

Growing in Grace:

Understanding the Dynamics of Sanctification

Mike Riccardi | Sundays in July | July 19, 2015

The Need for This Seminar

We are all currently living in between the time of our past justification and our future glorification—in the present pursuit of Christlikeness.

Sanctification is our daily, hourly, moment-by-moment task.

The Need for This Seminar

- Philippians 1:27 – Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ . . .
- Colossians 1:10 – we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Outline

I. The Principles of Sanctification

II. The Means of Sanctification

III. The Dynamics of Sanctification

Part One: The Principles

Two foundational texts on sanctification:

- Philippians 2:12–13 – “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”
- 2 Corinthians 3:18 – “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

Part One: The Principles

#1. Sanctification is Fundamentally Internal and Supernatural

- Philippians 2:13 – “. . . it is God who is at work in you both to **will** and to **work** for His good pleasure.”
- 2 Corinthians 3:18 – “But we all . . . are being **transformed** into the same image . . .”

Part One: The Principles

#1. Sanctification is Fundamentally Internal and Supernatural

- 2 Corinthians 3:18 – “But we all . . . are being **transformed** into the same image . . .”
 - Transformed (*metamorphóō*) – the inner transformation of the essence of a person; an inward change in fundamental character

#1: Internal & Supernatural

Holiness is not merely bringing our outward behavior into conformity to an external standard.

The inward transformation of the character will work itself out in external behavior, but the transformation begins **internally**.

#1: Internal & Supernatural

Charles Hodge:

“Sanctification . . . does not consist exclusively in a series of a new kind of acts. It is the making the tree good, in order that the fruit may be good. It involves an essential change of character.

“[Just] as regeneration is . . . a new birth, a new creation, a quickening or communicating a new life, . . . so sanctification in its essential nature is not holy acts, but such a change in the state of the soul, that sinful acts become more infrequent, and holy acts more and more habitual and controlling.”

#1: Internal & Supernatural

We want to have sanctified **affections** as well as sanctified **actions**.

God commands us not only to **behave righteously**; He also commands us to **be holy**.

Part One: The Principles

#2. Sanctification is a Sovereign Work of the Spirit of God

- Philippians 2:13 – “. . . it is **God** who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”
- 2 Corinthians 3:18 – “Beholding . . . we all . . . are **being** transformed into the same image . . .”
- Berkhof: Sanctification “consists fundamentally in a **divine** operation on the soul.”

Part One: The Principles

#2. Sanctification is a Sovereign Work of the Spirit of God

- Romans 1:4 – “. . . declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to **the Spirit of holiness**.”
- Galatians 5:17 – “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and **the Spirit against the flesh**; for these are in opposition to one another . . .”

Part One: The Principles

#2. Sanctification is a Sovereign Work of the Spirit of God

- Galatians 5:22 – “But the fruit of **the Spirit** is love, joy, peace . . .”
- 2 Corinthians 3:18 – “. . . being transformed into the same image . . . just as from the Lord, **the Spirit.**”

Part One: The Principles

- #1. Sanctification is Fundamentally Internal and Supernatural
- #2. Sanctification is a Sovereign Work of the Spirit of God
- #3. The Spirit Employs Means in Sanctifying the Believer

#3: The Spirit Uses Means

Henry Scougal:

“All the art and industry of man cannot form the smallest herb, or make a stalk of corn to grow in the field; it is the energy of nature, and the influences of heaven, which produce this effect; it is God ‘who causeth the grass to grow, and the herb for the service of man’ (Ps. 104:14); and yet nobody will say that the labours of the [farmer] are useless or unnecessary.”

Part Two: The Means

Five means of sanctification which we can appropriate, and thereby put ourselves in the way of the Spirit's sanctifying work.

1. Scripture

- 2 Timothy 3:16–17 – “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be **adequate**, equipped for **every good work**.”
- Psalm 1:2–3 – “. . . his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he **meditates** day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which **yields its fruit** in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.”

1. Scripture

Psalm 19:7–11 – The Word of the Lord is . . .

- perfect, **restoring** the soul;
- sure, **making wise** the simple.
- right, **rejoicing** the heart;
- pure, **enlightening** the eyes.
- clean, **enduring** forever;
- true; they are **righteous** altogether.
- more **desirable** than gold, yes, than much fine gold
- **sweeter** also than honey
- by them Your servant is **warned**;
- in keeping them there is great **reward**.

1. Scripture

- 1 Peter 2:2 – “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that **by it you may grow** in respect to salvation.”
- John 17:17 – “**Sanctify** them by the truth; **Your word** is truth.”

2. Prayer

The Father has ordained that His children receive
the good gifts of His grace
by means of their asking for them.

- Hebrews 4:16 – “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, **so that** we may **receive mercy** and **find grace** to help in time of need.”

