

SANCTIFICATION

#31

Have you ever heard the word “sanctification”? _____

What do you think it means? _____

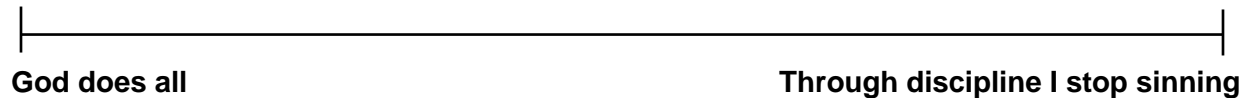
What do you think is God’s role in your spiritual growth? _____

What do you think is your role? _____

As we dig in, let’s clarify the term sanctification. To sanctify means to set apart to God or be made Holy; sanctification is the **process** of being made holy. When we come to Christ, the process begins and will not be complete until we are face-to-face with Him in heaven.

Historically, some Christian traditions have overemphasized the role God plays in the sanctification process, i.e., God does everything. This can be expressed in many ways, one of which is seeking a spiritual experience that will bring holiness in certain areas overnight - God, just change me! Other Christian traditions have overemphasized our role in the process - if you are simply disciplined and obedient enough, you will stop sinning.

On the following chart, where would you place your own perspective regarding this process?



The view of sanctification that we feel is most consistent with Scripture is called “cooperative sanctification,” which, as the name suggests, views the sanctification process as a partnership.

Read Philippians 2:12,13

According to this passage, what is God’s job in your spiritual growth? _____

Obviously, according to the verse, it is God’s job “to work in us to will and to act according to His good purposes.”

What do you think the phrase “work in us to will and act according to His good purposes” means? _____

In what ways have you seen God do this? _____

How have you seen God change your attitudes and desires? _____

Here, now, is a critical question: is there anything we can do in this “partnership” to better “experience” God’s direction and leading in our attitudes and desires?

Yes. While this is God’s part, we play a crucial role. The influence God has on our thoughts, motivations, and attitudes, can be like a rushing river, or a dripping faucet, depending on our cultivation of His presence.

What things can we do to cultivate God’s presence and influence in our life? _____

The atmosphere we set in our heart and mind determines the degree of influence God has over our “willing and acting according to His good purpose.” The atmosphere of our hearts and minds aids, or mitigates, the Holy Spirit’s influence.

What are some of those things we can do to create the right atmosphere in our heart?

Thanksgiving (when you are constantly giving thanks to God throughout the day, you are wonderfully open to God’s presence and influence); time in prayer and Scripture; relying on God; listening or singing Christian music; Christian fellowship; and engaging in ministry. These could all be good examples for us. The main point of these activities is to experience God’s presence and increase His influence in our lives. These are not things we go out and do for God to make Him happy with us.

Back to Philippians 2:12,13. What is our part in the passage? _____

What do you think Paul means by “working out our salvation”? _____

Paul is saying to make good choices and take what God is doing in you and cement it into godly habits and character. The other part of the partnership is for us to make GOOD CHOICES to turn these godly desires and attitudes into settled godly habits and character. It is often a “string” or campaign of good choices that habitualize godly desires.

Where do you feel you need to make consistent good choices? _____

In what ways have you begun to see these choices become habits? _____

A few other areas to consider making godly choices are: choices to confess our sins to someone else; choices to avoid sin; choices to get good sleep and exercise so as to be less vulnerable to attacks; choices to be involved in fellowship and ministry. In other words, there is a whole sphere of good choices that extends wider than simply saying “no” to sin.

Though this is our responsibility, how does God help us make good choices?

God can protect us at times from temptation, distract us, empower us, provide helpful relationships, and in various other ways come along side us and help us to establish a campaign of good choices that result in settled character.

How have you experienced God's help in these ways? _____

Finally, Read Hebrews 10:14.

What is the "single offering" referred to here? _____

How are we "perfected for all time"? _____

If we are perfected, why does it say we are "being" sanctified and not we "are" sanctified? _____

Summary

Our spiritual growth is a partnership. God works in us to will and to act, and we, for our part, cultivate His presence, which makes His influence more powerful, and clear. We also make right choices which confirm into our character what God is doing in us. God, on His part, empowers and encourages us in these choices.

Memorize Philippians 2:12