

THE224 Christian Narrative 2 Redemption

Unit 3c Order of Salvation Part 3

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Welcome to Christian Narrative 2, Session 3C. Today, we'll complete our discussion about the order of salvation. In our first section talking about the order of salvation, we talked about how Jesus brings us new life. In the second session, we talked about how Jesus brings us new relationships. In this section, we'll talk about how Jesus offers humanity new power. The next step in the salvation process is called sanctification. Defined, sanctification is the act of being separated to God as opposed to anyone or anything else. Salvation comes from the Latin root word *sanctus* meaning "to separate." The simple use of this word in English gives us the word sanctioned. So we might think about a police officer who is a citizen that is sanctioned by the government to uphold the laws and statutes of the land. In this instance, this police officer has been set apart, has been separated and sanctioned or sanctified in order to carry out the laws and statutes of the land. The spiritual use of the word in English gives us the word sanctifying. God or man set something aside specifically for God's purposes, and thus, it is sanctified.

I may sound like a broken record, but God the Father allows an individual to be sanctified or separated to himself. And this is a willful act of God. We've said this time and time again through this order of salvation that the process is, at the highest level, an act of God, but in the individual level is also an act of God. As we've looked at the various stages of the order of salvation, we've seen that each one occurs; it's possible because of God. The same is true with sanctification. 1 Corinthians 1:30, "And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption." We have the possibility of sanctification simply because God chooses to sanctify us. And what we come to recognize is that he does this through Jesus Christ. Hebrews 13:21, he will "equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." What we need in order to live the life that we've been called to live occurs because of Jesus.

He also does this through the work of the Holy Spirit. John 14:15-17 confirm that only is Christ part of our sanctification, but the Holy Spirit is as well. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments," Jesus says. "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." So sanctification is possible because of God's willful choice. And he does this through both Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Now, when we talk about sanctification, there's two aspects of sanctification that we want to look at. The first one is called positional sanctification. The disciple of Jesus Christ is put into a position of holiness based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. So when God looks down at the disciple of Jesus Christ, his own child because we've been adopted, God sees that disciple as holy, not because of what that disciple has done but because of the blood of Jesus Christ. The disciples of Jesus are a holy priesthood then that are set apart for service towards God. We read this in 1 Peter 2:5. "You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." So we are set apart, and we are set apart to a life of service, to a life of the priest, to a life of the call to God, that we serve at his bidding. And this is a secure position of holiness based on the reality that the Holy Spirit resides within the disciple of Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own."

We are positionally sanctified because of the idea that the third person in the Trinity resides within us. That very idea should really blow our minds that the third person of the Trinity, co-equal in power and

co-equal in glory through God the Father and God the Son, resides not next to us but within us as followers of Christ. And how could we not be seen as holy if the Holy Spirit dwells in us? It must be that we are holy. And yet this isn't because of what we've done. It is because of the position we take as we go through this process of sanctification, as we've been adopted, because we've been justified, because we've experienced conversion, because we've been regenerated, because we've heard the gospel call, and because we've been elect. We are thus sanctified when the Holy Spirit comes upon us, when we accept the work of Christ in our life. So we have positional sanctification.

But then we also have progressive sanctification. This is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the life of the disciple, and it is Christ's solution to the roadblocks of perfection. You see, the reality the Bible tells us that those of us who follow Christ are to be perfect. I don't know about you, but I struggle with perfection. I am not perfect yet. And so there's a recognition within the process of sanctification that it is both positional and progressive. It has to do with our standing before God, our relationship with him, that the Holy Spirit is within us, and thus, we are holy. Yet it also has to do with achieving the life that God has called us to live. This process of sanctification is called progressive because the goal is to look more and more like Christ over time and less and less like the old man over time. This occurs through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in our life.

