

*[From the Sangre de Cristo Lectures on the Holy Spirit]*

Sanctification  
by Gordon H. Clark

And now for a period of time the subject will be sanctification.

Questioner 1: Is this point 3 under ???

Yes because this applies to a great number of people and not certain individualities.

Questioner 1: Is this still on the inner work of the Holy Spirit?

Yes. When we get to the more particular, more individual things, that's when we begin to get into pentecostalism. Well now, sanctification.

Though the previous section began with regeneration, the doctrine of justification does not easily fit into a study of the Spirit. Justification is a forensic act usually ascribed to the Father and the same for all the elect. Sanctification is a subjective change of character in the individual in different degrees for different persons. That is, it is the same process, but it goes to different lengths. The former, that is justification, the former is instantaneous, the latter is temporal and lasts a lifetime. The agent is the Spirit and the topic belongs right here.

One verse that asserts the agency of the Spirit in sanctification is Romans 15:16. In verse 13, the power of the Holy Spirit produces hope. Here in verse 16, the gentiles are sanctified by the Spirit. Paul pictures himself as presenting the gentiles as an offering to God. The Old Testament shows that some offerings are unacceptable. But Paul's is acceptable because the gentiles have been sanctified by the spirit. The idea of presenting human beings to God in a manner diametrically opposite to pagan human sacrifice was previously mentioned in 12:1. It is a living sacrifice not a murder. The gentiles were Paul's acceptable sacrifice because the Spirit had sanctified them.

Other verses are 1 Corinthians 6:11, sanctified by the Spirit of God.

Questioner 2: Can I have that verse again.

That is 1 Corinthians 6:11. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 speaks of sanctification of the Spirit. 2 Thessalonians 2:13. Then there are verses that say the same thing without saying so explicitly. Various elements of sanctification are explained as effects of the Spirit. For example, the love of God, Romans 5:22, and joy, Galatians 5:22, and we mortify the deeds of the body through the spirit, Romans 8:13. In Romans 14:17, not in, Romans 14:17 also connects peace and joy with the Holy Spirit.

In other verses the connection is somewhat tenuous by themselves, but nonetheless

corroborative. Acts 6 verses 3 and 5, Acts 6 verses 3 and 5 mention wisdom and faith as works of the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 1:5 and 6 speak of power and joy. The import of such verses must be supported by the teaching that in regeneration the Spirit produces faith, and as time goes on, wisdom and these other blessings. For they are all parts of sanctification.

The work of the Spirit in regeneration, and his work in sanctification are tautologically coextensive. Oh, yeah they are tautologically coextensive, that is they mean the same thing. The work of the Spirit in regeneration, and his work in sanctification are tautologically coextensive. All the regenerate, now this is quite different from "all dogs are vertebrates," all the regenerate will be or are being sanctified, and all who are sanctified are regenerate. That's all A is B and all B is A, but it is really all A is A and all A is A. You must get your logic straight. Remember, it's not true that all vertebrates are dogs, but it is certainly true that all dogs are dogs.

Questioner 3: ??? say that again one more time.

All the regenerate are sanctified. Now I don't mean all at once. And all the sanctified are regenerate. Just keep your dogs and cacti straight and you'll be must better off in theology.

The fact that the latter issues from the former, sanctification issues from regeneration, and that in it individual particularities begin to appear permits the exposition to seem somewhat logically arranged. It would be peculiar if you wrote a book and put sanctification in chapter 1 and justification in chapter 2. The individual particularities to not prevent a description of some common general characteristics. Therefore, at least at start, we should not follow the example of John Sanderson's well-received book on the fruit of the spirit. Zondervan, 19??... chapters are headed love, joy, peace, patience, kindness. and some others. The book is so attractive that our adult Bible class went through it 3 times in 2 years. In the epilogue, however, he seems to recede from the very practical stance of the chapters into an ideal viewpoint which may be difficult to apply. The epilogue says, "Paul speaks of fruit, not fruits. We should not think of these character traits as isolated from each other. To have any of the traits in a Christian sense is to have them all. To speak of the fruit is just another way of describing the character of Jesus."

