

Christian Sanctification—A Summary from Eternity Past to the Eternal State

A Sermon Preached by Thomas Ross at the Word of Truth Conference on Sanctification, Bethel Baptist Church, El Sobrante, CA, 11/2020

Text: John 17:11-19:

¹¹ And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*. ¹² While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. ¹⁸ As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. (John 17:11-19)

Outline:

- 1.) The holy God
- 2.) His holy purpose
- 3.) The holy Mediator—and His holy redemption
- 4.) The holy people
 - i.) Definitively holy
 - ii.) Progressively holy
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- 5.) Are you holy?

In this sermon, we are going to get an overview of holiness and sanctification. We are going to get to our text, Lord willing, but first we must understand some background.

1.) The holy God

The one true God, Jehovah, is ultimately and uniquely the Holy One (all *hagios* below):

“And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” (Revelation 4:8, *hagios*)

Consequently, we read about the:

“Holy Father” (John 17:11)

The Holy Son: “These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth” (Revelation 3:7) & “the Holy One and the Just” (Acts 3:14)

The Holy Spirit: “the Holy Ghost” (John 1:33)

The holy Trinity, as the one true God, is uniquely and eternally holy; within the one undivided Godhead, there subsist the infinitely and immeasurably holy Father, the holy Son, and the holy Holy Ghost.

What does it mean that God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is holy?

The OT word group is *qds*: verbs like *qadesh*, adjectives like *qadosh*, nouns like *qodesh*, etc.

Jehovah’s holiness appears in texts such as:

Josh. 24:19 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he *is* an holy God; he *is* a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

Josh. 24:20 If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

BDB states that the original idea of the Old Testament verb is “*separation*.” It is “apartness, sacredness” (noun *qodesh*), used “of God, as separate, apart, and so *sacred, holy* ... exalted ... separate from human infirmity, impurity, and sin” (adjective *qadosh*).

“[H]oliness like all other attributes of God is the divine nature itself and so present in God in absolute perfection[.] ... God Himself is rather the essential idea and principle of holiness.—Mastricht (II, 198): “Holiness belongs to God (1) not as an accessory but as His actual essence; nor (2) as something received from another source but as the fountain of all holiness in all things ... nor (3) by fixed measure; but without measure in an infinite degree, which accordingly cannot be increased or diminished, because this is its very essence, although it can and ought to be declared more and more, Mt. 6:9 (hallowed be thy name).”¹

The opposite of holiness appears in texts such as:

Lev. 10:10 And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;

What is “holy” is contrasted with what is “unholy,” *chol*, also translated “common” or “profane.” What is holy is paralleled with what is “clean” and contrasted with what is “unclean.”

This crucial idea is repeated elsewhere in the Old Testament:

Ezek. 44:23 And they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

God is holy in that He is the transcendently separate one:

Holiness is so much the essence of who God is that Amos speaks of him as swearing “by his holiness” (4:2). This is simply another way of saying that “the Lord God has sworn *by himself*” (6:8). ... God’s name is qualified by the adjective “holy” in the OT more often than all other qualities or attributes combined ... The root meaning of the Hebrew noun “holiness” (*qodes*) and the adjective “holy” (*qados*) ... means “to cut” or “to separate,” and thus to be *distinct from* and *set apart*. ... God is separate from everyone and everything else. He alone is Creator. He is altogether and wholly other, both in his character and his deeds. He is transcendently different from and greater than all his creatures in every conceivable respect. ... Holiness, then, is ***that in virtue of which God alone is God alone. Holiness is moral majesty.*** ... [It represents the] ...

¹ Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thomson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 93.

transcendent inviolability of God. ... [It] includes purity but is much more than that. It is purity and transcendence. It is a *transcendent purity*" (57).²

God's ethical holiness is developed theologically out of His majestic otherness; it is His moral unapproachableness or His absolute and eternal separation from all that is unclean.³

Note as well that the revelation of His mind, character, and will in Scripture is likewise spotlessly holy: "the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:21), for the law is the expression of the will of the holy Jehovah.

So this is the holy God.

2.) His holy purpose

What is holy and what is unholy, what is clean and what is unclean, cannot, must not, be in contact. But both unholiness and holiness can be transmitted.

Speaking of the vessels of the tabernacle, Moses was commanded:

Ex. 30:29 And **thou shalt sanctify** [Piel] them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them **shall be holy** [Qal].

Ex. 30:30 And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and **consecrate** [Piel] them, that *they* may minister unto me in the priest's office.

