

Session Two: Sanctification

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[0 : 00] Hey, welcome back to Gospel Growth.

This is our Life on Life Discipleship course,! and we're talking about how we grow up in the gospel.! So far, we've talked about how we don't grow really in isolation, we grow in community. But how do we do that?

How do we grow? How long does that take? And who's really involved in that? Those are important questions that we want to take a few minutes to talk about together. To do that, we're going to learn a big word together.

And it's not for the sake of learning big words. Don't fall into that version of Christianity where we're all trying to impress each other with our SAT words. But this is an important one. The word is sanctification.

So what is sanctification? Wayne Grudem, in his introduction to systematic theology, gives us a great definition. It goes like this. He says, This part of the application of redemption is called sanctification.

[1 : 27] And he gives us a great little definition here. Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.

Okay. So that's in a nutshell what we're talking about with sanctification. Let me hit a couple questions you might have. When does sanctification start? It begins right away at conversion.

Right away we begin to hate sin. We begin to fight sin. And this is a moral shift inside of us. We're not just trying to be better so we can be better people.

We can be our best version of ourselves. We now hate sin. Something we used to love. And now we fight sin. Something we used to feed. This is a new perspective on sin for us.

Let me give you a couple of Bible verses here in Titus 3.5. It says, He saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness. So we didn't do a bunch of things that God has saved, but according to his own mercy by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the spirit.

[2 : 31] And so God saves us. He washes us. He renews us. But then this starts us off on this journey where we begin to, we're new people now. We've been renewed. We've been cleaned. We no longer see sin the way we used to see sin.

I love how 1 John puts it in 1 John 3.9. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning. We're not doing that anymore. For God's seed abides in him.

This life of God, this growing seed life of God abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he's been born of God, right? And so this is a big shift. Wayne Grudem goes on to say, this initial step in sanctification involves a definite break from the ruling power and love of sin so that the believer, this new believer, no longer is ruled or dominated by sin and no longer loves to sin.

Okay? So this is the very beginnings of this process is this shift inside of us from, I feed sin, you know, and I make excuses for sin, and I love sin, to I hate it, I fight it, I confess it, you know, I don't want anything to do with it, right?

So this is different than the sort of bumper sticker Christianity. You know, when I was a kid, there was a bumper sticker that always, you know, said, you know, Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven, which is true, I guess.

[3 : 56] But I think what it usually meant was, hey, get off my back. You know, I'm going to act however I want. You know, I'm saved by grace, blah, blah, blah. That's not, this is not a Bible version of Christianity.

The Bible version of Christianity really, it's more in line with what John Owens said, be killing sin or it be killing you, which I love that. It sounds like a pirate kind of thing, right? The truly converted Christian will hate sin and he'll fight sin.

And that's something you can, that's right away, you know that something's changed inside of you. Okay, so what should sanctification look like? You know, plain and simple, it should look like growth, which is why we're talking about it right now in gospel growth.

If Jesus uses analogies and parables, he says, you know, like the kingdom, it's like this yeast that spreads. It's like a tree that fills things out, that the life of God, the seed of God that's now in us should grow and expand and fill our whole lives.

That's one of the keys to knowing that you've actually been saved is you don't just quit the habits that you didn't like in the first place. You actually end up repenting of sin that you actually loved, things you liked about yourself.

[5 : 03] You realize, man, it's not okay, it's sin. I need to turn away from that and run to Jesus. And that process should grow and it should grow as we become more and more like Jesus every single day.

Let's read another couple of verses. There's so many, but I'm just trying to give you a few here. In Romans 8, we see this, for whom God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed into the image of his son.

So that's what God has in mind for each of us. It's not that I'll be the best Donnie I can be, but that Donnie will look more like Jesus and less like Donnie, right? That's the goal, is that we would conform more and more to the image of his son in order that he, Jesus, might be the firstborn among many brothers.