Do any of you want to make any remark about that quote? I'll read it again. "Paul speaks of fruit, not fruits. We should not think of these character traits as isolated from each other. To have any of the traits in a Christian sense is to have them all. To speak of the fruit is just another way of describing the character of Jesus." That's in the epilogue.

Questioner 4: Well, for starters, the English fruit is plural. There is no fruits.

Isn't fruits a good English word?

Questioner 4: It's not correct. Fruit is in itself a plural.

Questioner 5: It can be.

Questioner 6. If I say I eat all of the fruit.

Questioner 5: Yeah, you don't say all of the fruits.

Questioner 6: If somebody once says that want to all the different kinds of fruits, they don't say it that way.

Questioner 5: The context determines the interpretation. You can use fruit as plural, the context will determine it.

But can you not also use the plural fruits? Is that bad English?

Audience: Yes.

You think so.

Audience: Get a dictionary.

Get Merriam-Webster's unabridged dictionary. I always, I always, I don't think you'll find one in this room.

Audience. Merriam-Webster's.

That's just the condensed little thing. I always, I always advise the students in college to carry around a Merriam-Webster's unabridged dictionary in their hip pocket and get physical education credit for it.

*[Audience laughter]*

Yeah, you'll look it up. Well aside from correct English, which I'm glad you're beginning to take some interest in, what do you think of the thought here?

Questioner 7: It said something about if you have one characteristic of Christian life that you have them all?

Yeah.

Questioner 7: Now are they saying that because the word is fruit?

That seems to be at least a part of Sanderson's argument. It is a part of Sanderson's argument. Now whether it's the whole thing or not, I don't know. But he does say to have any of the traits in a Christian sense is to have them all. To speak of the fruit is just another way of describing the character of Jesus.

Well, I'll go on. And my point is, this does not describe the character of Jesus. Jesus was sinless and we are not. According to the sentences quoted therefore, none of us has any fruit of the spirit whatever. Does not this sound implausible? Cannot one person have a measure of joy even

though he is sometimes impatient? And perhaps the patient person, for that very reason, is deficient in joy. The conclusion seems to be that the Spirit distributes his gifts “to each man severally as he will.” 1 Corinthians 12:11. And of course the *he* there refers to the spirit, not to the man who gets the gifts.

There are nevertheless certain general characteristics of sanctification present in every individual Christian. Now we must not bog down into a treatise on sanctification, I think I have a manuscript on sanctification of several hundred pages. You haven't seen it. Well you haven't seen everything in the world. I'm not sure whether you want to see it anyhow. We must not bog down into a treatise on sanctification any more than into an exposition of the Trinity. But we surely want to see the general nature of the work of the Spirit. But though general and extensive the description must not be vague and unintelligible. One must be as definite as possible.

What then does the New Testament say about the Spirit's work in all Christians. There is a lengthy work by Watchman Nee, that's spelled N-E-E. Maybe you have heard of him. Have any of you heard of Watchman Nee? Oh, several of you have. That's nice. New York, 1968. The subject and method of which he states in the opening pages of volume 1. I beg your pardon.

Audience: ???

The spiritual man. Yeah, that's in two volumes, isn't it? I thought I said that too. On page 7 he describes it as “a book based on the word and on experience.” Well now you know what I'm going to say, don't you. “It will appear that there is more experience, that is in his book, than there was word.” “I knew I was commissioned by the Lord to undertake this task. This is a manual on spiritual life, every point of which can be experimentally proven. This books deals wholly with spiritual life as an experience. We base everyone on the Bible and prove all by spiritual experience. I wrote only because I was commissioned by the Lord to do so. The truths in these pages are not mine, they were given to me by God.”

Audience: ??? revelation.

Yeah, I think so. This is quotation, I'm not making it up. And that's why, if you start to write anything, try not to characterize a movement in general. Sometimes you have to do it and sometimes it can be done correctly. You have to be careful. But you avoid a lot of trouble and unfortunate criticism if you quote one particular author. Just take one particular author and quote his words. And one of the most annoying flaws in most theologians, they annoy me no end, they say well the Greeks thought so and so. And actually the fact is maybe one Greek thought so and everybody else disagreed with him. They give the impression this is what all the Greek's thought. Oh me!