By means of the holy anointing oil [which types the Holy Spirit], the tabernacle and all of its accouterments are "sanctified," with the result that they become קֹדֶשׁ קְדוֹשִׁים "most holy." Anything that comes into contact with them became holy by contact, as was stated for the altar in Exodus 29:37. If it were a thing unholy in itself, which could not be made holy, contact with what is holy would involve its destruction, for what is holy and what is profane could not, must not be together. So "[t]he new sphere of holiness was superlative, a 'holy of holies' (קֹדֶשׁ קְדוֹשִׁים). This new state of holiness, separate in function and existence, was so powerful that it was

² Sam Storms, *Attributes of God* (Oklahoma City, OK: Sam Storms, 2006).

³ Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity: The Doctrines of Salvation, the Church, and Last Things*, vol. 3 (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 120.

contagious; that is, anyone coming into contact with it became holy also.”⁴ The same anointing oil, type of the Holy Spirit, anointing Aaron and his sons results in them being “consecrated,” set apart as holy, a necessary prerequisite to ministering in the priesthood—only holy persons could touch the holy vessels. The non-priests in Israel, who were not able to be part of the holy Old Testament priesthood, would die if they touched the holy vessels—they were unable to bear the holiness transmitted to them and so perished.

Just as holiness could be “passed on,” could be “transferred,” could be “contagious,” so could unholiness be contagious.

So God, as the Holy One whose first action after creating light was dividing or separating light from the darkness, had a holy eternal purpose—for a holy people in a holy creation, a people chosen by and consecrated to Himself, separated or severed from those who were unholy, a people who would glorify and praise the Holy One in all His transcendent and pure perfection, in a holy creation that would itself be a holy place for His holy dwelling. His purpose was “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16). Jehovah loves His holiness (Malachi 2:11), and will fill His creation with it. God’s holiness would overflow to His holy people and to His holy creation, as certainly as He was Himself holy:

Num. 14:21 But *as truly as I live*, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

Note the connection in Isaiah’s vision of the holy God, visible in the holy Son seated on His holy throne, with the transmission and spread of holiness and glory:

Is. 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

Note that in this vision of Jehovah’s glory His terrible and awesome separateness is seen, so that Isaiah cries out: “Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). Isaiah knows that holiness and unholiness cannot and must not be together—as an unholy

⁴ Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, ed. H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick, vol. 2, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 268.

person, around unholy people and part of a people who are unholy, how can Isaiah be in the presence of the holy God and yet not be destroyed?

Note the answer to this question in vv. 6-7:

Is. 6:6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

Is. 6:7 And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

Contact with a coal from the sacrificial altar enabled Isaiah to have his iniquity removed, his sin purged. This same holy God is active not just in destroying the unholy, but in imparting holiness to sinner through the instrumentality of sacrificial death. He is willing—in infinite love and grace—to separate men from their sin and make them separated unto Himself—to make them holy—and He is able to do this in a way that is itself holy, as all His ways are holy.

Thus Isaiah is regularly able to refer not only to Jehovah as “the Holy One”—the transcendent, majestic, pure, righteous, sovereign God—but as “the Holy One *of Israel*,” one who, despite being infinitely set apart, yet was also able to belong to His people, those among whom He had established sacrifice, those to whom He promised that He would come among them and be the Holy One yet be in their midst—so that the infinitely separate God would yet be Immanuel, God with us.

Is. 57:15a: For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*...

This is what we would expect—utter transcendence, separateness from all that is not God, including from all sin—but the verse does not end there!

... **with him** also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

How can this be? Jehovah proclaimed through Isaiah that He would send a holy Servant who would make them holy them through His holy sacrifice (Isaiah 52:13-53:12), and whose sacrificial offering would overflow in holiness even beyond the limits of Israel to “sprinkle many nations”

(Isaiah 52:15), and from His “holy mountain ... the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

So this is God’s holy purpose.

3.) The holy Mediator—and His holy redemption

How did God create a holy people? We are finally ready to examine our text in John 17. How could the holy, holy, holy Lord Almighty have a holy people? How can the High and Lofty One whose name is Holy, before whom the seraphim cover their faces and cover their feet (Isaiah 6), yet dwell in the midst of a people as a holy God?