This next one is really helpful kind of as we think about growth and we think about this journey of sanctification that we're on. 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18, and we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord.

So we're looking at God, we're beholding his glory and we're being transformed. We're changing into the same image. All of us together being transformed into the same image, right?

[6 : 15] From one degree of glory to another. We're all looking more like Jesus little by little by little. We're moving closer to that. This comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. So it's a journey.

That's how it should look like on this earth. A journey where every day we grow more to look more like Jesus. That's what it should look like. When does it end? When does sanctification end? It ends when we die or Jesus comes back.

That's the easy answer, right? That's when it ends and it doesn't end until then. None of us breathing air right now on planet earth, you know, have achieved our sanctification.

I love this. This is a great verse. If you're, you know, if you think you've arrived at perfection, you can ask a friend, a spouse, a pet, and they'll tell you that's not true. But, or you can read a Bible verse.

First John 1, 8. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Plain and simple. So sanctification ends when we die or when Jesus comes back, right?

[7 : 16] Okay, there's a lot more we could say on this. I want to give you a few things I think would be helpful to think about and to discuss in your groups. Firstly, when we think about sanctification, it's good to just recognize that as human beings, everybody wants a savior and nobody wants a Lord, okay?

When we talk about the sanctification, we're talking about moving from doing what we want to do to doing what God wants us to do. We're no longer calling the shots in our life. We're no longer defending our sins.

Now, we're looking to Jesus to lead us. We're looking to God to lead us. We're fighting our sin, right? And the fact is a lot of people, they say they want to be a Christian, but what they mean is they want some sort of get out of hell free card.

That's like they want a savior, but they don't want a Lord. And Jesus, he interacted with people like this too. And he would say, why do you call me Lord, Lord, if you don't obey me? A Lord is a master.

It's a boss. It's a ruler. And so it's good to just recognize this part of sanctification. This is that whole topic of realizing, man, I can't do what I want to do anymore. I have a new boss.

[8 : 20] It's not me. It's him. And he calls the shots. And you kind of know you're on the road to sanctification when you're choosing to obey Jesus and it's hard and it's difficult and you don't understand.

And you're saying no to things that you like. And you're not even sure why you're saying no, but he said say no and you just trust him. That's really good proof. You're well on your way here on this road. Another thing worth saying is that God loves us like we are, but doesn't leave us like we are.

Some people will say, well, if God really loves me, he would just take me like I am and leave me like I am, right? So let's talk about that for a second. Because it makes God sound like he's got conditions, but he doesn't.

But what we see is that it's because God loves us that he wants to change us. He made us. He knows how dangerous sin is for us and he is committed to rooting it out of us, right?

But thank God the gospel is not change and then God will love you. That's not what the gospel is at all. That would be conditional. That would be like God saying, hey, if you lose 100 pounds, then I'll love you.

[9 : 26] That's conditional love. That's wicked, right? That's not what God does at all. God comes and he loves us like we are, but because he loves us like we are, he's committed to changing us into the image of his son, Jesus, right?

Because he knows that sin is a terrible, wicked thing, right? So that is important to understand. Another thing that's good to just know is that we need to remember this is about our maturity, not about achieving perfection in this life, okay?

Again, it's not gonna happen. You and I are not gonna get perfect in this life, but we should expect to grow to a place of maturity. That should be happening. That is attainable, a sense of maturity where we're knowing and applying the gospel.

We're knowing our sin, we're fighting our sin, we're trusting our savior. Those things are helpful. If you make perfection the goal, you're gonna ride that old rollercoaster of pride and despair. I'm perfect, I'm terrible.

I'm perfect, I'm terrible. Get off the rollercoaster. Man, it's not about that. It's about applying the gospel to ourselves and growing more and more every day to be like Jesus. A couple more quick ones.

[10 : 28] Avoid the ditches of legalism and license, okay? On our journey to following Jesus, there's these deep ditches. And it's legalism, which is God loves me because I keep the rules, and there's license.

