

Session 12

Chapter 9 The Key to Sanctification: Keeping a Fine Balance between Standing and State (Part B)

C. When freedom in Christ is overemphasized

In some conservative churches, not drinking, smoking, gambling and dancing qualifies someone as holy and sanctified.

1. In reaction to defining righteousness in terms of avoiding traditional vices, some Christians purposely engage in these things to demonstrate their freedom in Christ and how they are not bound by legalism.
2. The aforementioned Reformed theologian, who belongs to a conservative Presbyterian denomination, lamented over what he has seen too often among the pastors of his movement.

He writes:



“As a [member of my denomination], we were free to drink alcohol, smoke cigars, and gamble (playing poker with other pastors and church members). While many [in our movement] would disagree with the gambling part, there were many pastors and laypersons in my [district] doing just that and making justifications for doing so. I did do some drinking, but I did not like to smoke or gamble.

There was so much liberty as a Christian within [my Church] that I felt that things were not right nor biblical, but I just assumed that everybody in my denomination could not be wrong so I didn't do anything about it. This type of compromise had a negative effect on my spiritual life. With these sorts of so-called ‘Christian liberties,’ how was a Christian to know whether he or she was ‘backslidden?’”

This is how Christian liberty can turn into licentiousness for caving into the desires of the flesh (1 Jn. 2:15-7): when positional theology is overemphasized.

3. Even more alarming is the positional soteriology, such as that of Singapore megachurch pastor Joseph who teaches that since all our sins—past, present and future—are already forgiven in the finished work of Christ, we no longer need to confess our daily sins to be forgiven.
 - a. He says, "His forgiveness should have no more consciousness of sin. Stop examining yourself and searching your heart for sin" (2007:187).
 - b. But, what about 1 Jn. 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

(1) Prince's response: "It was written to unbelieving Gnostics who needed to confess their sins to be saved."

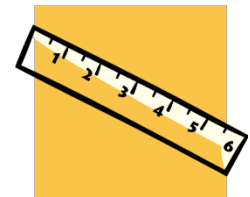
(2) That's not true since 1 John was written to the believers (note the pronoun "we" that includes John), to, among other reasons, warn against the false teachings of the Docetics (who denied that Jesus came in the flesh), the precursor to the Gnostics. 1 John was written to the believer about the Gnostics, and not to the Gnostics.

II. When the One's Own Effort is Emphasized Disproportionally

Many times, however, the pattern is reversed: what one must do to be sanctified is emphasized while ignoring what Jesus has already done.

A. An easy trap to fall into

1. Quite often, out of eagerness to help a young believer, the following things are said to them.
 - a. "You must perform acts of holiness before you declare yourself holy."
 - b. "You must act righteously before you can acknowledge yourself righteous."
 - c. "You must lead a victorious life before you can pronounce yourself a victor."
2. These are the Christians who consider themselves holy and sanctified because they conform to some behaviors that have been idealized as righteous, such as not drinking, smoking, gambling, or dancing.



B. The end result

But too often, making personal behavior the criteria of gauging one's righteousness before Christ lapses into legalism.

1. Grace is abandoned in lieu of judgment; subsequently, any believer who commits one or more of these "vices" in any degree is judged.
2. When the legalistic people fail to keep their idealized criteria for holiness, they feel condemned and hypocritical; instead of enjoying the freedom in Christ, they are bound by guilt and shame (like what Martin Luther experienced while trying to be holy before God by doing).

3. Often, they have to put on a happy or holy face in public setting out of fear that they will be judged if found out.

C. Example of the Pharisees

No group better exemplifies this in the Bible than the Pharisees who were the elites of the ancient Jewish society.



Lk. 18:9-12 (NASB): And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ¹⁰“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’”

1. Paul describes what the Jews in general and the Pharisees in particular were trying to accomplish as “seeking to establish their own righteousness” (Rom. 10:3).
2. Legalism is when arbitrary moral and doctrinal laws are established as the criteria for judging whether or not people are spiritual, even believers.
 - a. This is what the Pharisees tried to do against Christ, over healing people on the Sabbath. Having arbitrarily categorized healing as work, they accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath.

Matt. 12:9: “Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, ¹⁰and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’”

- b. In response, Jesus says to them, “You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions. . . . You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!” (Mk. 7:8-9 NIV).
 - c. In legalism, “judging by mere appearances” (Jn. 7:24^a) replaces grace and mercy.

Discussion¹: One pitfall of living godlier and not sinning outwardly as before is that we can easily become pharisaic. Have you experienced that in your own walk? What does that look like for you? What does that do to our relationship with God? How can we break from it?