You can't do theology without knowing cacti and doing Greek philosophy.

Audience: What verse is that?

That is Genesis 1:1.

It must seem that the volume contains about 1% Bible and the rest experience. Hardly sola scriptura. And yet on page 17, immediately after these quotations, he adds “It is of utmost importance that we never try to analyze ourselves.” But how, without analysis, can every point in a thousand pages, be experimentally proven? See, never analyze yourself and yet everything has to be experimentally proven. Well that’s contradictory.

Audience: ??? incorrect.

I would think if it is contradictory, it is incorrect. The theological basis of the book is trichotomy. “Is it a matter of any consequence to divide soul and spirit? It is an issue of supreme importance. If a believer is ‘humble,’ if a believer is humble, the Holy Spirit will grant him the experience of dividing of spirit and soul.” That’s verbatim quotation. The reader is then not surprised to learn in volume 2, page 83, that for him “intellect is of secondary, not primary, importance.” Continuing the quotation, “we do not sense God and the realities of God by our intellect, else eternal life would be meaningless.”

Strange, is it not, that eternal life would be meaningless if we could understand its meaning.

Audience: ??? if he ever read ???

I wonder if he’s read any of the Bible. Maybe his eyes went over the surface of the page, but you must be careful about intellect, that’s bad, you mustn’t understand the Bible, you must just love it. In contrast...

Audience: That’s what he’s doing. He’s got the Bible closed and he’s ??? it this way.

In contrast the Westminster Confession gives an intelligible and precise statement on sanctification that every truly devout Christian is bound to appreciate. This comes from Westminster Confession, and I’m going to quote 3 paragraphs from the confession.

They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened (that is, the individual, the people, the Christians), more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Next paragraph from the Westminster Confession: This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

And then the last of the paragraphs: In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of

Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

One may wonder whether John Bunyan got his title, *The Holy War*, from section 3. And even an idea for *Pilgrim's Progress*. Anyone here who has not read *Pilgrim's Progress* in some form or other? Well, I'm glad to see you've all read it. Read it again. Well, the original has a good bit of explicit theology in it. And children can't follow it very well. There are children's editions which cut out much of the theological discussions and give the story. And there was an English periodical called *Chatterbox* which ran a child's, called *Little Christian's Pilgrimage* and it gave all the story. And you will see the various conflicts which Christian had on his journey. All sorts of conflict, fight, and so on at vanity fair, doubting castle, the enchanted ground and so on. And someone here in this class, I think, said he used this in his church, or was it one of the speakers.

Well, if you don't want to use it in the regular church service, you can certainly use it in Sunday School. And it's a very good book. If, let me ask, have any of your read the original edition, the whole thing. You have? Well you agree that that's too much for a 12 year old.

Audience: ???

I know, but other 12 year olds.

Well there is a lot of conversation in the original. And different people represent different deviations from Scripture. There was talkative, you know. And pliable and obstinate. I can't remember them all, but anyhow. I just wonder if John Bunyan got some of his ideas from the Westminster Confession.

Unlike regeneration, sanctification is a process, a lifelong process, and one which regeneration, without exception, produces. The first step in the process, occurring in every case is repentance. Let me quote the Westminster Confession again. "Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace by it a sinner out of the sight and sense not only of the danger but the filthiness and odiousness of his sins so grieves for and hates his sins as to turn from them all unto God purposing and endeavoring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments." That's chapter 4, sections 1 and 2.

It is not a good idea to disagree with the Westminster Confession.

*[Audience laughter]*

But, oh I have to criticize it somehow.

Audience: ????

