

## SCRIPTURAL SANCTIFICATION

*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; **for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light**. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

*II. Corinthians 11:13-15*

Last week I talked about Satan's ministers of righteousness. I said that when most of us read Paul's warning in this passage, even though we tend to think of the Todd Bentley's, the Paul Cain's, and the prosperity preachers in the Religious System, we need to understand that Satan has his ministers of righteousness *outside* the system—and why would we expect anything different? It's those who have *escaped* the errors and deceptions of the Church System who are becoming a threat to him—the rest have *already* been deceived and are functioning as his ministers.

I also said we need to understand that Satan is not limited in his attacks on righteousness. Whenever the subject of righteousness is being taught or discussed—regardless of the theological framework or context—you can be sure his *ministers of righteousness* will be there to confuse and deceive people. Whether you are discussing imputed righteousness (justification) or actual righteousness (sanctification), the fact is, for every person who teaches the truth about these things, Satan has dozens of his ministers out there denying that truth or propagating a counterfeit of it.

Now, last week we talked about two specific *areas* of righteousness where Satan's ministers work to confuse and deceive people; and we discussed the two different lines of attack they use. One line of attack is *overt*; while the other is a *covert*. The first area of righteousness we looked at was the righteousness of the Gospel. We saw how the two different types of Judaizers in Paul's day used different approaches to destroy that righteousness and replace with legalistic obedience to the Law of Moses.

The second area of righteousness we looked at had to do with holding fast to the doctrine handed down by the Lord's apostles, and also *judging* the doctrine of others. Satan's ministers of righteousness will not, and indeed cannot, remain true to the "doctrine of Christ". So they end up attacking the whole idea of staying true to that doctrine at all costs, and especially of judging the doctrine of others. Their attack is both overt and covert. The *overt* attack is to come right out and say that thinking doctrine is important, and judging the doctrine of others, is wrong and unscriptural because salvation is all about our *relationship* with Jesus. Yes, it's all about relationship. Relationship is equated with righteousness; while holding fast to sound doctrine at all costs, and judging the doctrine of others, is equated with self righteousness.

The *covert* approach is different. In this approach, Satan's ministers don't come right out and say holding fast to sound doctrine and judging the doctrine of others is wrong and unscriptural. Rather, they accuse those who walk this way of being motivated by their "fleshly desires to be righteous" and of walking according to their own "carnal understanding". They also claim that since none of us can *be sure* we have *correct* doctrine anyway, those who walk around *thinking* their doctrine is correct, those who are willing to defend that doctrine, or separate over it, or reprove others *with* it, are simply self righteous. But those who refuse to do these things are said to be walking in true righteousness.

We also started looking at a third area of righteousness which has to do with *sanctification*. I said there is the true, Scriptural view of sanctification, and there are various false or counterfeit views that have been introduced by Satan over the years under that doctrinal banner. Just as it was in the previous cases, so it is in this one—the enemy’s attack on the truth of sanctification both overt and covert.

His *overt* attack comes in the form of an out-right *denial* that it’s possible to be *fully* sanctified in this life. This is part of the whole Evangelical “saved by grace” theology. Since we cannot possibly reach perfection in this life, God offers us salvation by “grace”—meaning, that since we will *continue* to sin the rest of our lives, grace is the only thing that God can come up with in order not to destroy us because of our sin. Once we get to heaven, we will be made holy and pure in reality. But until then, we can only be *reckoned* as pure and holy through the covering of the blood of Jesus.

His *covert* attack is much different. He doesn’t deny that we can attain full sanctification in this life. Rather, he confuses our understanding of *how* this sanctification is achieved; and in some cases, he gives people various *religious experiences* which they think have brought them to that place of full sanctification, when in fact, they have not reached that place and they get caught in a terrible religious delusion.