John 17, in the context of the rest of John and of the Bible, teaches that in eternity past the Father chose, set apart, consecrated, or severed His elect people from the mass of humanity and gave them to His Son, who would become true Man, one with them, being like them in all things except sin, and them redeem them through His sacrificial death. On the righteous ground of His sacrificial death, the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son in time as He proceeds eternally from them as from one Principle, would unite them to Christ, make them perfectly holy or just legally through the imputation of the righteousness purchased by the incarnate Mediator’s death and shed blood, make them holy inwardly through their lives by the power of His Spirit, and finally make them in every way holy in a holy resurrection, perfectly holy like the incarnate Son. The holy work of the holy Mediator would purchase and pass holiness to the saints—the holy people. In the words of John 17:17-19:

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

John 17:18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

John 17:19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Christ, as High Priest, sanctified Himself for the sake of those chosen and eternally loved ones for whom He was praying. The Father sanctified Christ, set Him apart for His redemptive and sacrificial work, and sent Him into the world, John 10:36; here we see the Son in full agreement with His Father, sanctifies Himself for the cross. The Old Testament called the dedication or offering of sacrificial animals their being sanctified:

Ex. 13:2 **Sanctify unto me all the firstborn**, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: it *is* mine.

Ex. 13:14 And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What *is* this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage:

Ex. 13:15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: **therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males**; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.

Thus, Christ's sanctifying Himself was His dedicating Himself to His sacrificial death, that His blood might purchase salvation—justification, sanctification, and glorification—for His loved ones. Christ completely separated Himself to the will of God in redemptive obedience, earning the merit and fulfilling the penal sanctions of sin that a standing before God requires. Furthermore, His sacrifice was a holy one. Sin was not overlooked and dismissed without the satisfaction of justice, but the full and righteous demands of God's law were fully met in the cross. There "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*" (Psalm 85:10), bringing "salvation" and "peace" to "his people" or "saints" (Psalm 85:8-9). Christ met the demands of the righteous commands of God to the uttermost—He was perfectly holy in His nature, free from Adam's sin through His virgin birth, and spotlessly pure in His every word, thought, and deed—and He offered Himself as a holy sacrifice to the holy Father, both consecrating and offering as Priest, and being the One offered as sacrificial Lamb, so that all who receive the infinite efficacy of His sacrifice are thereby "perfected for ever" (Hebrews 10:14). At the cross He was both King of righteousness and King of peace (Hebrews 7:2)—not just the righteous Lord on His own behalf, but "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:16). He sanctified or offered Himself, His sinless human nature, his body and his soul, which because of their union with his Divine person; which gives his sacrifice infinite value and efficacy. Through this holy redemption wrought out by the Holy One on behalf of unholy sinners, the Father could "declare his righteousness for the remission of sins" now completely and finally put away, and in "justify[ing] [sinners] freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," He could not just declare His mercy, but His very "righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26).

Let us wonder, grace and justice
Join, and point to mercy's store;
When through grace in Christ our trust is,

Justice smiles, and asks no more:
He who wash'd us with his blood,
Has secur'd our way to God.⁵

Behold the holy Mediator and His holy redemption!

4.) The holy people

This holy Mediator, through His holy life which climaxed in His holy offering, sanctified Himself not for His own sake, but for the sake of His people:

John 17:19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Through their union with Him, they are likewise sanctified:

Heb. 2:11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

How does the holy Mediator make His people holy? He makes them holy: A.) Definitively; B.) Progressively; and C.) Ultimately.

A.) Definitive sanctification

At the moment of regeneration or the new birth, the moment of repentant faith in Christ, the now repentant sinner is definitively and once-for-all set apart from sin and consecrated to God. This eternity-determining act is definitive sanctification.

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified [perfect tense verb] by faith that is in me.

The perfect tense here refers to a completed action with continuing results. At the moment of repentant faith, when the sinner is turned from darkness to light, he receives forgiveness, and is

⁵ John Newton and Richard Cecil, *The Works of John Newton*, vol. 3 (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1824), 654.

definitively removed from the world and the realm of sin and death, united to Christ, and brought into the realm of life and righteousness. By means of union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, a total transfer has been made from the realm of sin and death's power to the power realm of righteousness and life—a transition of eternal finality between two kingdoms—resulting in the freedom of forgiveness in Christ and the liberation to serve God in righteousness.⁶ He receives a new nature, becomes a new creature, has a new Lord, and is part of the new creation in Christ. This radical transfer requires that sanctification *necessarily* follows justification and the new birth. Preservation in faith, and perseverance in good works inevitably, although not automatically, flow from definitive sanctification.

Because of this definitive act of sanctification, all who are in Christ, from the most spiritually immature to the most mature, are called “saints”—“holy ones.”