It's not a good idea, but one or two words in one or two places could have been more exact. Above it says the regenerated Christian turns from all his sins. Not even a man so mistaken as Wesley made such extravagant prediction. And oh boy, Wesley was tremendous in the blunders

he made. He allowed that in most cases, perhaps it all, it takes some for a Christian to turn from all his sins. Only in later life could one achieve sinless perfection. Calvinists can only promise their people that we have to die before we become sinless. Of course, the Westminster Divines knew this quite well, it is just a case of wording that could have been more exact.

Sanctification is a favorite topic of two groups which seem to be very unlike each other. The Pietists are a quiet people, devout, with an air of holiness. They are not very strong on other Biblical doctrines, unless pacifism is a Biblical doctrine. But they are calmly determined to lead a pious life. The Holiness churches. I guess churches has only one H toward the end of the word. The Holiness churches, the second group are very noisy. Or, as one evangelist I heard, I heard him myself boasted, I'm an old fashioned shouting, stomping, singing, crying, then he mentioned his own denomination.

Unlike the Pietists, these groups want sanctification and holiness in a lightning flash and clap of thunder. Because of their emotionalism, they are disdained by the larger denominations. People who stomp and cry are queer. People who stomp and cry are queer. But in our more sedate ways, and in our insistence that sanctification is a process, let us remember, as too many in the mainline churches are willing to forget, that Hebrews 12:14 exhorts us to follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

Incidentally, without which, is masculine singular, peace if feminine, so that the which grammatically is restricted to holiness. You follow that?

Hebrews 12:14 exhorts us to follow peace with all men and holiness without which. It's not peace and holiness without which, it is holiness without which.

Audience: There is a comma after holiness.

Well, I don't care about the comma. It's singular. It's masculine singular. What's the word for peace in Greek?

Audience: εἰρήνη

What? That's feminine isn't it? This is singular masculine. That must mean holy. But if this is so, why did God give us holiness along with the new birth. Could he not have made us sinless instantaneously rather than dragging it out for years? Well, he could have. But such was not his plan. Sanctification is a process. He could have, so far as omnipotence is concerned, he could have given each one of us a complete and correct understanding of his Word, so that books like this would have been unnecessary. But he preferred that we should study and blunder.

We must walk up the hill difficulty. Between two roaring lions. Descend into the valley of death. Escape from vanity fair. And be imprisoned in the dungeon of doubting castle. We must struggle to defeat the sin which doth so easily beset us. Such is our progress.

That sanctification is a struggle is plainly stated in Scripture. Romans 7:23 and its context shows

how Paul struggled. Note that he is here describing his experiences after regeneration. You know the Arminians want to make chapter 7 a description of pre-Christian experience and chapter 8 description of Christian experience. And this ruins both chapters. In fact the chapters shouldn't have been divided that way. Because the first verse of the eighth chapter is a conclusion from the last verse of the seventh. And Paul in the seventh is not describing his Jewish experience, he is describing his Christian experience. And I'll show you why in one line or two. That sanctification is a struggle is plain to see ... Romans 7:23 and its context shows how Paul struggled. Note that he is here describing his experience after regeneration. He could earlier have said "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." The phrase in 2 Corinthians 10:3, "for though we walk in the flesh we do not war after the flesh" indicates a war. Paul here makes a play on words by using flesh in two different sense. 1st Timothy 1:8 describes Timothy's sanctification as a good warfare. And in 6:12, Paul urges him to fight the good fight of faith. See also 2 Timothy 2:3.

Paul had no fight in his pharisaic life. The fight and struggle came after he was regenerated.

So you study, you study Charles Hodge's commentary on Romans. But the fullest statement that the Christian life is a warfare, comes in Ephesians 6:10-17. The whole armor of God is needed to withstand the wiles of the devil. We wrestle against the rulers of darkness. We need a breastplate, a shield, a helmet, and a especially a sword. And we need perseverance.

The theologian today and the man in the pews must recognize that this warfare is conducted in the power of the spirit. Were not the right man on our side, our striving would be losing. How about that Lydia? Oh, who said it.

Audience: ???

What?

Audience: Martin Luther

Good that's fine, that's the way to do it. Yeah, I'm quoting Martin Luther. I didn't put quotes around, I just wanted to let people guess or something.

