

Positional and Progressive Sanctification

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Preacher: Tom Holland

[0 : 00] As we finished up last week, we made note of the fact that Scripture often uses the past tense, the word sanctified, as if it's already occurred.

! Now we're all involved, every believer in here is involved in sanctification, so it's not completed. It won't be in your lifetime. But the Scriptures often use past tense, and the champion of that was the Apostle Paul.

Of course, he wrote 13 books. That's a little inside deal there. When he gave his farewell address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, Paul spoke of the inheritance they share among those who are sanctified.

And he was talking to people that were in the middle of the sanctification process, but he used the past tense. That's Acts 20.32. When Paul appeared before Agrippa to give an account of what happened to him on the road to Damascus, he quoted the words of Jesus that day.

After Jesus identified himself to Paul in that blinding light, this is what the Lord Jesus said in Acts 26, among those who are sanctified, past tense, by faith in me.

[2 : 11] And I promise you, Jesus was talking about us even. And you get that, of course, in John 17, the great high priestly prayer, talking about that. Note that at the end of that long sentence, Jesus used those words, sanctified.

He knows who his elect children are. And in God's infinite mind, they are already sanctified. There is no greater example, though, of this than that that is found in the book of 1 Corinthians.

There was no church discussed in the New Testament that had such a poor record of such a string of failures as the Corinthian church.

I'm amazed that we have an entire wing of the church who builds their theology on the Corinthian church. Because it was a mess. They were fleshly.

They allowed sexual immorality of the worst kind to exist within the church. A man actually living, and I think most of you know what I mean by that, with his mother-in-law.

[3 : 23] They were suing one another in secular courts before an unbelieving judge. They used the holiness of the Lord's Supper as an excuse to engage in gluttony and drunkenness.

When they celebrated the Lord's Supper, it was a supper. I mean, they brought barbecue and beer and the whole thing. They were abusing the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Chapters 12 through 14 of 1 Corinthians talks about that. To be sanctified, if it depended upon them, fell far, far short.

But here's how Paul describes the members, or most of the members, of the Corinthian church. He says, but you were washed.

You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

[4 : 30] It's amazing. That is the very essence of positional or definitive sanctification. And that is why in both the Old and New Testaments, believers are referred to as saints.

I love what old Dr. McGee said. You know, you're either a saint or you're an ain't. If you're an ain't, you ain't a saint. If you're a saint, you ain't an ain't. He could just do it, just spiel it off.

A saint literally means holy ones. And there's probably not a man in here tonight that would be comfortable with referring to himself as one of God's holy ones.

Yet that's how the Bible refers to us, how God refers to us. Now, let us be clear. We are not saints and we are not holy on the basis of personal merit.

We all know that. The church at Rome teaches that. They're wrong. What makes a believer a saint is not his practical righteousness, but his positional righteousness.

[5 : 44] All believers are saints because they have been set apart by a holy God and united to a holy Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the concept of positional or definitive sanctification. Yeah, I wrote that first one up there. That's the first piece of sanctification. Positional.

You're in Christ. Well, what is the benefit of such sanctification? By our union with Christ Jesus, we are freed from the dominion or even could say maybe the domination of sin.

Sin will not be our master, although in our fallen flesh we still battle sin. We all know that. We're going to talk about that more later. Through justification, which we spent weeks studying, and the imputed righteousness of Christ, we have been set free from the penalty of sin.

Amazing. Sanctification is a process that gives us freedom from sin's power if we will exercise it.

[7 : 02] And we're supposed to. We learn this in Paul's inspired words found in Romans chapter 6 and in 7. Two great chapters in the Bible.

It is there he states that we have died to sin by virtue of our union with Christ, united with him in his resurrection. He also tells us that our old self has been crucified.

Think of that. We all know from study of the Bible what crucifixion is. In Romans chapter 6 he says this, Do you not know that all of us have been baptized into Christ Jesus?

All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were buried therefore with him by baptism unto death.

In order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life. For if we have been baptized into Christ, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

[8 : 17] And then Paul goes on from there and argues that our death in Christ is what sets us free. Let me pick it up at verse 6 and this will be a little lengthy.

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God.

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions.

[9 : 28] Do not present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

For sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?

By no means. God forbid. I think in Greek it says no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Never even think that. Now, in order to be sanctified, we must be united to Christ.

People that are not united to Christ are not being sanctified. We have to be united to Christ and we are thus freed from the dominion of sin.

And as I said earlier, this is not sinless perfection, but it is to be the direction of our life. So how do we make progress, and I really messed this sentence up so when you get copies, how do we make progress in practical sanctification or practical holiness?

[10 : 49] Because of the Spirit of God now indwelling us, the believer can live a life of faithful obedience on the basis that Christ Jesus has really been crucified and that Christ Jesus really lives in His people.

Boy, yeah, I mean, mark that down. He really indwells us with the Spirit. When you wake up at three in the morning and your whole world's crashing in on you, remember, He's there with you.