2. Prayer

B. B. Warfield:

“Prayer by the nature of it is a confession of weakness, need, and dependence. It is a cry for help. And no one can take this attitude once without an effect on his character, for in it we learn to look away from ourselves to one higher and greater and acknowledge our utter dependence on God. . . . What is prayer but the very adjustment of the heart for the influx of grace?”

3. Fellowship

- Hebrews 3:12–13 – “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But **encourage one another** day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ **so that** none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”
- Hebrews 10:24–25 – “. . . And let us consider how to **stimulate one another to love and good deeds**, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

3. Fellowship

Ephesians 4:11–16 – And He gave some as . . . as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²**for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;** ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to **a mature man . . .**

¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to **the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body** for the building up of itself in love.

3. Fellowship

It is in the fellowship of Christ's church that we . . .

- expose ourselves to the regular, skillful **preaching** of the Word of God;
- magnify the name of the Lord in corporate **worship** in a unique way
- minister to and edify one another as we **use our gifts**
- help each other **deal with sin**, and
- partake in the **ordinances** of baptism and communion

4. Providence

- Romans 8:28–29 – “God causes **all things** to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become **conformed to the image of His Son.**”
- James 1:2–4 – “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various **trials**, knowing that the testing of your faith produces **endurance**. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be **perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**”

5. Obedience

- John 15:10 – “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love”
 - Love for Christ is the fuel for obedience (John 14:15)
 - Walking in the way of Christ’s commandments produces more love for Christ.

Love → Obedience → Love → Obedience → Love

Part Two: The Means

Sanctifying grace flows through all of these channels.
It is our responsibility to put ourselves in the way
of their blessings.

We cannot perform the **divine operation** in our souls
that would make us more holy.

But we can **pursue** that holiness
by availing ourselves of **the means** by which
the **Holy Spirit** performs this divine operation.

Recap

#1. Sanctification is Fundamentally Internal and Supernatural

#2. Sanctification is a Sovereign Work of the Spirit of God

#3. The Spirit Employs Means in Sanctifying the Believer

- Scripture
- Prayer
- Fellowship
- Providence
- Obedience

Part Three: The Dynamics

- 2 Corinthians 3:18 – “But we all, with unveiled face, **beholding** as in a mirror **the glory of the Lord**, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

As believers **behold** the glory of Christ
with the eyes of our heart,
we are thereby progressively **transformed**
into His image.

The Dynamics: Beholding is Becoming

- Hebrews 12:2 – “. . .fixing our **eyes** on Jesus . . . ”
- Hebrews 11:26–27 – “. . . he was **looking** to the reward. . . .for he endured, as **seeing** Him who is unseen.
- 2 Corinthians 4:18 – “momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, **while we look** not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.”
- 1 John 3:2 – “We know that when He appears, we will be **like Him**, because we will **see Him** just as He is.”

The Dynamics: Beholding is Becoming

The spiritual sight of Christ, by virtue of the delightfulness and beauty of His glory, causes us to admire Him in such a way that we are satisfied by Him, and therefore we don't seek satisfaction in lesser, sinful pleasures.

The glory of Christ captures our affections and causes us to love what He loves. Then, our renewed affections inform and excite our will, and we joyfully obey the commands of God.

The Dynamics: Beholding is Becoming

Charles Hodge:

“The Spirit, we are taught, especially opens the eyes to see the glory of Christ, to see that He is God manifest in the flesh; to discern not only his divine perfections, but his love to us, and his suitableness in all respects as our Saviour. . . . **This apprehension of Christ is transforming:** the soul is thereby changed into his image, from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.”

The Dynamics: Beholding is Becoming

John Owen:

“Let us live in the constant contemplation of the glory of Christ, and virtue will proceed from Him to repair all our decays, to renew a right spirit within us, and to cause us to abound in all duties of obedience. . . . It will fix the soul unto that object which is suited to give it delight, complacency, and satisfaction. . . .

The Dynamics: Beholding is Becoming

John Owen:

“. . . When the mind is filled with thoughts of Christ and his glory, when the soul thereon cleaves unto him with **intense affections**, they will cast out, or not give admittance unto, those causes of spiritual weakness and indisposition. . . . And nothing will so much excite and encourage our souls hereunto as a **constant view of Christ and His glory.**”

The Dynamics: Beholding is Becoming

In all our diligent efforts to appropriate the means of grace, the glory of Jesus stands at the very center, giving life to all the other means.

Our aim is to saturate the eyes of our hearts with the **all-satisfying vision** of the glory of God revealed in the face of Christ.

(John Piper, *God is the Gospel*, 168)

1. Beholding Glory in Scripture

The **Word** of God
reveals the **glory** of God.

Undergirding and vivifying
the sanctifying **power** of the **written** Word
is the sanctifying **glory** of the **Living** Word.

1. Beholding Glory in Scripture

- Exodus 33:18–19
 - Moses: “Show me Your glory!”
 - God: “I will **proclaim** the name of Yahweh before you.”
- 1 Samuel 3:21 – “And the Lord **appeared** again at Shiloh, because the Lord **revealed Himself** to Samuel at Shiloh, **by the word** of the Lord.”