But there is a difference between regeneration and sanctification. As to the former "we are altogether passive therein." In the latter we struggle. One must not deny either the Spirit's power or our activity. The two of us must cooperate. You see there is no synergism in regeneration, but there is in sanctification.

Audience: Murray ??? sanctification ??? in two stages, definite and progressive.

Well, there are other sense of sanctification. For instance, you'll find that the priests of the Old Testament sanctified the vessels of the temple, you know. Set them apart for God's use. But we're talking about the ...

Audience: ???

Yeah. Certain popular Bible teachers have been so impressed by the power of the Spirit that they deny our need to struggle.

When I was a boy, my aunt, previously a missionary to the mormons, gave me Hannah Smith's "The Christian Secret of a Happy Life." Fortunately I was too young to understand it.

*[Audience laughter]*

So, what's that?

Audience: That was given to me too.

Now that wasn't too good. You might have understood it.

Audience: I didn't read it.

Oh, you didn't read it.

Audience: I think I read the first few pages.

Somewhat hypocritically, as it seems to me now, Mrs. Smith wrote in her preface, "I do not want to change the theological views of a single individual. The truths I have to tell are not theological but practical." When she adds, "they will fit in with every creed" she is certainly asserting a falsehood. You must read at least the second volume of B. B. Warfield's two volumes on perfectionism. That's a must. Of course if you want to get married you have to read Romans. But if you want to do other things read the second volume of Warfield's Perfectionism.

The Keswick movement, of which I think Mrs. Smith and her husband were a part, use such phrases such as "let go and let God." Well, that was one of their phrases. That's a quote. Another one. "We must not try not to sin." Now that may be a surprise, but that is verbatim. "We must not try not to sin."

Audience: Who said that?

The Keswick movement.

Audience: ???

Well, I'm not quoting a whole book.

Audience: It's not as bad as ???, but it's bad.

Plenty bad. And then another quote. "Let Him do it all." Him, either God or the Spirit.

Audience: ??? right?

Let Him do it all. For example, Mrs. Smith declares, “Man’s part is to trust and God’s part is to work. Either we must do it for ourselves, or someone must do it for us. It is something we are unable to do. Plainly the believer can do nothing but trust, surrender and trust is positively all a man can do. We do not do anything, but He does it.” Pages 29-31.

Audience: They couldn’t sing a song ???

Well, they might yet, but they might say obedience is simply trusting and doing nothing. But you see how utterly different the Keswick movement was from Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress. Night from day.

As a dedicated, and many will say extreme, Calvinist, I more than gladly insist on God’s doings. No one understands much of the Bible unless he believes in sovereign predestination. But if God predestinated Calvin to write the institutes, and if God has predestinated me to write this greatly inferior booklet, it was nonetheless Calvin and it is nonetheless I who must put down the words on paper.

Mrs. Smith’s statement, “Either we must do it for ourselves, or someone must do it for us” is, in its context, a false disjunction. Both Calvin and God do the institutes. And in an even stricter sense, both God and Moses wrote the pentateuch. They cooperated. And as in all cooperation, their precise activities in producing the result were different. I explain this more fully in my 3R book on page whatever it is, two-thirds of the ways through where I talk about the inspiration of Moses, that is, God’s inspiring Moses to write the Pentateuch. You can get the book and find it, I hope.

God is the source of our abilities and the effective determiner of how we use them. But it is we ourselves who must fight the good fight and run the straight race through God’s good grace. Page 58.

The hours not up yet, is it?

Audience: ???

5 minutes. Well, maybe I can get to a better stopping place in 5 minutes.