1Cor. 1:2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified [perfect passive participle—definitive sanctification with continuing results] in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

B.) Progressive sanctification

The new nature granted to all believers at the moment of their regeneration and definitive sanctification grows stronger by the grace and strength of the Holy Spirit, through the power of the cross of Christ, in progressive sanctification. Sin, which possessed tyrannical power before the new birth, has its dominion shattered at the moment of the new birth and of definitive sanctification, and its remnants are progressively eradicated by the Spirit as the new nature grows stronger through grace and gains the victory in its constant war with the flesh, that is, with the remnants of indwelling sin.

2Cor. 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves [hortatory aorist subjunctive] from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting [present participle] holiness [*hagiosune*] in the fear of God.

The believer, by grace, cleanses himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and in so doing, he is perfecting holiness. “Perfecting,” *epiteleo*, is “1. to finish someth. begun, *end, bring to an*

⁶ Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity: The Doctrines of Salvation, the Church, and Last Things*, vol. 3 (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 127.

end, finish ... 2. to bring about a result according to plan or objective, complete, accomplish, perform, bring about ... 3. to cause someth. to happen as fulfillment of an objective or purpose, fulfill” (BDAG). Holiness, which began at the new birth, is progressively accomplished, until its finishing point in eternal glory; when the saints “hearts [are] unblameable in holiness [*hagiosune*] before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (1 Thessalonians 3:13).

Heb. 12:14 Follow [present imperative of *διώκω*, “make it your habit, continue to pursue, continue to run after”] peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Paul commands those who have been definitively sanctified at the moment of their new birth to pursue or run after holiness, warning that those without holiness are those who have failed to truly receive the grace of God, but are like profane—unholy—Esau (12:15ff.). “Run after the holiness without which nobody will see God in the kingdom.” Those definitively sanctified will progressively be sanctified. Paul combines the two in Hebrews 10:10-14:

Heb. 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified [perfect passive participle] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. ἐν ᾧ θελήματι ἡγιασμένοι ἐσμὲν διὰ τῆς προσφορᾶς τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐφάπαξ.

Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, all who are washed in His blood are set apart once for all, with continuing results. What kind of continuing results?

Heb. 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected [perfect active indicative] for ever them that are sanctified [present participle, “the being sanctified ones”]. μὴ γὰρ προσφορᾷ τετελείωκεν εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους.

They are definitively sanctified—they are, at the judicial bar of God, perfect, for ever—and they are progressively becoming holy—they are the being sanctified ones.

Consider also:

Hebrews 2:11 For both he that sanctifieth [present active participle] and they who are sanctified [present passive participle] *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, ὃ τε γὰρ ἁγιάζων καὶ οἱ ἁγιαζόμενοι, ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντες· δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοὺς καλεῖν, 12Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will

I sing praise unto thee. λέγων, Ἀπαγγελω τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου, ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας ὑμνήσω σε.

Christ, by the power of His cross, is sanctifying them, and they are being sanctified by Him, in significant part as He declares to them His name—He reveals to them His character, who He is, to them, and they grow more like Him as they behold and commune with Him by faith.

Progressive sanctification also is referred to with many other Biblical terms. The Holy Spirit quickens, transforms, strengthens, renews, etc. the believer, making him more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. The new man is renewed, and the sinful flesh is mortified, by the strength of the Holy Spirit. Sin was given a mortal wound, and a new nature given, at the moment of definitive sanctification. This process continues through progressive sanctification, and is perfected in ultimate sanctification, when holiness becomes perfect in the presence of the sanctifying God.

In the words of the 1689 London Baptist Confession:

1. They who are united to Christ, effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new Spirit created in them, through the vertue [power] of Christ's death, and Resurrection; are also¹ farther sanctified, really, and personally, through the same vertue [power],² by his word and Spirit dwelling in them;³ the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed,⁴ and the several lusts thereof, are more and more weakened, and mortified; and they more and more quickened, and⁵ strengthened in all saving graces, to the⁶ practice of all true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

2. This Sanctification is⁷ throughout, in the whole man, yet imperfect⁸ in this life; there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part, whence ariseth a⁹ continual, and irreconcilable war; the Flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh.

¹ Act. 20:32; Rom. 6:5, 6.

² Joh. 17:17; Eph. 3:16, 17, 18, 19; 1 Thes. 5:21, 22, 23.

³ Rom. 6:14.