III. Sanctification Entire

Another approach to sanctification, namely, the Wesleyan position (a.k.a., *sanctification entire*), may provide an incentive for striving after spiritual maturity but, if it is made into a permanent spirit state, the result may be a type of spiritual delusion.

A. What the doctrine of *sanctification entire* posits

It holds that an individual believer, following a crisis moment in his faith, can reach a permanent spiritual state in which “the war within [him]self might cease and the heart might be released from rebellion into whole hearted love for God and others.”¹

1. If this state refers to spiritual maturity in which the believers are obeying God more and sinning less, then sanctification entire can be a helpful concept.
2. However, some advocates of this position have gone as far as to suggest that the person no longer willfully sins after having been sanctified in this manner (a dangerous position).
Therefore, instead of saying, “I am being sanctified,” they say, “I have been sanctified.”

B. A recipe for spiritual delusion

Traditionally, the groups that adhere to this doctrine (e.g., Church of Nazarene) emphasize conformity to the behavior code of not drinking, smoking, dancing and using makeup.

1. Subsequently, as long as the “sanctified” individuals refrain from these, he is considered “not sinning.”
2. Those who believe that they have reached this permanently sanctified state can hardly admit to having committed any sins with their thoughts (Matt. 5:27-8²).
3. But since Romans 7 talks about Paul’s struggle with sin, the advocates of *sanctification entire* insist that Paul was talking about his past when he was not a believer.
As indicated earlier, the apostle was likely referring to his post-conversion days.



C. The confusion

In essence, this position confuses salvation *present* with salvation *future* “when the perishable has been clothed with imperishable, and the mortal with immortality,” (1 Cor. 15:53), “in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (1 Cor. 15:52) that is sounded at the Second Coming of Christ.

Discussion²: Share your own struggle over sanctification: which side—standing or state—do you tend to lean on for the most part? How are you doing with respect to working out your

¹Melvin Dieter. Retrieved October 18, 2013, from <http://www.xenos.org/ministries/crossroads/OnlineJournal/issue1/fiveview.htm#The Wesleyan view>.

² Matt. 5:27-8: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

salvation (Phil. 2:12)? Be honest!

IV. The Optimal Approach to Sanctification

A. Maintaining a fine balance

In light of many pitfalls of imbalanced approach to sanctification, it is critical that one side is not favored over the other.



1. First, we should never lose sight of our firm position in Christ clearly spelled out in the Scripture; it would be foolishness to try to earn what has already been imparted to us by God.
2. But our sanctification shouldn't end there; upon that secure standing in Christ, every effort should be made to build a disciplined life consisting of the following spiritual exercises:

- a. Reading and studying God's word.
Among other things, this exercise reminds us of our inheritances in Christ.

- b. A consistent prayer life both in depth and length.
One benefit of prayer is to ward off temptations.

Jesus, disappointed that his men could not pray with him for one hour, said, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation?" (Matt. 26:41).

- c. Belonging to a faith community (e.g., church, small group, etc.) where like-minded believers can be encouraged as well as holding each other accountable for their actions.

This is the context in which the believers are forced to deal with their character flaws, such as selfishness, indifference, unkindness, anger, greed, critical spirit, etc.

3. Along with these, tangible changes in lifestyle are needed to avoid being entrapped by the things of the world, including unhealthy relationships and habits that pollute the body and spirit.

The Hebrews writer urges the believers to "lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely" (Heb. 12:2 ESV).

B. Which should be emphasized?

Then, there is a matter of which of the two components to sanctification (standing or state) should be emphasized. This depends on spiritual condition and attitude of individual believers.

1. When a believer is doing quite well in his progressive sanctification (e.g., a consistent devotional life, church involvement, etc.) while others around him are struggling, there may loom a hint of Pharisaic pride:

Being confident of his own righteousness, he is glad that he is not like others.

- a. This is when he must see himself in light of his position or standing in Christ.
- b. He needs to be reminded that none of his accomplishments has made him any more justified and holier in God's sight than before.
- c. The good and righteous things he has done, with the strength that God has provided, merely confirms what was already done for him in Christ.

2. On the other hand, when an individual begins to be lazy in his actual sanctification, it is short distance from there to return to unhealthy and unproductive lifestyle.

Instead of changing his way, he relishes over God's unconditional love for him and the security of his salvation, this despite of his undistinguishable lifestyle from unbelievers.

This is when he needs to be reminded of the following:

- a. The lack of interest in his sanctification, thereby leaving many sins unconfessed, grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30) as well as "put[s] out the Spirit's fire" (1 Thess. 5:19).