Although the present writer should avoid the temptation to discuss sanctification too fully, as he resisted the temptation to expatiate on the Trinity, but that was easier, we’ve already written a treatise on the Trinity. Nevertheless a little more description of the Spirit’s work in all Christians needs to be added. If sanctification is a necessary element in salvation, it is hard to see why some Christian feel no need to understand it better. No doubt the real reason is that they are not presently sanctified enough. Some scriptural statements on sanctification are deeply disturbing to serious souls. Romans 8 says “if any man have no the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” What is

worse, 1 John 2:29, 3:9, and 5:18 seem to say that if I commit one single sin, I have not been regenerated. Not only, “not only everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him”, but “whoever is born of God doth not commit sin, he cannot sin because he is born of God.” Also, “whosoever is born of God sinneth not.” These are terrible verses. They jolt any conscientious Christian. But of course I do not want to repeat here my whole commentary on 1 John which was published in 1980 and maybe Dwight has a copy of it somewhere if you want to read it.

The NAS softens 3:9 a bit, but only a little bit. So also the NIV. Even the RSV is better, or should we say worse. That is, more disturbing. This freedom from sin is the evidence to support an assurance of salvation. And since John seems to have desired to assure his readers, it seems strange that he wrote so severely. The problem here is not how I can know you are saved, but how I can I am saved. Presbyterians do not admit people to communicant membership on the ground of their regeneration.

Now is anyone of you a good standard Baptist?

Audience: Used to be.

You used to be. On what basis do the Baptist churches admit people to communicant membership?

Audience: On what basis do they accept people into membership?

Yeah

Audience: Mostly, by vote.

On what?

Audience: By vote?

Well, on what do they base the vote?

Audience: ??? ????

Oh, well no, because they'd have to be accepted before they were baptized. The baptism would come later.

Audience: In other words they'd have to prove ???

Well, the original Baptist position, I think it is original, at least what I know to be the general idea, is that the Baptists accept people to be communicant members on the basis of their regeneration. And this means that the Baptist congregation, because it is congregational and not presbyterian, the congregation can discern whether a person has been regenerated or not. That's not presbyterianism at all. We do not accept members on the basis of their being regenerated. We

accept members on the basis of a credible profession of faith. And that's quite different.

Audience: What do you mean by ??? presbyterian. ??? PCA now. We had to go through communicants class. We also had to be baptized. ???

Well, naturally some instruction is needed. I agree with that. And, of course, if you have not been baptized in infancy, you would be baptized as an adult. That's true. But, now the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and I shouldn't speak about the whole Christian and Missionary Alliance, but following my criteria, I speak about one ministry who was talking to me. And he didn't like the way we accepted people into membership in our church. He says "God has given the pastor the ability to see into a man's soul and see whether he is regenerate or not." And "when we look into his soul we know whether he can be received into membership."

Audience: His pastor is God, is that correct?

What?

Audience: His pastor is God?

Well, no there are certain things he can't, he's not omnipotent, but he can see whether a person is regenerate or not. The particular pastor who told me this ran off with another girl and divorced his wife, or she divorced him. Now he sells insurance.

No, but the presbyterian principle is we accept a person who makes a credible profession of faith. Now this leaves it of course in the hands of the sessions, they have to decide whether the person's confession, whether he sounds sincere. And let me give you this example. When I was pastoring a church in Indianapolis, some, a family came up from, it was actually from Tennessee, and lived in Indianapolis. This young man and young women, they had several children. They eventually had 7 or 8. They had both run away from home because both homes were drunken and they fought and everything and the two kids didn't like it at all. And they ran away and got married at a very early age. I think the man, the boy really, had gotten through 6th grade, the girl had gotten through maybe 3rd grade. Now then, it became my duty as the minister, moderator of the session, to examine her for membership. You can't expect a person with that background, 3rd grade education, and not too bright at that. You can't expect a person to know as much a college graduate. And what is a credible profession in the case of this young wife would not be a credible profession in the mouth of a college graduate. Now, of course, the session has to take the responsibility. But somebody has to take the responsibility if you're going to admit anybody to membership. And this woman, you might almost say, was born a Calvinist. She knew Calvinist without any preaching I guess, somehow or other. And, she made a very simple confession of faith. And she demonstrated her sincerity in the church for quite a number of years after. There never was any reason to discipline her for anything. She was one of our best members.

So we do not claim to see whether another person is a Christian or not. We accept people on the basis of a credible profession. And that of course includes some evaluation of their background

and we have higher standards for better educated people, and very low standards for others.