

In The Pursuit of Holiness

“Growing from Milk to Meat!”

—
Revised Edition

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Chapter One

“Understanding Our Sanctification”



“It’s what Jesus did for us!”

In order to have a clear biblical understanding of our sanctification, we should take a look at regeneration, justification and glorification and how they all work together in the lives of Christians. Understand what these terms mean, and the distinctions between them will clearly show us that salvation is past, present and future - spirit, soul, and body.

It is truly important that we understand that all the benefits of our salvation are connected to us through our relationship with Jesus Christ. It is by Jesus, through Jesus, and because of Jesus we have received regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification, because outside of a relationship with Him there is no salvation.

Regeneration

First let’s start with regeneration; this word in the Greek language is *gennao* which means new birth, rebirth, or reproduction. Regeneration is God’s work in the believer at conversion to create a new person empowered by the Holy Spirit.¹ This means that at your conversion you were made into a new creation in Christ Jesus and your spirit was

regenerated and renewed from your old spirit and behavior into a new spirit and behavior.

- “He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5 NLT).
- “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV).
- “Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God” (John 3:3 NLT).

The new birth is the most extreme change in a person’s life – so extreme it can only be described as being born again or having a new life. It is a spiritual birth, a birth that is life-changing and so gratifying that it can only be by the love and power of God Himself.

Regeneration refers to a new birth, or rebirth, or the new nature of the believer.

Justification

Next is *dikaioo* the Greek word for justification. Justification is the act whereby an individual legal position has been changed from an alien of heaven to a citizen of heaven and into a new relationship with God the Father. It is an act of God’s grace wherein He forgives our sins and accepts the believer as righteous or to be in right relationship with Him based on faith in Jesus Christ.²

Justification *has saved us* from the penalty of sin.

“Therefore no one will be justified in His sight by works of the law. For the law merely brings awareness of sin. But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, as attested by the Law and the Prophets. And this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is

no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God presented Him as the atoning sacrifice through faith in His blood, in order to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance He had passed over the sins committed beforehand. He did this to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and to justify the one who has faith in Jesus. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of works? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Certainly not! Instead, we uphold the law" (Romans 3:20-31 BSB).

Justification deals with our past. Here the Bible tells us, "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," and we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God dealt with our sin in the ultimate and most intimate way; He presented Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement. God did this to demonstrate His justice, wherein He pardoned all our sins and adopted us as children unto Himself (we receive legal sonship). This is only because of the righteousness of Jesus that is imputed to us by faith alone.

The short meaning of justification is, Just as if I had never sinned!

Salvation and Sanctification

Soteria is the Greek word that has these meanings: rescue, safety, deliver, health, save, saving and salvation. Salvation means the full deliverance of something or someone from impending danger, and this is what Jesus Christ fulfilled for all believers through His death, burial, and resurrection.

The Bible teaches us that salvation is threefold:

- First, salvation is nearly always by blood; Hebrews 9:22 (NIV) tells us, "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."
- Second, salvation is always through the person of Jesus; Acts 4:12 (KJV) states, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"; and 1 Thessalonians 5:9 (NIV) says, "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."
- Third, salvation is always by grace; 1 Corinthians 1:3 (BSB) says, "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; and Romans 1:7 (NIV) states, "To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Sanctification is the process in salvation by which God conforms the life and character of the believer into that of Jesus through the Holy Spirit.³

It's very important that you clearly understand your salvation and sanctification. Sanctification occurs in the present age or period in which we are now living, and sanctification is saving us from the power of sin.

However, when we receive sanctification through Jesus the Lord and Savior, it is in three forms: instantly, positionally, and progressively:

- The first form is instantly: I AM – A New Creature. The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:17 (BSB), "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!"
- The second form of sanctification is our position in Christ Jesus. Positional: we have been raised up with Christ – "Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of

heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand" (Colossians 3:1 NLT) and seated in heavenly places – "For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6 NLT).

- The third level is progressive; Paul tells us in Philippians 3:14 (NIV), "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." The progressive part of our sanctification is a person's response to the call and command of God.

Therefore, in our sanctification we are instantly made holy, we are positionally holy, and we are progressively pursuing holiness.

In the section which I call "Paul's New Attitude," you will gain a better understanding of our progressive stage (pursuing holiness) and this is where I got the title for this book, In the Pursuit of Holiness.

The short answer to the meaning of sanctification is this: I am saved from the power of sin!

Note: Justification is an act, while sanctification is a work. Justification is the means, while sanctification is the end. Justification removes the guilt and the penalty of sin, while sanctification removes the growth and power of sin. Justification works for us, while Sanctification works in us. Justification declares us to be righteous, while sanctification makes us righteous. Justification is the past, and sanctification is the present.

Glorification

The word glorification is not used in the Hebrew Old Testament or the Greek New Testament, but glorification is communicated as *doxazo* in its verb form and *doxa* in the noun form, meaning the act of glorifying or the state of being glorified. It is the ultimate state of every believer, though it has not yet occurred. It is the *future* for Christians that after

death, the mortal bodies of Christians will be transformed into eternal physical bodies like that of Christ Jesus.

- “And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:17 NKJV).
- “Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Romans 8:30 NKJV).
- “Beloved, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2 BLB).
- “So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:42-44 NIV).

The glorification period will be after the completion of the sanctification process. Our bodies will be transformed, and the old nature will be eliminated forever.

Glorification says that I will one day be saved from the presence of sin!

Therefore, we find that the words regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification are of great significance in the life of the Christian. First the word regeneration refers to a new birth or rebirth or the new nature of the believer by the Holy Spirit, so we are presently holy. The word justification means that we have been saved us from the penalty of our sins. Sanctification means that Christians are saved and are being saved from the power of sin. And the word glorification tells us that one day Christians will be saved us from the presence of sin.

In the book of Philippians Paul gives us a great example of his understanding of our progressive or pursuing stage of holiness, which I call Paul’s New Attitude.