

Sanctification pt2

REVIEW: We are entering week 12 of the series “A Long Look At Salvation.” Now to be honest, I never thought this series would last this long. I knew it would be a longer series, but this has surprised even me. And trust me when I say we still have more to go over.

If you are coming in part way through the series, or if you have missed parts of the series, I encourage you to go to the church website and listen to previous messages in the series. If I were to circle back and review all that we have looked at, we would be here 40 minutes before I ever started new material.

In the last couple of weeks we looked at how we are positionally holy. That means that when God declares us righteous because of our faith in what Christ did on the cross for us, God sees us as holy. The disconnect comes in when we look at our lives and realize that we are obviously not holy. How do we rectify this? Well the fact is that while we are positionally holy before God, practically we are striving to living up to that holiness.

Last week we looked at two terms: vivification, and mortification. That’s fancy preacher speak for allowing our thoughts to dwell on God. To seek after Him, and the higher things that He desires for us. That is vivification. Mortification is putting to death in us the things that God has declared are sinful and should be done away with. And not just try really hard to not do these things, it is the process of dragging the beast out of the darkness, into the light, onto the street and killing that sinful habit or nature.

INTRO: Today, we continue on with sanctification. This will be what we look at for the next several weeks, in no small part because sanctification is the part we live and experience here and now. It is the area of the scale of the process of salvation that we are most familiar with, and most frustrated by, because this is our life now.

I. More on our pursuit of Christ

- A. Last week we discussed our pursuit of Christ, and the fact that it is a reflection if we really have been justified and adopted into God’s family
 - 1. Under that we talked further about the kinds of things that we need to get rid of in our lives
 - 2. From Colossians 3 Paul named several things that are overtly sinful
 - a) Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, etc.
 - b) But he also listed some things that were not so overt: anger, rage, malice, etc.
- B. I want to turn your attention to the idea that there are things that are obviously explicitly sinful that God wants us to put to death (mortification) - but there are also things that are NOT explicitly sinful, even morally

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neutral that can hold us back in our pursuit of Christ that may need to die as well

1. Let's face it, and if you have been a Christian for any length of time you can attest to this, there are things that are morally neutral that can affect you in your walk with Christ
 - a) There are things in my life that I need to be careful of, or simply put to death because they can distract me from God
 - b) Those things pull me away from my pursuit of Him
 - c) Let me give you a chapter and verse on the concept
 - (1) Hebrews 12:1 "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us..."
 - (2) There are things that hinder us
 - (3) Those things are not called sin, that is the next phrase - they simply hinder us from pursuit of God
 - d) I show you that chapter and verse because too often we use the defense of, "Show me that in the Bible!" "Point to chapter and verse on that one Pastor!"
 - (1) And while I cannot for each and every thing, I can for the broad concept
2. If we are serious in our pursuit of Him, as we should be, then we must put to death anything that gets in the way of our pursuit of Him - even if it is morally neutral
 - a) You can tell when a person is not all that serious about sanctification when they respond with "What's wrong with that?" Or "Where does it say that in the Bible?"
 - b) If it affects you negatively in your love and passion for God, why wouldn't you want to destroy it?
3. So what can some of these things be that are morally neutral but hinder us from our pursuit of Christ?
 - a) My answer: How long ya got? The list can be as long as there are things in this world
 - b) So to deal with this, allow me to give you a few I see in my life, and then press on a few I see in our community, and our church community
 - c) In my own life:
 - (1) TV
 - (a) Not the type of program, but just falling into a laziness about watching it instead of pursuing Christ

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- (b) Often times i like to veg out at home - but when that overtakes my pursuit of Christ, whatever I am vegging out with needs to go
- (2) Competition
 - (a) Yes, competition is healthy, but there are times that it can overtake me, and then Sweet Lil Keith becomes anything but
- (3) Even relationships
 - (a) I have an old friend that has made less than stellar choices in life, and when I think those through, it pains me, and that should drive me to prayer, but admittedly, sometimes it drives me to frustration and anger
- (4) None of these are explicitly wrong, but they can take their toll if not monitored, submitted to Christ, or in some cases killed off
- d) In the life of all of us
 - (1) We will do this by broad concept - time!
 - (a) More than any single thing, I watch time and schedule consume people and their pursuit of Christ
 - (b) When people are so busy they cannot be at Bible study - something in the schedule need to die
 - (c) When you cannot be involved in a Life group, building your relationship with others and allowing them to build into you, something in the schedule MUST DIE!
 - (d) Please do not get me wrong - we all have a busy season or time of life, but that should be the exception, not the rule
 - i) When we live life on the ragged edge and do not have time to pursue Christ in all the ways we should (meaning not just individually, but in small groups and corporately), something in the schedule must die
 - (e) And I know that this is one that I get on my soapbox about, but please understand two things:
 - i) First, as your pastor, I am like your parent - my job is to get on your case to help you conform your life to Christ (like you expect your child to conform their life to your family values) - I am not supposed to be your friend in things like this - do I value your friendship, of course, but not so much that I shouldn't or won't get all over you
 - ii) Second, I'll move on to the next thing when I see this one has abated
 - (2) So to avoid getting legalistic about this and making hard and fast rules that God Himself never made, here is a principle that I think

