

“The Spirit and Our Sanctification” (Series #2 of 6)

By Pastor Rand Lankheet, for New Horizon URC, second service, February 26, 2017

Based on HC: Q. 53. Biblical illustrations: Romans 8:1-14, 1 Peter 1:1-2

Before reading: Last week we began a short series on the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

Just a note of clarification (澄清): in this series, we are **not** considering other very important works of the Spirit in God’s plan of redemption (救赎). In the Bible, the work of the Spirit starts in Genesis 1, his role in creating the world. Other works of the Spirit include his inspiring (默示) the writers of the Bible to faithfully write down God’s words. Also, the Spirit was directly involved in the redemptive work of Jesus on earth. For example, Jesus conceived (孕育) by the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb./

In this series, however, we are considering the Spirit’s work in us, in our salvation and in our living. Last week we noted how the Spirit causes us to be born again, and unites us to Jesus.

Let us now consider another important work of the Holy Spirit in us—in the Bible it is called “sanctification.” (成圣) [Read: Rom 8:1-14; 1 Pet 1:1-2.

Introduction: Several years ago I traveled to Vienna, Austria. There I had opportunity to hear the world-famous Vienna Boys Choir (合唱团). One of their hymns (赞美诗) was entitled, in Latin, “Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.” The Boys Choir sang the words found in Isaiah chapter 6. “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD God Almighty.”

In Latin they sang: “Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus.” in English, means, “holy, holy, holy.” So, the Bible speaks of the HOLY Spirit. **SANCTI**, in Latin. So it is that one of the main works of the Spirit in us is called, “**sanctification.**” Literally, “holiness-making.” “Holy-fication.”

-The biblical idea of holiness has two aspects. Holiness first means “being set apart from all that is ordinary and common.” Set apart for service unto God. So the Bible often describes us, God’s people, as a “**holy people.**” Covenant children, according to 1 Cor 7:14, each one of them, are described as “**holy children.**” That is, they are separated out of the world of unbelief, set apart from children of unbelievers. / The second aspect of holiness, is that of “being cleansed from sin and impurity, or, being pure.” We are working with that second aspect of holiness, this aft: that is, how the Spirit causes us to become more and more pure; a more godly people.

1. Now, there are also two ways in which the Bible speaks of sanctification.

[Sorry, this is a bit complicated...but very

important!

1.A. Here’s the first way. The Bible says that when we are justified (被称为义), credited with Jesus’

righteousness (义), we are, in that very moment, made holy.

We are definitely, decisively, made holy, as we are credited with the full holiness of Jesus. So, for example, in 1 Corinthians 6. Paul refers to the past lives of the Corinthians, before they were Christians. But then they put their faith in Jesus. They were converted. So Paul says of them, in vs. 11: “You were washed, you **were sanctified**, you **were justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” This kind of sanctification is a past event; it is a completed action and it happens when we are justified.

We are credited with the purity, the holiness of Jesus...his righteousness, his goodness.

1.B. But then there is a **second meaning of sanctification.**

This kind of sanctification is **NOT** referring to the one-time act of God.

Rather, this kind of sanctification is an **ongoing (持续不断的) process of increasing holiness**.

Once we are saved, converted, then the Spirit continues to work in us, so that we grow and increase in purity and godliness (敬虔) .

To distinguish these two types of sanctification, the first type is sometimes called “**definitive (明确的, 决定性的)** sanctification.” The other is called “**progressive (渐进的)** sanctification.” [Repeat.

This afternoon we are speaking about this second kind. Progressive sanctification.

In Romans 8, both kinds of sanctification are in view. The first kind goes along with what we read in [Romans 8:1-2. Read again. “The law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death.” The word “law” here refers to a controlling power in our lives. When we are credited with Jesus righteousness, as we trust in Jesus, the guilt of our sins is removed. We are given the “life power,” the “life principle” of the Holy Spirit, who unites us to Jesus. That’s “definitive sanctification,” a one-time act of God upon us.

-Paul continues in Romans 8. That we as justified people then must keep on being “led” by the Spirit. And we must now “live” according to that Spirit. [Read vs. 5; and vss. 13-14.

Paul is speaking here of our “**progressive** sanctification”—progressing, improving, day by day. As we are “led” by the Holy Spirit.

-Dr. Benjamin Warfield, that American Presbyterian (长老会) and Reformed theologian (神学家) in the 1800’s, has a wonderful sermon based on Romans 8:14. About us as Christians being “led” by the Spirit. Let me share some of his thoughts.

The word, “being led,” is found in other places in various NT books. For example, in Matthew 21. Remember how Jesus commanded his disciples to find a donkey with her colt, to be used on that first Palm Sunday (棕树节主日)? Jesus commanded his disciples to [quote] “loose them and lead them” to him. So those two animals were “led” by the disciples to Jesus. Often, the verb, “to be led” refers to the enforced movements of prisoners.

We also have the verb used about Jesus, arrested by the soldiers that night before Good Friday. Those soldiers “led” Jesus to the high priest Caiphas (Jn 20:28). The proper meaning of that particular verb, to be led, implies the idea of control---the person being led is under the control, the influence, of another person.

-So it is with the verb in Romans 8:14. It helps clarify the sanctifying work of the Spirit on us, as believers. We who are sons of God, saved by Jesus, children of the Father, **are now “led” by the Holy Spirit**. The Spirit powerfully controls us, directs us, leads us. Sometimes, he controls us, despite our natural, sinful wishes. It is not as if the Spirit merely “points out” the right way to us. Rather, the Spirit powerfully directs us and controls us.