⁴ Gal. 5:24.

⁵ Col. 1:11.

⁶ 2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:14.

⁷ 1 Thes. 5:23.

⁸ Rom. 7:18, 23.

⁹ Gal. 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:11.

3. In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much¹¹ prevail; yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ the¹² regenerate part doth overcome; and so the Saints grow in Grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,¹³ pressing after an heavenly life, in Evangelical Obedience to all the commands which Christ as Head and King, in his Word hath prescribed to them.⁷

iii.) Ultimate sanctification

1Th. 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil. 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

The believer was transferred from the realm of death and sin into the new creation at the moment of his new birth, when he is definitively sanctified:

2Cor. 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

That new creature is strengthened in progressive sanctification, and the good work continues until the return of Christ, when believers will receive their glorified bodies and be perfectly like Christ, seeing Him as He is. If they die before Christ returns, their spirits are immediately perfectly free from sin in conscious bliss in the presence of Christ. When Christ comes back the second time, they will all receive resurrected, glorified bodies and will in all ways be perfectly conformed to their risen, returning, and reigning Lord, wholly sanctified at the coming of Christ. At regeneration, the Son reveals the Father to them—for the first time, they, by faith, truly know and spiritually see God (Matthew 11:27). Right now, 2 Corinthians 3:18 is taking place:

2Cor. 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

¹¹ Rom. 7:23.

¹² Rom. 6:14.

¹³ Eph. 4:15, 16; 2 Cor. 3:18. ch. 7:1.

⁷ W. J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), 246–247.

This process is completed at the resurrection:

1John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

1John 3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Every man who will see Christ as He is, and be perfectly holy like Christ in His presence—for to be in His presence requires perfect holiness, for the unholy and the holy cannot meet—is also being sanctified now—he is purifying himself, because Christ Himself is perfectly pure.

Sanctification is the beginning of glory, and ultimate sanctification is the consummation of glory, the end point of passing “from glory to glory” in Christlikeness.

5.) Are You Holy?

1Pet. 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

1Pet. 1:16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

1.) God is perfectly holy—His holiness is an absolutely inseparable characteristic of His being. He is the “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy” (Isaiah 57:15). Furthermore, His glory—His transcendent, infinitely exalted, beautiful and blessed glory is inseparably connected to His holiness:

1Chr. 16:29 Give unto the LORD the **glory due** unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of **holiness**.

Psa. 29:2 Give unto the LORD the **glory due** unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of **holiness**.

Ex. 15:11 Who *is* like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who *is* like thee, **glorious in holiness**, fearful *in* praises, doing wonders?

Is. 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy**, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his **glory**.

Is. 63:15 Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy **holiness** and of thy **glory**: where *is* thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?

He will allow nothing to defile His holiness. All His works are holy, His ways are holy, His thoughts holy, His judgments holy, all is holy, holy, holy!

Do you treasure holiness the way that Jehovah treasures His holiness? The Holy One will under absolutely no circumstances whatever allow anything to compromise His holiness in the least way. What does it take to get you to not be or act holy? Would you do anything other than compromise on holiness to the least degree? Do you treasure holiness the way Jehovah does? Do you view holiness as glory? Do you view holiness as beauty? Do you view holiness—which is God and Christ-likeness—to be the highest good? Do you abominate and hate evil and unholiness the way that Jehovah does? Do you recollect that “righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesian 4:24) is how you are in God’s image, as a redeemed saint?

2.) Be astonished that this infinitely holy God can yet be the portion of His people—a people born and dead in sin—because of His incarnation and sacrificial, substitutionary death. God can both be high, holy, and separate, infinitely distant in His exalted majesty, and also just like us—truly human, perfectly identifying with us—in Christ, Immanuel, God with us. The Triune God can both be transcendent and immanent, infinitely separated and just like us, because of the Person and work of the Mediator, Son of God and Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus He can both be the Holy One and the Holy One *of Israel*, both the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity and at the same time *with him* who is humble and of a contrite spirit. The infinitely transcendent God is also Immanuel—*God with us!*