Let me try and explain progressive sanctification with the illustration that you have before us. When we come to faith in Christ, we hear that God calls us to live a certain way, that there is a standard to which we are to meet. Now, this standard is high. It's perfection. But we hear it and we say, "I want to live the way that God has called me to live." And so for many people, what they do in order to live the way that God has called them to live, they develop what I call a spiritual field of vision. They look around them and they say, "What needs to change in order for me to please God?" Well, of course, the first thing that they set their eyes upon is known sins in their life, things that are clearly and visibly out of line with the will of God. Maybe someone is a habitual liar and so they want to become honest. Maybe someone is unfaithful in their marriage and they want to become faithful. Maybe someone is dishonest and they want to become honest. Whatever that sin might be, they begin to tackle these sins and they do meet with some success. They are progressing in their sanctification.

But a problem occurs that they can't deal with the whole of sin that they struggle with. They can only deal with, as you see in this kind of visual that I've given you, one-third of their sins, if we're kind of looking at this as a pie chart. There are two other places that they have to deal with. One is temptation, and the other is sinful habits. Now, temptations are those inclinations to sin that are surprise attacks. We don't know when they're going to come. And so the new believer who is seeking to live the life that God has called them to sometimes meets with success and sometimes doesn't meet with success. And perhaps the best of us, when we fight temptation, see us elevate our stats over time, right? We beat temptation more than we lose, but we still lose to it sometimes.

And then there's sinful habits. Sinful habits are things that we do without thinking. That's the definition of the word habit: something that is so ingrained that we do it without thinking. We don't know we've taken a breath until after we've taken a breath. We don't know that our heart has beat until after it's beat or when it stops beating. This is because these processes in our life have become so ingrained, so habitual. Well, the reality is for some of us, sin has developed such habits that we do it without thinking. And the only time that we can recognize it is after it's been completed in our lives. And so while an individual of good nature and good heart desires to live the life that God has called them to, ultimately

in their own power, they are inadequate to do so. This is part of the reason why we have the sanctification process. This is why the Holy Spirit is called the helper. This is why he is called the spirit of truth. This is why we are told that the Holy Spirit wants to come in and guide us in all things.

So if we are going to progress in our sanctification, then this is what must occur. We must go from using our spiritual field of vision to using the Holy Spirit's field of vision. You see, the Holy Spirit, because he is fully God, is all-powerful and omnipotent and omnipresent, has a full understanding of not just the known sins that we face, but also understands when temptations will come our way and what sinful habits inhabit our life. And so, as we begin to rely more and more on the Holy Spirit's field of vision and less and less on our spiritual field of vision, we begin to progress more rapidly in the process of sanctification.

Now, we need to come to a critical realization. We must allow the Holy Spirit to have full control in our lives in order to overcome the roadblocks to perfection because, see, here's the reality. The Holy Spirit does not force himself upon us. The Holy Spirit does not demand that we listen and obey. In fact, we can disregard the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our life. So there are some believers who walk through life doing their best to progress in their sanctification but are limited to their own spiritual view because they haven't asked the Holy Spirit to have control or leadership in their life. And so there's this conscious moment of crisis that every believer must come to. Every disciple must come to a moment of crisis. Now, crisis is simply defined as a stage in a sequence of events at which the trend of all future events, for better or worse, is thus determined. And we could call it a turning point. Every believer must come to a turning point. You see, the disciple of Jesus must present himself or herself as a living sacrifice to God through the Holy Spirit. Romans 12:1 talks about this. "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Now, yes, some may say, "Well, don't we have to do this more than once?" Absolutely, because as living sacrifices, sometimes we can be out of line with the will of the Holy Spirit in our lives. But there is a moment where the believer, for the first time in their life, comes to the realization that they must be a living sacrifice, that they must sacrifice the leadership and autonomy of themselves and instead ask the Holy Spirit to lead them because the Holy Spirit is the only one that can begin to dig out the sinful habits that are in our life. The Holy Spirit is the only one that can understand and foresee temptations before they come our way.

And so, sanctification, both positional and progressive, requires the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is involved in the life of the believer. And the believer must invite the Spirit to work in him and through him. And so we talk about this crisis of sanctification because when the Holy Spirit is in control, the Holy Spirit helps the disciple combat known sin. This is great. This is something that the believer has been fighting with but now finds new power. Galatians 5:16, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." The Holy Spirit, in fact, also helps against temptation. And the Holy Spirit reveals and removes sinful habits in the disciple's life. If we continue to read in Galatians 5, we read some powerful words. "The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are..." and this is the word, "led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."