Scripture sanctifies because
Scripture reveals the glory of God
in the face of Christ.

2. Beholding Glory in Prayer

Prayer is the occasion for **personal worship**.

This is the time for you to:

- meditate on the beauty of the Lord's manifold perfections
- praise Him for His goodness and bounty
- taste the goodness of His sufficiency as you present your requests to Him

2. Beholding Glory in Prayer

John Owen:

“The things to be aimed at in prayer [are the following]: the spiritual intense fixation of the mind, by contemplation on God in Christ, until the soul be as it were swallowed up in admiration and delight, and being brought unto an utter loss, through the infiniteness of those excellencies which it doth admire and adore. Through the riches of divine condescension, [these] are frequently enjoyed [in prayer].”

3. Beholding Glory in Fellowship

Because every believer is being progressively conformed into the image of Christ, fellowship with other believers sanctifies us because of what we can see of Christ *in* each other.

3. Beholding Glory in Fellowship

Anthony Hoekema:

“Believers learn what Christ-likeness is by observing it in fellow Christians. We see the love of Christ reflected in the lives of our fellow believers; we are enriched by Christ through our contact with them; we hear Christ speaking to us through them. Believers are inspired by the examples of their fellow Christians, sustained by their prayers, corrected by their loving admonitions, and encouraged by their support.”

4a. Beholding Glory in Providence

When we learn to see all of the experiences of life as gracious dispensations of God's providence, we can treasure the glory of the Giver that is revealed *in* His gifts, and give Him thanks and praise for "richly supplying us with all things to enjoy."

When we experience His compassion
and comfort in times of trial,
we behold with the eyes of our heart
the rich display of the glory of His character.

4b. Beholding Glory in Creation

- Psalm 19:1 – The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.

The conscientious believer learns to see all the beauties of the creation as streams of glory that trace back to the God who is the Fountain of all goodness and grace.

5. Beholding Glory in Obedience

- John 14:21 – He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and **will disclose Myself to him.**

Out of a desire for a **superior** pleasure,
reject the false pleasures of sin
in exchange for the **supreme** pleasure
that is found in Jesus alone.

In Conclusion

John Fawcett:

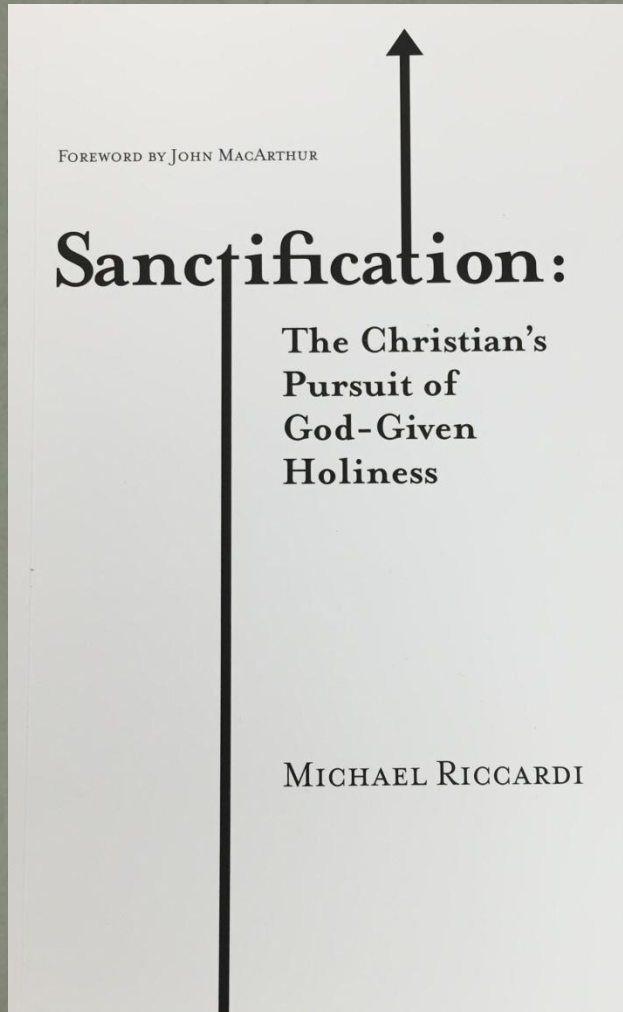
“Christ Jesus is the life of all the graces and comforts of a Christian in this world. By the knowledge and contemplation of Him, and of His death in our stead, faith lives, and is strengthened from day to day; all the springs of repentance are opened, and flow freely, when the heart is melted by views of a dying Savior; . . .

In Conclusion

John Fawcett:

“ . . . love feels the attractive power of its glorious object, and is kindled into a holy flame; sin is mortified; the world is subdued; and the hope of future glory is supported, enlivened, and confirmed, so as to become sure and steadfast, like an anchor of the soul.”

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