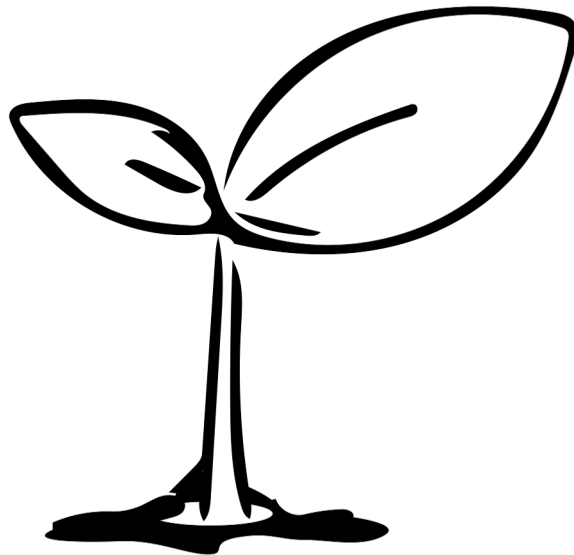




# **SANCTIFICATION**

A GFC DISTINCTIVE



**SANCTIFICATION IS THE PROCESS OF BECOMING HOLY AND BEING MADE MORE INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST. WHILE THE WORLD IS BECOMING MORE EVIL EVERY DAY, THE CHURCH IS NOT. IT IS BEING SANCTIFIED AND WE HOLD TO THIS DOCTRINE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS.**

## **1. WE ARE COMMANDED TO PUT AWAY SIN**

The first reason why we hold to the doctrine of sanctification is because we are commanded to put away sin. On the one hand, when we are saved, all our sin is defeated at the cross (Hebrews 10:10). However, on the other hand, our sin still lives inside of us and we are commanded by the Lord to resist it and fight it until the end of our days.

First John 1:8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." John makes a very clear statement here against those who say that they have no sin because he says they are deceiving themselves. Our sin does not disappear the moment we become a Christian.

On the contrary, John says that our temptations increase and we have a duty to resist them because First John 2:1 says:

*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin."*

This is one of two references that John makes to sin in this passage. The first one confronts the lie that you never sin as a Christian but the second one addresses the issue of how to handle sin when it comes up in your life. You need to resist it if because God hates sin and we have to hate it too. He despises it and we have to despise it as well because of our newfound faith in Him. Otherwise it shows that we are not saved at all.

The point is that a Christian is commanded to get rid of sin because this is where our relationship with God begins. You cannot have fellowship with God and walk in darkness. You cannot be united to Him and be united to what He despises. You have to choose one or the other which leads to the next point.

## 2. WE ARE ENCOURAGED TO GROW

A second reason why we hold to the doctrine of sanctification is because we are encouraged to grow as Christians. God wants us to make progress in our struggle with sin. He does not want us to stay in the same place.

As Paul was beginning his letter to the church in Philippi, he says in Philippians 1:6:

*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

This was quite a statement to make at the beginning of his letter because Paul says that he is confident that God will finish what He started in the lives of the Philippians.

In fact, Paul had mentioned several good works that God was doing in the church at Philippi because they were conducting themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel (1:27). They were growing in humility and service to others (2:1-4). They had learned how to be content and not to be anxious (4:4-14), but what he says in chapter 1 is that they did all of that because God was working in them.

They were making such tremendous progress in their lives because the Lord was moving in them and He would not finish “until the day of Christ Jesus.” This means that God was moving in them already and would keep moving in them until they reached Heaven itself. He had already saved them. He had already paid the price of their sin at the cross but He would not stop there. He would continue the process of sanctification because He wanted to see them grow.

This should be a wonderful reminder to each of us of how much God loves us because He does not just want to save us and let us go either. He does not just want to pay for our sins and send us to Heaven alone. He wants to bring us there every step of the journey. The road to salvation starts with, ends with, and continues with God because it is God all the way, which brings us to one more reason we hold to this doctrine.

### 3. WE ARE TOLD TO STAND FIRM AGAINST THE DEVIL

All of this leads us to one more reason why we hold to the doctrine of sanctification and that is because we are told to stand firm against the devil. Christians are told to fight all the temptations that he sends our way because God does not leave us exposed in the battle against sin. He gives us all that we need to resist and defeat the enemy.

Ephesians 6:10-13 says:

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.*

Using the image of a soldier, Paul tells us to put on the armour of God and get ready for combat. Why? So we can stand firm against the devil.

Some believe that Paul was chained to a Roman soldier as he wrote this because he gave us this letter from prison so he would have seen his helmet, shield, and sword. He would have seen his battle armour and, with that in mind, Paul says that a Christian should dress the same way in the spiritual battle.

We should take up "the shield of faith" (verse 16) to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one and repel his temptations. This shield allows us to resist temptation as we put our trust in Jesus Christ. We should also take up "the helmet of salvation" (verse 17) which guards our minds from being deceived and it keeps our hearts from being tricked. We should also pick up "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (verse 17) so we can slay the enemy with the truths of Scripture. Again, the point is that we need to be ready to fight.

Richard Baxter said, "Kill sin before it kills you"[1] and that is the attitude of the Apostle Paul in this passage. A Christian is in the business of killing sin because God is making us holy.

[1] Richard Baxter quoted in A Puritan Golden Treasury (Carlisle, Penn.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2011) 281.

## CONCLUSION

The world is full of sin today. You see it all around you. Watch the news and it seems like the world is getting worse by the second but the church is not because God has commanded us to be different.

This is because the Bible directs us to put away sin and it encourages us to grow. It is also because we have the full armour of God so we can stand firm against the devil which is something that we must do as those who are being sanctified by the Lord.

If you have any questions about this distinctive or anything else in our ministry, please let us know.



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