In order to redeem men and make them holy, so that He could dwell among them, God did far more than He did to create the world. The vast universe, with its spectacular grandeur, its evidence of His wisdom, its galaxies and flowers, its amazing tiny cells and its gigantic searingly hot stars, was made by just a few words: “Let there be!” and there it was. But to make sinners holy, the holy Father, holy Son, and holy Holy Ghost could not, must not just speak to sweep sin under the table, to just decide not to punish it. No—for this would compromise Jehovah’s holiness. In order to make men holy so that He could dwell among them the Father needed to send His Son to permanently unite human nature to His Divine Person, and take the greatest evil, the most awful evil, the very detestable sin of all men and take that sin and lay it on His Son, and then punish His Son as a substitute for that sin. The Son needed not only to humble Himself to become Man but

humble Himself to bearing the infinite weight of that very sin which of all things was to Him the most detestable on the cross, and then rise from the dead, ascend to heaven, advocate for those redeemed sinners before the Father when they sin—as they still would. And the Holy Spirit must strive with men, convict them, draw them through the Word, unite them to Christ, give them new hearts, progressively renew them, make their bodies His holy temple, bear with their remaining sin, despite His infinite abhorrence of it, and then in the future raise them with glorified bodies at the command of Christ from the Father.

Thus, it took an instant for the holy God to create the universe—to make sinners holy, consecrated to Himself, has been His outworking plan for ages!

3.) It is no light thing to be unholy. If you are unholy God *must* send you to hell. As soon as He created, He separated the light from the darkness. If you are darkness, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). He always has, He always does, and He forever will destroy all who will not become holy. When He looks upon you, and sees you, outside of Christ and unholy, He sees everything that is contrary to who He is. As long as He is immutably holy, He must condemn you. As long as He glories in His holiness, so long you must be lost. As long as He loves righteousness with all the ardor of His infinite Being, so long must He hate, loathe, and abominate you, and must exercise all the infinity of His holy hatred of evil against you.

Will you remain unconverted, oh sinner? Will you embrace the greatest evil—unholiness with its necessary consequence, separation from God—or will you repent, and, by grace, have God make you holy, so that you can be like Him and be with Him? Christ, at infinite cost to Himself, took your sin upon Himself so that He could freely give you righteousness. Can you remain one more day—one more moment—unconverted and unholy?

4.) Consider the absolute madness of the teaching that a Christian can remain unholy, unchanged by God. The very eternal purpose of the Father, Son, and Spirit in saving a sinner is to make him holy. Definitive sanctification must take place at the very moment one passes from the realm of death to the realm of life, and progressive sanctification must also begin then. A “salvation” without holiness is a salvation without salvation.

5.) Consider how great an evil it is for the true Christian to turn His back on God’s holy purpose of holiness by sinning and backsliding. It is contrary to everything in God’s nature. The Lord must and will chasten—His love demands it, for He will not allow His blood-bought ones to return

to slavery to unholiness, that greatest of all evils. His holiness demands it—it must, and it will, transform those with whom it comes in contact into holy ones like Him, the Holy One.

6.) When you follow—hasten towards, pursue, run after—holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14), you are running after what is of all things most glorious, most beautiful, most worthy, most valuable. There is nothing you can pursue that is better than holiness. A job that makes you a multi-millionaire but makes you one speck less holy than you would have been with a job that left you more time to pursue holiness and the things of God is a terrible tradeoff. A compromise that brings you incredibly pleasant worldly blessings but makes you even the slightest less holy is a loss of infinite proportions. Anything that would keep you out of His church, the place of God’s special holy presence, or from proper service in His holy earthly Temple, is an infinite loss, because of the infinite value, glory, and beauty of holiness.

There is nothing that either makes you one speck more unholy, or that is a weight that keeps you from growing in holiness more than you would have otherwise, that is worth it. The Facebook account or news feed that shortens your time in the Bible and prayer—it isn’t worth it. That hobby that is not inherently evil, but does nothing to make you more holy—it isn’t worth it. Pursue holiness more than an Olympic athlete pursues a gold medal.

7.) The same sort of way that the Father sanctified Christ and sent Him into the world, so has He sent His people into the world (John 17:17-19). What more glorious message than that the holy God has made a holy way to transform unholy sinners into His holy sons? What are you doing for the salvation of the unconverted?

What more glorious calling than to serve the holy God in a full-time way, giving oneself to the holy Word and to prayer and fellowship with the Holy One, proclaiming the glorious riches of His holiness to His saints, shepherding them into greater paths of holiness, guiding the straying back into His holy way, and pointing the lost to enter His holy flock, whether in this nation or around the world where Christ is not named or barely known? How do you esteem the Christian ministry? Is God stirring up your spirit to desire to be in it? How highly do you value those who are in it? Would you love for your children to be in it—would they themselves love to be in it?

8.) Do you esteem holiness, and growth in it, the way God does?