

## **Sanctification- Definitive and Ongoing**

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**Integration Question:** *What is your model of sanctification? How do you counsel someone dealing with a sinful habit?*

### Theological Statement

The author of Hebrews reassures us that all who put their faith in Jesus' atoning work on the cross "have been sanctified" (Heb. 10:10). This definitive act is purely the result of our life being unified to Christ, who "has perfected for all times those who are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). For all followers of Jesus, this means that His atonement really did circumcise, cleanse, and renew our hearts, just like the prophets of old foretold (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4). For this reason, Paul boasts that what constitutes a follower of Jesus, is not one who circumcises the physical body, but rather, the one who circumcises their heart through their union in Jesus' death and life, and consequential indwelling of His Spirit (Rom. 2:29). This newness of life results in being freed from the slavery and bondage of sin. Paul writes about this in Romans 6, proclaiming that because "we have become united with Jesus in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom 6:5). Meaning, "our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin" (Rom. 6:6-7). In other words, those are united to Christ now reside in a house where sin no longer has any right to dictate. Christians are finally able to walk perfectly in step with His Spirit. John also sees the total reality of the sanctified life in Christ through Jesus' atonement. For this reason, he writes to the churches on the outskirts of Ephesus, telling them he writes "these things to you so that you may not sin" (1 John 2:1). He reminds them of their sanctified identity in Christ, declaring that "no one who is born of God sins" (1 John 3:9; 5:18). Scripture is clear, the definitive act of sanctification really makes one holy, set apart, and freed from ever having to heed the call of sin in their lives.

Scripture also talks about the ongoing act of sanctification. A couple verses after Paul declares followers of Jesus are completely freed from slavery to sin, he encourages them to walk in their newfound freedom, their righteousness, that results in sanctification (Rom. 6:19). While sanctification is a one-time act of God spiritually recreating all who believe, the ongoing process of sanctification is the choice to remain every second of everyday living out the new identity in a world that is ruled by evil, sin, and death that wage war and constantly want to pull Christians in other directions. Accordingly, in multiple of Paul's letters, he reminded all the Christians to constantly keep off the old self who remains submissive to sin, and to always put on the new self, who lives in the realities of a transformed life (Eph 4:22-24; Col. 3:1-17).

John 17:15-19 makes this claim come to life. Just days before Jesus was crucified, He prayed to the Father for his disciples, saying "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth." Jesus said that He too went through the process of sanctification, If we know that Jesus is holy and lived the only life free of sin, then why would He have to go through sanctification, if sanctification is defined as a process of becoming set apart from sin but not achievable until the day of? I believe that because Jesus was fully man and had to rely on the Spirit to live a holy life, He had to choose every moment submitted and empowered by Holy Spirit to live in His identity. Consequently, Jesus gave us a clear picture that sanctification is not only a state of holiness, but the choice to live every moment of our lives in the reality of our Holy Spirit filled, cleansed life in Christ.

### Ministry Application

For someone who is dealing with sinful habits, such as an addiction to pornography, gluttony, or rage, I would direct them to dive into their identity as a renewed creation in Jesus, as

well as encourage them in spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, spending time alone with God, reading the Scriptures, fasting, discipleship and community, serving others, just to name a few, are Christian practices that allow us to live more freely (guarded against the evil of sin, deception, and death) in the ways of the new, sanctified self. Verbalizing and owning up when we act out of our new identity to others, including the closest people in our lives, is a great attribute of holy living. I was not freed from my addiction to pornography, even amidst partaking in spiritual disciplines, until I openly sought accountability from those closest in my life, including my wife. While spiritual disciplines are vital to a Christians faith, they do not make a person grow holier, as if Jesus' blood only partially cleansed them. Instead, Jesus' completely renews us and makes us entirely holy. This means, spiritual disciplines are a lifestyle that aids a person to walk in their new, sanctified identity in Christ.

Which leads me to my second area I would want to council someone doing with a sinful habit. The more we know who He is, the better we know who we are, the more confidently we can walk in the light. Growing in one's identity is always rooted in becoming more intimate in relationship with Jesus. Just as a heads is the flip side of tails, and vice versa, the flip side to knowing and living in our identity is knowing and living in intimacy with Jesus. And experiencing intimacy with Jesus, will reveal, deeper in our souls, the truth of what He really has done for us and to us. Sharing the "aviation" analogy is helpful for most struggling people to actualize the power and authority Jesus has given His sanctified people. It goes like this: There is a landing strip with planes circling overhead. The planes represent temptation. The planes landing on the landing strip represent sin (the manifestation of temptation). Because sin leads to death, the penalty of a plane landing on the landing strip is death. Now, justification is Jesus

taking away the penalty of the planes landing on the landing strip. So even if a plane lands on the landing strip, it won't result in death (eternal separation from Him).

Sanctification is Jesus taking away the landing strip altogether so planes can't land.

*Because of Jesus, the new state of life for those in Him (our new identity) is life without landing strips.* Although, we do not have the ability to remove a landing strip, only Jesus' atoning work does that, we have the ability to lay landing strip. In other words, we have the ability to choose to continue to live without a landing strip or to lay a new landing strip. This is a choice we make every moment of every day. Now, choosing to not lay a new landing strip doesn't mean the planes circling overhead go away. Rather, we get to live in freedom of them not landing (if we choose not to lay a landing strip). There are things that help us restrain from laying a new landing strip called spiritual disciplines. But these spiritual disciplines are not done to limit the number of planes landing on the landing strip, rather, they are done to help us not lay a new landing strip. Finally, glorification, what all followers of Jesus will experience one day, is when all planes circling overhead are gone forever and there are no more landing strips, nor the ability to relay landing strips, anywhere.