Unless he repents, the Holy Spirit will increasingly become inactive, making his spiritual condition go from bad to worse.

- b. He must make the initiative to re-engage in activities that will help him to separate from the pattern of this world, the devil's schemes, and a hurtful past that can entrap the present.
- c. The absence of holiness in his life is a great deterrent to others desiring God in their lives (Heb. 12:14); what awaits is God's discipline "for our good, that we may share in his holiness" (Heb. 12:10^b).



C. The optimal approach

Keeping a fine balance between standing and state is clearly shown in Jesus' handling of the hemophilic woman (Lk. 8:43-8).



“And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. ⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped ⁴⁵ ‘Who touched me?’ Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, ‘Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.’ ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, ‘Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.’”

⁴⁷ Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. ⁴⁸ Then he said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.’”

1. Here, a desperate hemophiliac woman pushed and shoved her way to Christ, who was being swarmed by a large crowd at the time.

Having suffered for 12 years of this disease that made her unclean (Lev. 15:19-27), her intent was to touch his cloak clandestinely, hoping that that would cure her.

- a. To her amazement, “immediately her bleeding stopped.”

(1) She got what she wanted: freedom from a disease that made her feel shame

(2) She was not sick anymore; she was now free, physically.

- b. She, then, looked for a quick exit but Jesus, to her chagrin, wouldn’t allow it; he demanded to know who touched him when in fact many were doing so.

2. But identifying herself was the last thing she wanted to do.

Why?

The disease that made her unclean was shameful enough, but it is likely that she had kept her condition a secret.

- a. Had people known about her condition, they wouldn’t have allowed her to come near them, let alone touch them.



- b. However, by coming in contact with an unassuming crowd and by touching the cloak of Jesus, she made all of them, including Jesus, unclean until that evening. For that, they would have had to “wash their clothes and bathe with water” (Lev. 15:27).
- c. But so desperate was this woman that evidently she didn’t care! Had someone knew what she was up to, she would have been told, “Shame on you” or “Don’t you feel guilty for doing that.”

3. So when Jesus stopped everything to call her out, she was expecting the worst (“came

trembling”); what she received, however, was much more than what she had come for.

She was content with her physical healing but that alone wouldn’t have released her from years of having felt shame about herself and guilty for making others unclean (and thereby not abiding by the requirement of the Law).

- a. However, Jesus wanted to make sure that she was not only outwardly clean but internally as well. So what did Jesus make her do?

Dr. Luke put it like this: “Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told how she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed.”

- b. And this is how we know her story because Jesus made her give a “reluctant” testimony before everyone (some of whom found out, to their chagrin, that they had been touched by her).
 - c. They had the right to be upset since she made them “technically” unclean.
4. But instead of condemnation and judgment against this woman, the most significant individual at the time, Jesus Christ, commended her action, saying “Your faith has healed you.” If Jesus commends her, then who would dare condemn her?
- a. The Greek root *sōzō*, rendered here as “healed” is different from the Greek root *therapeuō*, used in “no one could heal her.”
 - b. Remember, the writer was himself a physician who had dedicated his whole life to *therapeuei*, that is, physically cure the sick people.
 - c. But *sōzō*, often translated as “to save,” carries the idea of being saved from disease and its effects (which in her case were shame and guilt).
- (1) Thus, the King James Version renders this verse as,
“Thy faith hath made thee whole.”
- (2) In other words, now it wasn’t just the body that was healed, but her whole self, including her inner-being (Eph. 3:16: “I pray that [God] may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being”).
5. If this woman had returned home just with physical healing, she still would have been afflicted with guilt and shame over what she had been hiding and doing (i.e., making others unclean) for awhile.
- a. Thus, it’s unlikely that she would have gone to the temple to offer the required atonement on the eighth day after being healed (Lev. 15:29).

- b. However, with her inner being restored and strengthened in this very public fashion by someone whom everyone held in high regard, she now could go home in peace; thus Jesus says, “Go in peace.”
- c. Now, her outward position and freedom of movement (stemming from the physical healing) were in a perfect balance with her inward state and freedom of the heart.

D. Inner healing

This section is added to suggest that inner-healing ministry can be a helpful tool in our actual sanctification, particularly at the outset of our faith journey.