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we all need to post somewhere: “If it hinders me from pursuing Christ, personally, or corporately, I need to consider if this is wise, or perhaps kill it off.”

- (a) If you are unable to have personal times of refreshment with God because of your schedule, or you love to sleep too much, or you like to veg out too much - you need to find the hindrance and kill it
 - (b) If you are unable to have corporate times of refreshment with God and His/your family - there may be something needing to die lurking around
 - e) And remember that your brothers and sisters in Christ are there to help you
 - (1) They can keep you accountable, pick you up when you fail, and pray for you as you seek to kill off your personal hinderance
 - (2) Keep in mind, that there is not one of us in here that does not fight this battle of hinderances - so there is no need to put up a front - share your battle with someone and ask them to pray for you, and call you out when they see you slipping
- II. In our pursuit of God, our process of moving from positional holiness to personal holiness, we often face other obstacles as well
- A. The first is treating the symptoms rather than the disease
- 1. One area we see this clearly is relationships
 - a) That means in marriage, in family, in youth group, in neighbors, in your Life Groups
 - b) When I talk about people treating the symptoms rather than the disease, here is how it plays out
 - (1) First would be personally
 - (a) You ever meet someone, you can see a pattern in their lives of trading out friends every so often, usually with a similar story that their friends have turned their backs on them, or hurt them deeply in some - this is a pattern, not just a one time event
 - (b) Rather than dealing with their own heart, and seeing the pattern of behavior, they deal with the symptoms in what happens in the relationship
 - (c) Basically, this person never asks the question: what’s wrong with me - its always the other person’s fault
 - (d) The problem with this approach to life is that as soon as the person really becomes known to others, they run away - they fear being truly known - they don’t want to deal with their part

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- (e) Here is the thing, if you want to really know what's happening in your own heart, hang out with people that know you well.
 - i) Example: If you married later in life you may get this right away, but I bet it's true for many - when you are single you have no clue how deeply selfish you are - until you get married
 - ii) When you get married, you find out how selfish you really are - why, because you are with someone that knows you well
- (f) It is in community that your heart begins to be revealed - one of the reason we encourage you toward life groups - you need to be known
 - i) In the church setting it is so easy to hide
 - ii) But when you get with a smaller group, there is nowhere to run
 - iii) We start to see "iron sharpening iron" - which is not always a fun process, it's violent, and painful sometimes but it is for our good
- (g) The problem should be obvious, that we short change the work of God when we change relationships like that
 - i) God may very well be at work in those relationships
 - ii) He may be using that person to speak truth into your life, whether it feels good or not
- (2) The second would be corporately
 - (a) What I mean is that when we see heart issues in another person's life, rather than pray, and seek a gracious way of dealing with them, we gloss them over, or try to keep them from hurting themselves
 - (b) This is one that people in the church can be famous for
 - i) We think "I'll just wait for God to work on their heart"
 - ii) The reality is, God may be asking you to go help that person, because you are close enough to them to see it
 - (c) I understand that there is such a thing as "pick your battles" and Christian liberty
 - i) But what we are talking about here is a person that has obvious heart issues that are harming themselves, others, but more importantly, keeping them from experiencing all of God's grace
 - ii) That is a battle that should be fought for their personal walk with God

