



World Christian Fellowship

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Galatians

Lesson 40-Sanctification

Galatians 4:19-20, *My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰ I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.*

Paul took great risk in the region of Galatia and poured his life for the sake of Gospel and established churches in that region. He, like a pregnant woman, had endured the agonies of bringing the gospel and having it finally be believed, and they literally be born into the kingdom of light.

He had laboured intensely, painfully, to see that happen. They are now his children, and in a very strange set of circumstances he feels like he is in pain again, as if he's going through the birth pangs that he already experienced in bringing the gospel to them, the gospel that brought them spiritual life.

He is enduring the same kind of pain, the pain that longs for them to become what they are not yet.

This time it is "labour pain until Christ is formed in you."

- ✓ First it was “labour pain until Christ is in you.”
- ✓ Now he longs that Christ be formed in them, or that they become Christlike.

They have become believers, Christ lives in them, but they have not taken on the form of Christ.

Paul wishes that he could be present as he writes this letter, so that he could personally hands-on aid them in this Christ formation.

Maybe he was able to go there again, and he could change his tone.

He might have an opportunity to demonstrate some more compassion and tenderness to them, because he is profoundly perplexed about them.

They are true believers

They have begun in the Spirit.

They are in Christ.

But Christ is not yet fully formed in them.

Rather than them pursuing that, they are caught up in being foolish and becoming bewitched by some false teachers who are leading them to a misunderstanding of the gospel. Now they have been turned away from them becoming more like Christ. He is perplexed!

We might call this as frustration or confusion.

They are not what they should be, and therefore they are not what he as a faithful pastor wants them to be.

This is the concern of every faithful pastor for his people.

This is the pain of the ministry, the pain of seeing your children become like Christ. Nothing is enough short of that.

In these two verses we have the very nature of sanctification.

Sanctification:

Very familiar theological, biblical word that all Christians understand.

But the doctrine of sanctification, the truth of sanctification has become unpopular at present time.

You can hear about

- The doctrine of election, (how God has chosen sinners before the foundation of the world to belong to Him and to enter into eternal heaven.)
- Doctrine of Justification (which is where God in time declares a sinner righteous by virtue of imputing to him the righteousness of Christ)
- The doctrine of glorification, (God's redemptive purpose when we are in heaven and we are like Christ, and we are in the midst of eternal joy and peace and bliss and worship and service.)

The doctrine that has fallen into the greatest disuse is this doctrine of sanctification. Yet, sanctification is the applicable doctrine to our entire life as believers on earth.

- Election is something that happened before creation! It was the work of God solely.
- Justification happened in a moment of time when God declared us righteous in Christ by faith.

Glorification will occur in the future.

In between justification and glorification, we live our lives on this earth, and the doctrine that defines the character of our lives before God is the doctrine of sanctification.

What is sanctification?

The word means “to be separated.”

It is the lifelong work of God in every believer to separate us from sin.

It is what the Holy Spirit is doing now in our lives. Nothing is more important for us to understand than this work of sanctification.

The same foolish teachers and their followers who are bewitched about the gospel of salvation by faith alone are often bewitched about the doctrine of sanctification.

The truth of sanctification is what defines the work of the Spirit in our lives from justification to glorification, which means from the moment of our salvation until we enter heaven.

If there's anything that we ought to know, understand, and be committed to it would be sanctification.

This is what expressed by Paul in his words where he says, "I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you, filled out in you, so that you are like Christ. I settle for nothing less."

Ephesians 2:8, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*

That's past.

You have been saved from the penalty from sin; you passed from death to life.

We love to celebrate that. Its right as well.

Preachers love to preach on the grace of salvation by grace alone through faith alone apart from works.

Ephesians 2:9, *not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

All the glory goes to God.

Ephesians 2:10, *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

The doctrine of election, predestination does not only relate to justification. It does not only relate to justification and glorification, but it relates also to sanctification.

God has not just ordained that we be justified and one day glorified, He has ordained that we be sanctified.

That is what verse 10 is saying: “God prepared beforehand.” God prepared, we can say, before the foundation of the world certain good works that we would walk in.

The great truth of sovereign election, divine choice, encompasses our sanctification, not just our justification and our glorification.

God has established a pattern of good works in which believers will walk by His sovereign will. As our justification was accomplished by the Holy Spirit who gave us life, so our sanctification is accomplished by the Holy Spirit who enables us to become more and more righteous, and less and less sinful.

