

# Sanctified by the Cross

1 Corinthians 1:26–31

*“But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life” (Romans 6:22).*

Christians exist to save sinners and make disciples (Matthew 28:18–20). However, evangelism, once “in,” is now “out.” “Why try to save someone who does not view himself as lost?” some now say.

## DEDICATION

Sanctification has never been “in.” Most of us do not even know what it is. “Sanctification,” simply, is being “set aside, dedicated” for God’s use. In religion, it means “holy.” As Peter said, “. . . it is written, ‘you shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15, 16). We can be right without being righteous (Matthew 6:1–18), but we cannot be righteous without being right. Sinners must be saved, and the saved must be sanctified.

Christians have been saved (that is salvation). Christians are being saved (that is sanctification). Christians will be saved (that is glorification). The saved need to be sanctified, not re-saved. God does not sanctify the un-saved.

We have salvation because of the position we have in Christ. Sanctification, however, is a process. Salvation comes through the event of our obedience to God; sanctification takes a lifetime. Paul wrote, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18; NKJV).

Let us not confuse salvation, sanctification, and glorification. We must learn to think in concepts. Most religious confusion comes from mixing up these three truths. Salvation is not an initial spasm followed by chronic inertia.

### **FAITH, NOT PERFECTION**

Can one be a Christian without being perfect? Yes, for no Christian is perfect. People say, "I tried and failed, so I quit." Extremes come from misunderstanding concepts. "Once saved, always saved" is wrong. "Once saved, never saved" is equally wrong! Christians must know they are saved (1 John 5:11–13). We cannot be perfect; therefore, we must be saved by faith. We cannot be perfect, but we can be faithful one day at a time (Romans 3:10, 23). Faith works through love! (See Hebrews 11.) We cannot save ourselves by ourselves, so we must trust Jesus to save us. Our faith does not save us; the object of our faith (Jesus) saves us.

### **DAILY WALKING IN THE LIGHT**

Saints sin even when we are walking in the Light. Read 1 John 1:7—2:3. The blood of Christ has saved us; His "blood of the covenant" also sanctifies us (see Hebrews 10:29b). Saints are constantly washed from

sin and continually grow in sanctification.

Moses was given a law system; saints now live in a faith system. The most practical thing on earth is faith. We walk by faith (not perfection; 2 Corinthians 5:7). “The righteous man shall live by faith” (see Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17b; Galatians 3:11b; Hebrews 10:38a). Let us pause and take special notice in the Scriptures when God quotes Himself!

The troubled “church of God at Corinth” was sanctified (1 Corinthians 1:2). As vile sinners, they had repented and their sins had been washed away (1 Corinthians 6:9–11). They had immediately become “saints” and then had begun growing daily in sanctification.

God (John 10:36; 1 Thessalonians 5:23) and Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30; Hebrews 2:11) sanctify. Christ’s divine sacrifice, made once for all time, is the foundation of sanctification (Hebrews 10:10, 14, 16–24, 29; see Hebrews 7–9). Truth (John 17:17, 19), “the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:5), and the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:16; 1 Peter 1:2) sanctify. In addition to all of this, faith sanctifies (Acts 26:18).

What is the conclusion? Jesus did not save the Corinthians to leave them as they were. Saints must live in repentance. Children of God are “saints,” even if they are not “perfect angels.” A Christian grows in sanctification.

## DISCIPLESHIP

Sanctification is discipleship, the process of learning and growing to be more like Christ. We are to have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5–11), daily buffet our bodies (1 Corinthians 9:23–27), and put off the old and put on the new (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22–24). We grow

in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Peter 3:18). Through our growth, Jesus is being formed in us (Galatians 4:19). Every thought becomes captive to Him (2 Corinthians 10:5).

There are no spiritual hermits. God makes His church out of saints. No one can become a “spiritual giant” alone. We “stimulate each other to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24). We are all part of the body. There are no “Lone Ranger” Christians. We do not withdraw—we serve as His body. We deny ourselves and take up our crosses daily (Luke 9:23–26).

The twentieth-century theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote:

Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing . . . makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love.<sup>1</sup>

*The cross . . .  
there is no other way!*

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<sup>1</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1952), 63.