,” because it progresses over our lifetime.
- The idea is that we can learn to live up to the position we have as brothers and sisters of Christ, as people who bear God’s image and were saved to be his people.
 - **[Slide 18: 1 Thessalonians 5]** Paul expressed this wish in his letter to the Thessalonians: [1 Thessalonians 5.23 NET]: “Now may the God of peace himself make you completely holy and may your spirit and soul and body be kept entirely blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - This process of transformation will be unique for each believer, as the Spirit works at different rates and in different orders for each of us, but the process will continue throughout the rest of our lives, to bring real transformation to us.
- † Baby William and Baby Matthew have been granted physical life, they are alive! But that is just the beginning of their physical, emotional, intellectual growth process.
- The same is true when they and you become spiritually alive in Christ! You are alive, right now! And you are separated out from the world to belong to God in Christ! But that is just the start of your spiritual growth process.
 - God has a plan for you, to make you into what he already has declared you to be: his person, who will reflect his character and represent him to others here on Earth.

Vision Casting

- † **[Slide 19: Benefits 1]** So we see that we can change with God's help. So the next question is, "Why should we want this?"
- First, be all you can be! God created you with a specific vision in mind. Because of sin, struggles in life, neglect of your relationship with God, you have not yet grown into the person God designed you to be! That means you have not reached your full potential for fulfillment, happiness, empowerment, emotional strength and stability, and more. The blessing awaits you, so grow into it!
 - **[Slide 20: Benefits 2]** Second, live life to the fullest! If you think about it, people are the only thing in creation that struggle to be what they were created to be. A tree knows how to be a tree; a cat knows how to be a cat, but people have forgotten how to be people. God created a way of life that is optimal, best, for people! You could learn to live in a way that would be more of a blessing to others while still being more of a blessing to yourself!
 - **[Slide 21: Benefits 3]** Third, be God's man or woman! God created you and saved you for a purpose. He chose you, saved you, redeemed you, all so he could grow you into someone who could reflect his character and represent him to others, so he could grow you into someone who could minister in his name and bring glory to his name.
- † Next week, we'll see what are God's specific goals are for our sanctification, our transformation. But even with this taste of what's to come, we should be eager, excited to experience the growth God wants to bring us. It will lead us closer to him and empower us to have joy and peace and love for others.
- † **[Slide 22: 1 Corinthians 3]** 1 Corinthians 3.1-3 [NET]: "So, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but instead as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready. In fact, you are still not ready, for you are still influenced by the flesh. For since there is still jealousy and dissension among you, are you not influenced by the flesh and behaving like unregenerate people?"
- We all start as infants, but you don't want to stay there, do you? Every stage of life has its glories, but we don't want to remain as infants forever, nor as toddlers, nor as school-age children, not even as teenagers or young adults. We should desire to grow, to gain experiences, to gain knowledge and wisdom, to become mature and strong women and men.
 - And we will not be content to always be fed milk, will we? Even if we love milk, we will want solid food too! When Paul says milk here, don't be picturing ice cream, ok? Do you want to be confused about God and spiritual things or grow in understanding? Do you want to be weak and insecure or grow to be strong and confident?
- † **[Slide 23: 1 Peter 2]** 1 Peter 2.2-3 [NIV]: "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."
- So if you are young in faith, then seek out nourishment from God through prayer, Bible study, going to one of our small groups, attending church and the development class on Sundays.
- † **[Slide 24: Hebrews 5]** But if you want to grow beyond infancy, you have to yearn for more than just the basics...

- Hebrews 5.11-14 [NIV]: “We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”
 - Just like physical or intellectual growth, you have to progress from what is basic and simple to the deeper things. That is why I say it is ok if you don't understand everything I say in a sermon, so long as you get something. God will use that something to grow you. But we should always desire to grow to the point where we can understand the deeper things.
- † **[Slide 25: Ephesians 4]** One last passage in this vein: Ephesians 4.14 [NET]: “So we are no longer to be children, tossed back and forth by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching by the trickery of people who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes.”
- While you are young in faith, you are most vulnerable to the attacks of Satan, the corruption of the world, and the impulses of the flesh. Only if you grow, if you allow God to grow you into a mature believer, will you be able to stand fast in faith and understanding, to protect yourself and others.
- † **[Slide 26: blank]** If you want to embrace God's plan to grow you and shape you into who he created and saved you to be, then pray to ask for this and be open to the teaching over the next few weeks about how this looks and how it works. If you have fears, questions, or doubts, please pray about that, ask God to help you desire and submit to his plans and his work in you. And please feel free to talk with me anytime.
- † I want us to watch a video now, and then we will have a time of prayer...