Nothing then is more important for us to understand than this great doctrine that is the defining work of God in us until we go

to heaven. God has ordained this as much as He has ordained our justification and our glorification.

God did not design to justify us and glorify us and be indifferent about what's in the middle. He ordained that, and for that He ordained sanctification and manifest good works, that before the foundation of the world He determined we would walk in them, so that every true believer is being sanctified, has been justified, will be glorified, is being sanctified.

That is a mark of a true believer.

That's why Jesus said in **Matthew 7:16**, *You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?*

Manifest evidences of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work are those fruits.

The importance of sanctification just from the texts of Paul's letters.

1 Corinthians 1:1-2, *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, ²To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:*

1 Corinthians 1:30, *But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption*

2 Corinthians 7:1, *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, *And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you,¹³ so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.*

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;⁴ that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour,*

2 Thessalonians 2:13, *But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,*

Titus 2:14, *who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works*

Hebrews 12:14, *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord*

There are many more passages.

Notice that holiness is the synonym for sanctification.

- ✓ Holiness means “to be separate”,
- ✓ Sanctification means, “separate from sin.”

So, the doctrine of sanctification, we could say, is the doctrine of holiness, or the doctrine of righteousness.

It defines our earthly lives in Christ. It is the constant work of the Holy Spirit to separate us from sin.

You will see as you live your Christian life decreasing frequency of sin and the increasing frequency of holiness as you move from your justification to your glorification.

As the believer is being sanctified,

- the seductions of the world,
- the desires of the flesh,
- the lusts of the eyes,
- the pride of life

are replaced by

- ✓ love for God,
- ✓ love for Christ,
- ✓ love for the Word of God,

- ✓ love for obedience,
- ✓ longing for holiness,
- ✓ aspirations to give glory and
- ✓ honor only to the Lord with your life.

This is, as justification is and glorification is, a mark of true Christians.

Now the question would be asked,

How does it occur?

Paul is desiring that his people whom he loves and once gave birth, if he's in pain again for them to become like Christ, how does that happen?

By what means do we become Christlike?

Are we sanctified?

Do we become holy?

By what means does this happen?

It is again the work of the Holy Spirit, but not apart from means, which engage the believer.

- Salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit, but not apart from faith.
- Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit, but not apart from obedience.

- ✓ **Do I need to read the commands?**
- ✓ **Do I need memorize all the command?**

- ✓ **Do I need to become more familiar with the commands?**
- ✓ **Do I need to develop more self-discipline?**

Maybe I need to have more accountability with people around me who can help me with discipline. Certainly that's good, but that is not what Scripture calls us to do.

If you are to keep His commandments in an increasingly more faithful way, this is not going to come out of sheer duty, but rather our Lord said this: "If you love Me you keep My commandments. Whoever keeps My commandments" – He said – "loves Me."

This is not about duty, this is not about discipline, although it is a duty and there is a discipline; this is about love.

So, if you want to be more obedient, you must love Christ more. And if you want to love Christ more, you must know Christ better.

The unconverted don't love Christ. Anyone who doesn't love Christ is damned.

Believers are those who love Christ and continually urged to love Him more.

Sanctification, holiness, purity, righteous attitude, righteous words, righteous actions are the result of looking at the Lord Jesus Christ and loving Him more until you are literally becoming like Him.

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 by the Spirit of the Lord.*

It is your vision of Christ that is the means the Spirit uses to sanctify you.

- ✓ Sanctification is Christlikeness.
- ✓ Christlikeness is loving obedience to God.

What marked the Lord Jesus Christ?

What was the demonstration of His perfect virtue, perfect holiness?

John 17:17, *Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*

Sanctification happens in the Word.

John 17:18, *As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.*

Jesus said, "I am living the example of sanctification."

What did Jesus demonstrate?

Perfect love for His Father that manifested itself in perfect obedience.

John 5:19, *Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."*

His perfect obedience out of perfect love for the Father is a manifestation of what it is to be fully sanctified.

A fully sanctified person is one who loves God perfectly and obeys Him perfectly. Christ is our model.

What is Christ's perfect sanctification like?

Any faithful pastor will never be content. He will always be in pain until his people are manifestly Christlike.

Why we should be so concerned about this?

- Holiness,
- godliness,
- sanctification,
- obedience,
- separation from sin, and
- separation from the world

These were the very common themes in the history of the church. Preachers preached often on holiness, virtue, fleeing sin, fleeing the world. They preached calls to salvation, and then to the saved they preached calls to holiness.