God loves me, so I don't have to keep the rules, right? Those two ditches are always right there beside us. And it's easy, better people than me and you following them all the time, and me and you following them all the time.

Man, that's why it's good to grow in community because we can help each other. Hey, man, you're following the legalism. Hey, you're following the license. Get back up on this road together. Let's walk this road together, right?

Those are the natural ways to think, but they're not the right ways to think. The right way to think is, man, I obey because God loves me, and because God loves me and I love him, I want to obey, right?

I obey because God loves me, and because he loves me, I love him, and because I love him, I want to obey him. That's that path we want to stay on. Just one or two more here.

[11 : 27] Remember that we are sanctified by the Spirit. It's a work of the Spirit. We see this in bunches of places, but in 2 Thessalonians 2.13, we see that it's through the sanctification of the Spirit that we're changed.

But here's what I want you to really get from this, is that by spending time with the Holy Spirit, you and I grow and change. My youth pastor, when I was a kid, Terry Bartz used to always say, you know, if you lay down with dogs, you get up with fleas.

What's he getting at? You and I change to be like the people we are around. It's the same way with the Holy Spirit. If we want to be more like Jesus, the Bible tells us we should spend time with the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5.22 says, the fruit of the Spirit, what that means is the fruit of being with the Spirit, being filled by the Spirit, led by the Spirit. You know, the fruit of that, you know, this is the fruit you're going to get from spending time with the Holy Spirit.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control against such things that there's no law. If you and I want to see more of those things in our life, as we grow in those things, we're becoming more like Jesus, we have to spend time with the Holy Spirit.

[12 : 35] We have to pray daily for him to help us and fill us and keep us and empower us and lead us and all those things. And then just one more. Remember that we never get beyond our own need of the gospel.

The Galatians did this. They knew that they started in the Spirit, but then they thought they'll take it from here. And Paul writes to them and says, you foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

Let me ask you only this. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected, right?

Are you now being perfected by the flesh? So this is important. Paul says a lot of us recognize that we were saved by grace, but then we try to finish in our flesh. And he's saying, look, you don't got this.

You couldn't start it. You can't finish it. But God does, right? Philippians 3.12, not that I've already obtained this or am I already perfect? Paul's saying, look, I'm not perfect, right?

[13 : 40] But here's what I've got. I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. It's the gospel that upholds us as we get on this journey of change. I'm not perfect, but man, I'm Jesus's.

And because I'm Jesus's, I'm gonna press on. I'm gonna strain forward, Paul says. I'm gonna keep pushing on and let those of us who are mature think this way, right? This is a mature way to think. If God can save me, then God can change me.

If God can change me from being who I was to who I am now, man, he can sort out the rest of this, right? Philippians 1.6 says this. I'm sure of this. He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

That's a good one for us just to land on right there. Man, he who began this good work in us is gonna bring it to completion, right? We're trusting him to do this, but we work together with him.

We fight sin, but we trust our savior. Now, one day, this journey of sanctification is gonna be complete. One day that's gonna happen, right? Which is an amazing thing. We're not gonna struggle with sin anymore, shame anymore, guilt anymore, all that mess.

[14 : 45] But that day so far is not today. And so for today, man, we're gonna fight sin. We're gonna trust Jesus. We're gonna do that in community and we're gonna grow to be more like Jesus. And God's gonna help us. And as you get together in your groups to discuss this, man, there's lots and lots you could talk about, but I think it's a great chance to just confess sin to one another and talk about how this journey of sanctification has been for you so far.

And then I'd love it if you'd pray together the prayer of John the Baptist. When he said this in John 3.30, he said, he, speaking of Jesus, he must increase, but I must decrease.

I think as you discuss together, man, pray for each other. Man, we wanna see you decrease and Jesus increase in your life. And let's just continue trusting Jesus on this road to sanctification.

Amen. Amen. Amen.