

Sanctification in Community: The History, Doctrine, and Practice of Sanctification

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION, HISTORICAL OPTIONS, AND THE FAILED THEORY OF ROMANISM

Introduction: Some Governing Questions

- How is sanctification related to justification?
- Is sanctification something that is optional or something that is necessary?
- How do I become more holy? What formula should I follow to best improve my chances at becoming like Jesus Christ?
- What is the Spirit's role in sanctification, and what is my role in sanctification?
- What should we think about Christians who are not becoming like Jesus Christ?

Definitions:

Sanctification:

- (1) The etymological meaning: Being ‘Set Apart.’
- (2) The theological meaning: Becoming Like Christ.
- (3) The three senses:

- **Initial** sanctification, or sanctification in the past tense (1 Cor 6:11; Heb 10:10). By initial sanctification the believer is rescued from slavery to sin and rendered capable of “walking in newness of life” (Rom 6:1–14). He has become a new creature (2 Cor 5:17) and a “partaker of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4), and is rightly described as a “saint.”
- **Progressive** sanctification, or sanctification in the present tense. While we are constitutionally new creatures, our *flesh* or our tendency to sin remains. We are not what we once were, but we are also not what we will be. We are therefore being progressively transformed into likeness with Christ by flexing the muscles of our new man, awakening that new person in Christ to do battle royal against the deeds of darkness (Col 3:3, 5; Rom 6:6–7, 11–12; 1 John 3:3).
- **Final or entire** sanctification, or sanctification in the future tense. At the coming of Christ the believer is freed not only from the *penalty* of sin and the *power* of sin, but also the *presence* of sin (Eph 5:25–27; 1 Thess 5:23).

Justification:

God’s acceptance of the believer whereby he declares him righteous and treats him as such, based wholly on the imputed righteousness of Christ. It is a great exchange in which the believer’s sins are imputed to Jesus Christ, making him “not guilty,” and the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to the believer, rendering him fit for heaven (Rom 5:12–19). By it the believer is *declared righteous*, but does not actually *become holy*.

Three Basic Models for Relating Justification and Sanctification:

(1) In the **Roman Catholic Model**, sanctification and justification are basically merged together as a progressive *experience* of the believer. One begins his faith journey with a *preliminary* justification by grace that transforms a person and makes him capable of “works of the Spirit” (i.e., sanctification). If one persists in these works, then he/she can earn a *final* justification that is based upon good works.



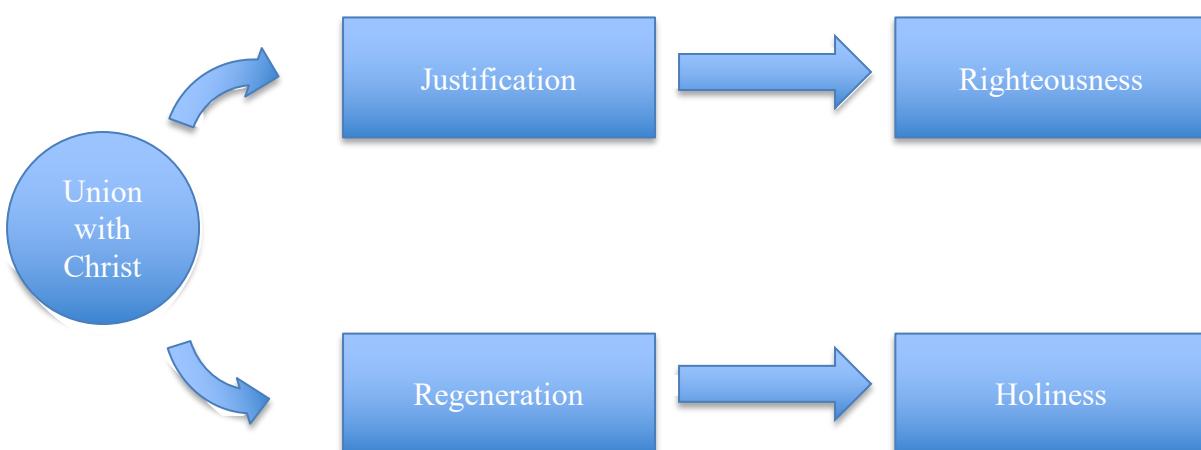
(2) In the **Keswick Model**, great emphasis is placed on the *legal* or *forensic* aspects of salvation. Justification is by grace alone through faith alone. Sanctification, in the Keswick model, happens the same way—by faith alone—and is received by meditating on the Gospel and reminding ourselves over and over of the new standing that Christ secured on the Cross. Sanctification, or growing in practical holiness, is the believer’s giant “Thank You” to Christ for saving him, and a request for Christ to help the believer live for Him.



Many who hold this view, however, are quick to point out that sanctification, while biblically important, logical, and reasonable, is not a *necessary* result of justification. Sanctification is not technically **caused** by justification; instead sanctification is simply something that *should* happen if I am truly thankful to Christ for what he has done:



(3) In the **Reformed view**, justification and sanctification are two parallel results of the believer’s union with Christ, two separate but connected pieces of the work of Christ on behalf of every believer—the “Double Benefit” of union with Christ. When Christ saved us he did TWO things for us. In the legal sphere, he exchanged his righteousness for our guilt, giving us the righteousness necessary to eternal life. In the practical sphere, however, he also made us, in the words of 2 Peter 1:4, “partakers of the divine nature, having enabled us to escape the corruption that is in the world.” One becomes holy, in this model, by making good use of his new nature, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, to accomplish something that before salvation was impossible—pleasing God:



The Roman Catholic Model: What they got right, and what they got terribly wrong.

What They Get Right	What They Get Wrong
It is impossible for an unbeliever to please God on his own. God must act first to by grace start the salvation process. Salvation is “by grace” (Rom 8:7).	Salvation is “by grace,” but is not by grace <i>alone</i> (Contra Rom 11:6; Heb 10:10). Justification starts with Christ, but is completed by the believer.
Works “of the Law” cannot contribute to one’s justification (Gal 2:16).	Works “of the Spirit” can contribute to one’s justification (Contra Rom 4:1–8).
Justification is integrally connected with the believer’s accumulation of righteousness (Rom 1:16–17).	Justification does not involve righteousness that is <i>imputed</i> to the believer in all of its perfectness by Christ, but is rather a “seed” that Christ <i>infuses</i> in the believer and expects the believer to perfect (Contra Rom 5:12–19).
The process of life transformation begins when a believer is justified, and is a vital response of all truly justified people (Heb 12:14).	The process of life transformation is not only a vital response of all truly justified people but is also something necessary for believers to stay justified or, better, to complete their justification (Contra Rom 5:1).

Conclusion: Roman Catholicism stresses the great importance of sanctification and integrates the doctrine with its overall theory of salvation, but does so by making justification something that is *transformational, ongoing, and mediate*. This devalues grace, diminishes Christ, and destroys the Gospel. Another solution must surely be found.