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2. A second area you can see this is in addiction
 - a) In addiction, many times people will deal with the addiction (a good thing), but they fail to deal with the heart
 - b) When that happens, they replace one addiction with another because they never stopped to understand what need they had that was driving the addiction
 - c) They address the symptom of addiction, but never the heart of the issue
3. The problem with dealing with the symptoms is that it feels right
 - a) I'm addicted to this, so I will deal with the addiction - that feels right
 - b) This relationship is hard and this person gets on my nerves. These folks I like, they don't get on my nerves. Of course it makes sense to switch social groups.
 - c) But when we fail to deal with the heart of the issue there is no real freedom
 - (1) The fullness of life that Christ desires for us is not realized
 - (2) And we wind up enslaved to something and we never realize that we are
 - (3) God has so much more for us and we can follow Him through the hard places to places of peace, of joy, of life
4. So back to the idea of positional holiness (that you are declared holy), and that you are working toward personal holiness, this example should help
 - a) All of you parents in here, want the best for your kids, you set them up in values, in life to succeed, you bring them to church desirous that they will come to know Christ and pursue Him
 - (1) Every parent knows, and I think fears a little bit, that their child may grow up, and refuse any or all of mom and dad's hopes and dreams for them
 - (2) Now- question. If they do refuse that life you desire for them, will they cease to be your child?
 - (a) It may break your heart
 - (b) They may do stupid things that make you want to cry
 - (c) But they never stop being your child
 - b) This is the same as us with God
 - (1) He has declared us His child
 - (2) Even if we fight Him on the life He wants for us, we are still His child
 - (3) God is saying, "You are My Son/Daughter! I have so much for you. Don't do this. This painful moment in life, that broken

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relationship, that pull toward sin, that attitude in your heart - it is there to reveal something about your heart. Don't mess with the symptom - search for what I am trying to show you."

- B. The second obstacle for personal holiness is a deeply rooted one in almost all churches - covering up
1. "How are you today?" "I'm fine."
 2. "Really, because your car just blew up in the parking lot, your kids are hanging other kids off the balcony threatening them to give up their offering money, and when I saw your wife earlier this week it looked like she was reading a book called, "How to Kill Your Husband and Get Away With It In Six Easy Steps." "So do you want to try again? How are you, really?"
 3. Covering up is the simplest, oldest trick in the book and we are all prone to it
 - a) It's Adam and Eve trying to hide their nakedness
 - b) That's all we are doing, is sporting the fig leaf outfit
 - c) And you may fool people, but you will never fake God out
 4. One of the amazing things the Gospel teaches us is that we are weak, and Christ is strong
 - a) Yet we somehow can't seem to deal with that first part - we are weak
 - b) We do it in the general sense of needing salvation
 - c) But to work on my sin, no help required - I got this covered
 - d) Of all the people that walk the face of the earth, we should be people that rejoice in our weakness - Paul said, "If I am going to boast, I will boast in the things that show my weakness" "For when I am weak, then I am strong."
 - (1) In context that is all about Christ displaying His power through our weaknesses
 - e) We foolishly hold on to the idea that what brings God glory is our being super strong
 - f) Why do we pretend to impress people that are pretending? Shouldn't we all remove the masks, display our weakness, and let the grace of God do its work?
 5. Let's take a lesson from David, he said in Psalm 32:3-4 "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah"
 - a) This is David trying to cover up to God
 - b) He says that his bones wasted away - he groaned all night long
 - (1) God's hand was heavy upon him

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- (2) His strength was sapped
- c) At the end of verse 4 in the original is the word “selah”
 - (1) We have talked about this word before
 - (2) It means stop what you are doing and consider this
- d) This is what is happening to David trying to cover up his sin before God
 - (1) Have you ever considered how exhausting it is trying to cover up your sin before others?
 - (2) Worrying about, “If they only knew” or “what if they find out?”
 - (3) That is exhausting!
- e) But when you have a Life Group, or a prayer partner or a discipleship group that you can be fully known in, there is a freedom in that
 - (1) When those people know you, love you, support you, pray for you and with you - there is freedom
 - (2) When someone comes and says, “I found out about how you are weak or what you did!”
 - (a) Its a simple reply, “So does, Matt, and Rob, and Ed, and Kevin.”
 - (b) They all know my struggles, they pray for me about them, they call me out on it, and they show me the grace that I need
- 6. The point of all of this is simple - stop covering up!
 - a) It only hurts you, not helps you
 - b) Learn the art of confession, and accept the grace of God that is displayed to you by others
 - c) It is a way that God speaks to us through our brothers and sisters in Christ
 - (1) So God can speak to me through Rob. Or through Matt. Or through Ed, or Kevin.
 - (2) I get to experience the grace of God, and hear what God wants to say through these men that I let into my life
- 7. These are the parts of sanctification
 - a) We will continue on in the up coming weeks with more on the process of becoming personally holy