That's a great time to get up and pray. I'm living proof of that. Because of the Spirit of God indwelling us as believers, we can live a life of faithful obedience on the basis that Christ lives in us.

That's the very meaning of Paul's words in the second chapter of the book of Galatians. Galatians 2.20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Amazing.

[12:09] Because we have been chosen by God and are being made progressively holy in the image of Christ, we can now fulfill a very great verse or passage in the book of Colossians.

So several verses. In Colossians chapter 3 verses 12 to 17, listen to this. Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, may I add, not taking them to court, which is what the Corinthians were doing, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must forgive.

Now these are inspired words. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. That's amazing.

[13:59] And you know when you pray, guys, if you've never heard this, you're behind. Pray the Scriptures. You want your prayers answered? Pray the Scriptures.

You sit down, you write this down, and you copy it off the computer. And in your quiet time, in your closet, you sit down with this, and you pray those things.

You pray for humility and kindness and meekness and patience. And you just go through this. Make a list of them if you want to. Pray the Scriptures. Now we also have to exercise some deal of caution when we speak in terms of sanctification.

If, for instance, we are attempting to improve ourselves morally apart from the grace that God bestows on every genuine believer that is united with Christ, we will fail.

Worse, we will find ourselves engaged in a counterfeit work of sanctification and that never finds any favor with God.

[15:10] He's not into counterfeit sanctification. We can't conjure it up. Such a work done in the flesh would be totally ineffective.

Romans 8.8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. I wish Paul would be more specific what he meant there. In the flesh can't please God.

Romans 14.23 Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. And then Hebrews 11.6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him.

Forever who would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. Now we come to another important point. As believers, we are to pursue practical sanctification and practical holiness.

And we do this Let me back up. We do not do this to enter into a relationship with God. That's not what that's not the purpose.

[16:18] We don't do this to earn God's love. That's not the purpose. We do this because we've already entered into a relationship with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our faith is centered upon His death, His burial, His resurrection. In such a relationship we've already received God's love and His favor.

And that's found in Christ. And may I say it's unearned, unmerited, and undeserved favor.

Worshipping Christ is the solid rock on which the church stands.

Remember Luther said words similar to that about two months ago in here. Charles Wesley understood this quite well. And I told Dan before the class I toured the Wesley Museum in London. Most of it devoted to John Wesley. but I got to go upstairs and sit at Charles Wesley's piano. I didn't play a tune. I just sat there.

[17:33] Had a little lady, the tour guide, she said, are you all Methodists? And I said, no ma'am, we're Baptists. And she said, oh. And she walked off. I had to take Diane on the tour.

She just walked off. But he wrote a song that I'm going to sing to you now. Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing.

Dan, you probably know the word. I'll read them. With emphasis. Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing, my great Redeemer's praise, the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of His grace.

My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim, to spread through all the earth abroad, the honors of Thy name. Jesus, the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease.

Tis music in the sinner's ears, tis life and health and peace. He breaks the power of canceled sin, He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean, His blood availed for me.

[18 : 42] He speaks and listening to His voice, new life the dead receive. The mournful broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor, believe. Glory to God and praise and love be ever, ever given by saints below and saints above, the church in earth and in heaven.

Actually, in heaven is not there, just heaven. The church in earth and heaven. one day I plan on seeing Brother Wesley in heaven and I'm going to go up and I will say, Charles, you may have been an Arminian in theology but you were a Calvinist in writing music.

You read his hymns and it comes across. He was, he didn't know it maybe but he was a reformed Puritan guy. He may not have known it. There is only one kind of sin whose power has been broken in the lives of people.

The only sin that has been broken in our lives is canceled sin. Canceled by the cross.

Canceled by the Lord Jesus Christ. Canceled by the propitiation, the appeasement, the satisfaction. that was wrought at Calvary's hill. That is canceled sin is sin that has been forgiven through faith.

[20 : 18] And even that is not your own. That's a gift of God. Now, we should battle sin daily with that in mind.

If we are to experience any victory over sin, it must be because Christ Jesus conquered that sin in us by virtue of His death and resurrection.

And there's no victory apart from that reality. And when you get on your knees, and I hope you do, or on your face before the Lord, thank Him for that.

What a blessing. But once we are genuinely saved, we do enjoy victory over the dominion and domination of sin because of our union with Christ.

Remember, He's the sinless one. We can rejoice in this. There is a certainty that the penalty of sin is paid for.

[21 : 23] is there any doubt in here of that great reality? Christ paid the penalty for our sins.

When God looks at you and I, He sees Christ, His precious Son. And we know the Father was satisfied with the sacrifice. How do we know that?

The resurrection. He was raised from the dead as proof positive. And the stone was rolled away.

And remember, the stone wasn't rolled away to let Jesus out.

It was rolled away to let the world in. We worship a God whose tomb is empty. The tomb is empty. The penalty of sin was paid for.

Because of that, the power of sin is broken. Now, consider for just a moment what we mean by the power of sin is broken.

[22 : 28] Because there's a lot of denominations that would say, they'd walk out right now. So, we know that's not true. We know that sin is still present in our lives.