The truth of sanctification through the history of the church has been dominant, and it should be dominant because it is the dominant reality in the Christian experience.

- ✓ Great to celebrate the doctrine of election.
- ✓ Great to celebrate, as we do today even at the Lord's Table.
- ✓ Great and marvelous to anticipate the glory of heaven.

But we live in the realm of the operating doctrine of sanctification, and it once was central to the life of the church.

There were expectations about how you lived and how you thought and how you talked and how you conducted yourself to honour the Lord. There were continual calls to love the Lord and to be obedient to His Word out of that love.

That's not true anymore. The truth of sanctification, the truth of holiness, godliness is disappearing from popular Christianity.

Rarely we hear any call from popular preachers for

- purity of life,
- holy living,

- separation from the world,
- self-denial,
- resisting all fleshly desires.

Instead, the church is now offering God up as the one who wants to fulfill everyone's desires. All the longings of the selfish human heart are being legitimized. People are being told, whatever you desire, whatever you can dream, this is what God wants to do for you.

Come to Him. Come to Jesus, and you will have everything that you want, which is the false Gospel.

Things of the world are necessarily accommodating that message, so that things of the world are incorporated into the church as the necessary elements to fill out the church. God has become like our Amazon prime membership!

New evangelical Christianity is committed to import the culture, the fashion of the world, and appeal to people's consuming self-interests.

Churches are carefully avoiding anything that,

- ✓ condemns people,
- ✓ convicts them,
- ✓ terrifies them,
- ✓ fear of God,
- ✓ judgment of hell etc.

Avoid anything that expects people to deny themselves, take up a cross, pursue with passion what is holy, pure, and good.

Modern day Christian churches are very strongly emphasizes on justification, and on glorification, there is a strict avoidance of sanctification.

The church is supposed to look like Christ in the world. Faithful churches are always led by godly shepherds who lead their people

- away from the world,
- away from themselves to God,
- away from the fulfillment of their own desires,
- to seek those things which are above, not things on the earth.

What do we see in the media?

Gross sin and immorality attributed to someone in the media across the world.

The church is in a sad state.

How did we get to this point?

Lack of fear of God and accountability.

Churches for centuries were theological, and biblical. The Bible was the centerpiece, and the theology that the Bible taught established the convictions, and churches were God-centered.

When you went to church you were encountering God.

It was God and Christ-centered. They trusted in the Holy Spirit for the growth of the church.

- Churches opposed worldliness.
- Churches opposed sin categorically.

There was a dignity about the churches.

The music had a dignity.

The way people conducted themselves had a dignity.

The leadership carried themselves in a dignified fashion.

You came to hear from heaven.

You came for an encounter with God.

New churches are not theological, they're not biblical. They are psychological and sociological.

Times it makes you think that you have stepped into some kind of fashion show, or rock concert or disco or some theatre.

It is man centered.

The names of Jesus and God are used, Jesus and God are like imaginary friends who give you what you want.

Churches today trust in their growth techniques, not the Holy Spirit.

They trust that by sucking in the world and redefining worship as a mindless musical stimulation while the people think only about their own desires.

You can collect a crowd that way, but only the Holy Spirit can build a church.

Vague spirituality has replaced sound doctrine.

True holiness is not an issue, because that would be confrontation.

Attendance in a church and loyalty to a church is never related, it seems, to the love of the truth or the love of Christ, but always to the love of self.

The most liberated sinners are the youngest, because they lack the restraints that come from the lessons of life, and so youth become the symbol of authenticity. Youthful, irresponsible desire is elevated to a noble level, and the perpetual adolescent is the most authentic person.

We see it in our culture.

The heroes of this culture are so profoundly sinful and so proud about it.

They are the real people.

The church is a restrainer.

The church is full of hypocrites.

“I Did It My Way.”

Same-sex marriage:

Homosexual people don't care about marriage. They just care about doing what they want to do. They don't care about marriage.

Why do they want same-sex marriage?

They want it established by law for one reason.

So that they can put those who are against that sin out of business. That is all they want.

They want to make criminals out of the people who spell that out as sin. They want to criminalize Christianity.

That's the only reason any of this is happening. They are free to do what they want, and they do it. But what bothers them is those who denounce that behavior as sin.

*Strong preaching on holiness against worldliness
is the need of the hour!*

*Confronting the desires of the hearts of the self-
boasting of I, Me and Myself.*