What does that look like? Vs. 13 says that we then **more and more put to death** the misdeeds (恶行)

of the body. By the Holy Spirit, we as believers are powerfully directed to kill off wrong thoughts, to kill off sinful words, to kill off, put to death, the actions which also displease our Heavenly Father. We are his children...

Illustration: Sometimes parents see their own children, acting or speaking like young, immature children. They might say to their misbehaving child: “How old are you?” And the child says, “I am 9 years old.” “OK,” the parent says, “then you should act like a 9-year-old, and not like a 3-year-old.” So our Heavenly Parent, our Heavenly Father, expects us to act as we really are, in Jesus. In sanctification, increasingly, you and I must **act like** a Jesus person. We must **speak like** a Jesus person. We must **think like** a Jesus person.

Dr. Warfield also adds this point. In our sanctification the Spirit does not substitute himself for our own activities. **It is by our effort, also, that we advance in greater and greater holiness**.

So, too, Dr. Louis Berkhof, speaks of us, as believers in Jesus, “**cooperating**” in our sanctification. We are not **passive**, as we are in justification (称义). In our sanctification, we as Spirit-filled believers, are to be **active**. We must exert (使努力) ourselves. So Paul himself says in 1 Corinthians 9:27: “I beat my body,” like an athlete training for competition. Like a runner, training on a track. Pushing, controlling, his body.

Appl: So, let me ask: how is that going for you? Are you pushing yourself, as the Spirit leads you in greater sanctification? Are you training yourself in greater holiness? Let me ask: how would you know if you are growing in holiness? If you are progressing in sanctification? Well, one of the later Catechism (教理问答) answers is very helpful in this regard.

It gives three signs that we are growing in our sanctification.

About our sins, our faults and failures, it says we must 1) be **genuinely sorry** for them, 2) we must **hate them** more and more, and 3) we must **run away** from them.

So, let me ask, 1) first, are you able to identify some of the key sins, faults, in your life, at this point? Can you quite quickly make a list of just 3 or 4 key failures in your life at this stage in your life? And, then, more importantly, are you “genuinely sorry” for them, before God?

We’re not talking being merely sad about your sins. Unbelievers regularly are sad about their sins, their personal faults. They can even shed tears over them. Many alcoholics 酗酒之人, for example, will cry when they tell the sad stories of drunkenness. That’s not enough. You see, as a true follower of Jesus, we must be **deeply spiritually sorry** about your sins. +

2) Then, secondly, if we are being sanctified, we should more and more **hate those sins**.

To even say to yourself: “I hate it when I think that wrong way.” “I hate it when I have a bad attitude towards my spouse, or towards someone in my church. I really hate it.”

[The old language in the old profession of faith form (用于决志的文稿), asked those professing whether they “**abhorred 憎恶 themselves**” because of their sins. To abhor yourself means “to be filled with horror and disgust.” That, is when we think of our sins.]

As we identify our sins, we should react in disgust, even hatred 恨恶, over those sins.

We should say to ourselves, “I really hate it, when I sin in that way. I am disgusted when I think how I am displeasing to my loving God, when I sin in that way.”

Do you? Or do you just brush them off... ? +

3) Then, thirdly, in genuine sanctification we must be “**running away**” from those continuing

sins in your life. Are you? The apostle Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2:22: “flee [run away from] the evil desires of youth.” He says in 1 Corinthians 6:18, to “flee from sexual immorality 不道德.”

-Let me give some illustrations. So, if you are particularly being tempted to sexual sin, you must run away from anything that provokes (挑动, 激起) or stirs up sexual lust (欲望).

You must flee, run away from, from wrong websites on the internet.

You must run away from wrong movies and wrong reading material.

Maybe there are certain people who enjoy flirting (调情), and tempt (试探) you... or they themselves are sexually immoral. Flee from them. Run from them.

-That applies to any sin—that you actively run away from and avoid **the people and situations**

which feed any wrong desire. If it’s a desire to drunkenness, you must stay away from places of drinking. / If it is anger, stay away from angry people.

-Then, positively, fill your life with more gentle people. Find friends who are peace-loving. Read books and Bible verses which talk about self-control and gentleness.//

Finally, let me add this note: sanctification happens, **especially, in the context of the church,**

the gathered people of God. In the Apostles' Creed, the line says: "I believe in the Holy Spirit." That line follows immediately with this line: "I believe a holy church...the communion of the saints." There you see the connection...

The HOLY Spirit works, especially powerfully, in and through the HOLY church.

[Repeat.

Some Christians don't like that. If a pastor, or an elder, or a mature believer, gently points out their fault in a situation, they often become defensive (抵触的). They think...how dare they say that? Why, I am not at fault...they are at fault." But, brothers and sisters, a key way in which Jesus by His Spirit sanctifies us is together, as a **holy church**.

And not merely through pastors and elders, but all of us should be working to help one another in our sanctification. Paul prays this way for the Christians in the church in Ephesus: "I pray that out of his glorious riches he [the Father] may strengthen you with through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in [all] your hearts. And i pray that you [all] ...may have power, together with all the saints...to be filled with the measure of the fullness of God." Ephesians 3. All of us helping one another to become more sanctified.

Helping each other speak more loving words. More concerned listening.

If we say something wrong, that we become more aware of it. That we apologize.

We might even tell a fellow Christian that we are working on that area of our lives.

Example this past week, in our small group. The question was asked... +

So may the Holy Spirit be working in each of us, powerfully, to increasingly sanctify us.

And may we be working at it, becoming more godly in our thinking, our speaking, our doing.

That our attitudes and actions, may become more holy...more Christ-like. LET US PRAY.