And we know why. We live in unredeemed flesh. The war still goes on. Because sin remains in us, we must continually be putting it to death.

Put it to death. If you don't put sin to death, it'll put you to death. I mean, you've got to be putting sin to death. How do you do that? Through the sanctification process.

This process begins at regeneration, continues throughout the entirety of our Christian life.

Throughout our Christian life.

Never achieve it. Strive for it. But why do we still sin? You know, we could probably come up with a thousand reasons, but I'm going to boil it down to the real reason.

[23 : 41] sin. And people say, well, it's our nature. We've got a new nature. We've got a new nature. Remember that?

Why do we still sin? We sin because we choose to. Sin for us is now a choice.

And we choose it all too often. I'm a living example of that. Does that mean we don't have to sin?

And I'd say, yeah. We don't have to. We have a power living in us, the Holy Spirit of God, placed there by Christ himself, who leads us into holy living.

We have Christ at the right hand of the Father interceding for us moment by moment. We have the Father who is satisfied with the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf and yet we choose to sin.

And the next time you're considering an act, that you yourself know to be sinful, just stop. Stop. Just push the pause button.

[24 : 51] Go to the Lord Jesus right then. Tell him what you are considering. He already knows it anyway. You might have, you know, I'm reminded of the guy who said, well, I'm mad at God, but I

don't want to say anything because I don't want him to know.

He already knows. And open up to him. Lord, I'm thinking about doing this, what should I do? And then do whatever he tells you to do.

If Jesus says, I'll go ahead and sin, then go ahead, but I don't think he's going to say that. Do whatever he tells you to do. If you are alone, voice that prayer out loud.

God, this type of sanctification that lasts for our whole lifetime is called progressive sanctification. I got that up there. This is progressive. Positional is because we're in Christ. Now we have progressive. And we're going to expand on this probably next time, but you know something neat about progressive sanctification?

[25 : 59] It's a gift from God, but we get to participate. we get to do some things that before this is over, I'm going to give you a list of things you ought to be doing as part of your sanctification, not tonight.

In other words, how do you remember progressive sanctification? It progresses as we live the Christian life and as we grow in Christ. It progresses.

We read many times in Scripture about progressive sanctification. and the Bible often uses the present tense when speaking about ongoing progressive sanctification.

Romans 12, Paul, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. if we were fluent Greek scholars as Pastor Mike is, we would immediately recognize based on the tenses used here that what Paul said was be continually being transformed by the renewal of your mind.

[27 : 19] It's continuous action. And the writer to Hebrews says this, 12, 14, strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

That's a heavy weight. The Greek word for strive there, diakete, which means literally to be continually pursuing the holiness, that's the same word for sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord.

the pursuit, now that's an action word, isn't it? That's talking about us. I've been in pursuits out here, but that's an action word. We're to continually pursue holiness and sanctification.

One of the hallmarks of true sanctification is putting off the deeds of the flesh that is characteristic of people who are indwelt by the Spirit of God.

Romans 8, verse 9 and following, You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

[28 : 39] But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. righteousness, if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Now the great apostle Paul informs us that his sanctification, Paul's sanctification was incomplete in this life.

He didn't believe in perfectionism. The definitive passage there is found in the book of Philippians. This is Philippians 3, 12-14. Paul, not that I've already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus had made me his own.

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it on my own. One thing I do forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.

[30 : 03] I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. One of the great comments I read once on this first passage was forget past failures and forget past successes because they'll both debilitate you.

Put them behind you. Press on toward the upward goal, the upward prize of Christ Jesus. Now this passage captures Paul pursuing progressive sanctification.

He was sanctified because he's in Christ. We are sanctified because we're in Christ but we're to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We are to continue that process and we'll get into that more in the weeks ahead.

That should be a life verse right there, a life section of scripture. Read it every day and then pray. Let me back up here because I don't want be any confusion.

I said that sin is a choice and it is but we do choose it don't we? John 1 John if you say you're without sin you're lying you're not telling the truth.

[31 : 20] If you sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous go to him. If we sin he's faithful and just to forgive us that sin and cleanse us of all unrighteousness by the way court downtown that's a pretty good deal.

Walk in and your attorney who's representing you is sitting on the bench. Our sanctification has a very definite beginning.

We can plot that. It occurs at regeneration. Remember I told you regeneration faith repentance justification that's all collapsed into moments real real fast.

And sanctification begins. Remember I talked about the sanctification highway? And remember you know two steps forward a step back two steps forward three steps back it's this every now and then you fall off the highway and the Lord picks you up dust you off pats you on the fanny says go that way go that way.

It has a beginning. It occurs at regeneration. It has a definite! end. There'll be being sanctified.

[32 : 40] When is that? Either you die and go to glory or Jesus comes back and takes us all to glory. And then we will be like him and he is sanctified because we'll see him as he is.

And when either one of those occur then we move into perfected sanctification. And that's where we're going to! get him next time.

We'll see you