1. What should happen.

- a. During inner healing sessions, like this woman, we tell our stories of both having been victims as well as aggressors.
- b. In case when hurtful and painful things happened some time ago, we must rely on the Holy Spirit to recall them but it is imperative that the recollection is as accurate as possible and not always blaming others for everything.
 - (1) In other words, there are people whom we need to forgive as well as those from whom we need to receive forgiveness.
 - (2) Ultimately, the power to live freely will come from hearing Jesus, who, despite knowing all that happened, says, “You have been made whole; go in peace.”

2. What inner healing needs to be careful with.

Having reached the state of freedom, it is important to not regress.

In responding to Charles Kraft’s book *Two hours to Freedom*, an AMI pastor wrote:

“This gives off the impression that once we’ve dealt with some of our issues and demons, that we are totally set free. Consider, for instance, the case of college kids who struggle with lust, porn, masturbation, and other sins (not to mention young adults).”

- a. He, then, raised this question?

“So with Dr. Kraft’s model, if we were to put the demon of lust (along with others) into the *box* and send it to Jesus, are they forever free of going back to the internet and browsing on porn channels?”

Answering his own question, he said, “Of course, that’s not the case.”

- b. The crux of the matter is the question of how freedom is defined.

The same pastor wondered:

- (1) “Is the temptation not as strong after inner healing?
Is the issue of porn and lust even related to inner healing?”
- (2) “I suppose this can also apply to the desire for power
and money or even the difficulties of forgiving someone.



So, if I have walked through inner healing and forgiven someone and even have the demon of discord exorcised, does that mean I will enjoy being with that person who's hurt me deeply in the past?”

- c. His cautious warning: “I think the word freedom gives off the impression that all of the old emotions and issues would simply vanish. And when it doesn't, I think people look at inner healing as just a therapeutic and temporary exercise.”

3. Inner healing as a tool of sanctification.

Ultimately, the long-term effectiveness of inner healing as a tool for sanctification hinges on two things:

- a. First, has the person truly internalized or embodied the unconditional love of God expressed in the work of Christ through justification (salvation past), sanctification (salvation present) and glorification (salvation future)?

This is the immovable foundation of our faith.

This ought to produce a sense of gratitude that motivates the person to refrain from offending God and to desire to conform to Christ's likeness.

- b. Second, following an effective inner healing session, does the person continue with the optimal approach to progressive sanctification?
- a. Seriously reading and studying God's word, and then applying the truth in our daily living (James 1:22-5)
 - b. Consistently praying both in depth and length
 - c. Actively being involved in the faith community, to be encouraged as well as held accountable
 - d. Maintaining a fine balance between our immovable standing in Christ before God and own effort to separate ourselves from the pattern of this world,

devil's scheme and the effects of past painful experiences

V. The Results of Sanctification

A. A closer walk with Jesus Christ in much greater intimacy

1. As believers renounce their sins and consecrate themselves before Jesus, they are bound to experience a new level of God's holiness and love.
2. Jesus promises that as believers come near to him, he will come near to them (James 4:8).



B. The horizontal effect of walking close to God

A closer walk with Christ will cause believers to be more conscious of their own actions and motives, and in so doing become cautious in how they lead their life before the watchful eyes of the world.

C. Sensing the “heartbeat” of God

A closer walk will also result in greater awareness of those things that make God joyous (because his children obey Him), sad (because sinners do not repent), and at times, angry about the world (injustice, indifference, etc.).

1. This implies that the sanctified believers, instead of being primarily concerned about their own goals and ambitions, are more concerned for the heart of God and His desire to reach the fallen humanity.
2. This should be the reason for “do[ing] good works which God prepared in advance for [us] to do (Eph. 2:8).

D. Selflessness

Whereas sinners and immature believers seek to benefit only themselves, the sanctified believers, on the other hand, seek to do good for their neighbors: they are humble, caring, kind, patient and selfless.

E. Love God

Ultimately, they love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind, and love their neighbor as they love themselves (Matt. 22:37-39).

Discussion³: As we conclude this chapter, take a prayerful moment to reflect on your *actual* spiritual state. How are you *really* doing with the Lord?

Are you dealing with discouragement or habitual sins? Perhaps, it's pride or bitterness. So, what positional truth do you need to hear at this moment? How can you actively participate in your own sanctification? Pray; heed the inner testimony of the Spirit; jot it down; act upon it.

Homework 12

Read over the material covered in the last class and the additional Bible reading (if any). If you have any questions, please note them here and ask me later.

1. What is legalism and what is the principal reason behind it?
2. How is your current state of your sanctification? What are some areas of your life that need changes?
3. How do you plan to implement the necessary changes in your life so that your life is separated from the pattern of this world, the devil's schemes, and the painful past experiences that may affect your present? Pray before responding.