You see, the reality is even after we come to Christ, even after we've been elected and we've heard the gospel call and we are regenerated and we are converted and we are justified and we are adopted and we are sanctified, even after this, we have a human body that is impacted by sin. And so habit has

formed. And what we discover is that through the sanctification process, through inviting the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our life, the Spirit begins to war against the inclinations of our body, the inclinations of our old life, and begins to put us in the place of living by the Spirit and not by the flesh. But the Holy Spirit must be in control. The Holy Spirit must lead us.

Now, once the disciple has submitted to the Holy Spirit as a living sacrifice, he or she is able to work with the Spirit to become more like Christ. Philippians 3:14-16, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal this also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained." You see, we can pursue the perfect life, the Christ-like life, the Christian life, the standard of holiness to which God has set out for us through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, by pursuing the things of God and not the things of the flesh. This is sanctification. It's the next step in the process of salvation.

Now, moving on from sanctification, we come to perseverance. Part 7, perseverance. Defined, the perseverance of the saints means that all of those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives. Not only those who persevere until the end have truly been born again. John 10:27-29, Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." So those who are redeemed will follow the way of Jesus. Romans 8:17, "If we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided that we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." We're willing to follow the way of Jesus even if it means difficulty, even if it means taking up our cross and following him.

Yet even though we experience difficulties in the Christian life, we must recognize they are not penalty for sin because Romans 8:1 tells us that there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. So when we experience difficulties, it's not part of God somehow trying to punish us for our sins. But we understand that as we persevere through these difficult things that we experience as Christians, be them sickness, be them persecution, be them martyrdom, even the biggest one, that we are being persevered towards eternal life. Ephesians 1:13-14, "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." Sealed is another wonderful, powerful word. And the Holy Spirit "is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of [God's] glory." So we persevere through the ups and downs of life, recognizing that we've been sealed for eternal life. This is what we pursue and we recognize that the Holy Spirit guards the believer, ensuring our perseverance. 1 Peter 1:5, "God's power [guards us] through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." What a wonderful reminder.

So we move from sanctification to perseverance. And finally, we move to Part 8, glorification.

Glorification is the final step in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died and reunites them with their souls and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like our own. Physical death is the necessary first step of eternal life. Philippians 1:6 says, "I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." So death for the believer is not something to be scared about, physical death, because it brings us into eternal spiritual life. Physical death is not a punishment for Christians. Rather, it is the final outcome of living in a fallen world. 1 Corinthians 15:26 tells us that "The last enemy to

be destroyed is death.” Physical death is the completion of sanctification. We’re told in Revelation 2:10, “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” So we come through this process, and death is the ultimate... We become fully sanctified in our progression towards sanctification. And physical death brings us into complete union with Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:8, “We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” So the believer need not fear death.

Now, we may ask, “Well, what is glorification?” Glorification is the transformation of our physical bodies from decay to new life. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.” This transformation will be the same as Christ. It will be similar to Christ’s resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:20 tells us that. “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” That phrase firstfruits means that there are more fruits to come of a similar vein, and we shall be those. Jesus Christ was the first.

At the time of consummation, at the time of the end, those who are dead and those who are in Christ and are still alive will be glorified. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.”

So we have the order of salvation. Election, the gospel call and effectual calling. We have regeneration, that process whereby we are given new spiritual life in order that we may convert, willingly respond to the gospel call in our life. When we respond through faith, we are justified and adopted. We have legal right standing and we are changed from children of wrath to children of God. We are changed on the inside as well through sanctification, when the Holy Spirit resides within us, positionally placing us as holy and allowing us to pursue a life of holiness. We’re promised that we’ll persevere as those who have been saved. Those who have been redeemed will persevere. And finally, we will be glorified. This is the process of salvation. And as we’ve said, in every step, it is God who is at work within us. The salvation process should bring us to a place of humble thankfulness. We should worship because none of these things could be done apart from the power of God in our lives. To God be the glory for great things he has done. Jesus offers humanity new power. Those are the three phrases that we used: new life, new relationships, and new power. I pray that as you’ve walked through this process of understanding the order of salvation, you have a new respect and a new love for Christ our savior.