A month or so ago I gave some of my own personal experiences of running across this kind of thing *outside* the Religious System, but I said last week that this whole idea actually started *inside* the system with none other than the famous evangelist, John Wesley in the 1800’s. Then I looked at a current example of this error from a contemporary Bible teacher named George Delo. So let me show you how people like Mr. Delo *mishandle* the Scripture when it comes to sanctification and the sin nature. The following quote comes from his article: “*How May Times Must We Die*”—but this argument is not exclusively his. All those who promote this error use the same verses and they draw the same erroneous conclusions from them. Mr. Delo correctly represents all of them. He says:

“Herein lies the key to the second question, how do we overcome sin? God does not focus on the acts of sin but rather the heart of sin. Acts of sin are the fruits of **the heart of sin**. So if you want to deal with the acts you must deal with **the heart** first. Otherwise you are just wasting your time. This is exactly what the church has been doing for so long. We have been focusing on **the fruit rather than the root**. And just like a tree or a plant, as long as there is a root it will produce a shoot which will produce fruit. But if you destroy the root, it can’t produce a shoot. And if there is no shoot, there won’t be any fruit. And this is exactly what Jesus came to do as a mediator of a better covenant.

*But those things which proceed out of the mouth **come from the heart**, and they defile a man. For **out of the heart** proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.*

*Matthew 15:18,19*

*The **acts of the sinful nature** are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*Galatians 5:19-21 NIV*

Both of these passages reveal **the source of sin as the corrupt heart or sin nature**. And as long as the sin nature is there, you can crucify the fruits of the heart all you want and they will continue to come back because you haven't dealt with the source. The way we overcome sin is **by removing the source of sin**. Thereafter the fruits will die off because there is no longer anything to feed them. Jesus came to deal with the heart of sin. Read the following scriptures carefully and notice the common thread.

*But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **circumcision is that of the heart**, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.*

*Romans 2:29*

*Knowing this, that **our old man was crucified** with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*

*Romans 6:6*

*In him you **were also circumcised**, in the **putting off of the sinful nature**, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ.*

*Colossians 2:11*

*And those who are Christ's **have crucified the flesh** with its passions and desires.*

*Galatians 5:24*

The way we overcome sin is by **removing** the nature of sin through the crucifixion of the old man **or the circumcision of the heart**. As you can see from Romans 6:6, Colossians 2:11, and Galatians 5:24, these terms are synonymous. The old man or the flesh is put to death by the circumcision or **removal** of its sin nature. The power or dominion of sin that enslaves us is **taken away** through the sanctifying work of Christ."

First he says the sin nature is part of the *heart* of man. Then he quotes passages that clearly talk about the heart being "circumcised" and the flesh being crucified. Well, if the sin nature resides in the heart of man, and if we can have our heart "circumcised" as the Scripture says, then it's only natural to conclude that circumcision of the heart equals the **REMOVAL** of the sin nature. Can you see how easy it would be for a person to accept this line of reasoning? The problem with all this is: (1) the Scripture talks about the crucifixion of the flesh in past and *present* terms; and (2) this whole idea stands in direct opposition to many other passages which clearly state that Christians will have to *continue* to struggle against their flesh nature—which would not be true if that flesh nature were to be removed.

*For if ye [presently] live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye [presently] through the Spirit do **mortify the deeds of the body**, ye shall live.*

*Romans 8:13*

***Mortify therefore [presently] your members** which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

*Colossians 3:5*

*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, [presently] **being made conformable unto his death.***

*Philippians 3:10*

The problem with all these people is that they do not recognize that there is a *gap* between our legal position in Christ and experiencing that position in life. Jesus accomplished a complete work of Redemption for us at Calvary. However, we do not experience the *full outworking* of this Redemption when we come to Christ initially. At first we experience the assurance of having our sins forgiven and of being accepted into the family of God, etc. As we grow spiritually, we begin to experience more and more of the *actual effects* of our Redemption. The fact is, our *position* in Christ must become a *reality* in this life. The gap between what we are positionally and legally, and what we are in reality, in life, must be closed—and it is only closed as we *obey* the Lord and come forth in His image.

In Christ we are perfect and have power over all sin. In Christ we have been fully redeemed and have dominion over every enemy—including death. Yet look around. Many of us are bound in sin; many are sick; and we die every day. The realities of life force us to confess that we are not yet able to manifest some of the benefits of our Redemption. We are unable to apprehend and utilize some of the authority and power that is *legally* ours by virtue of being part of Jesus. This is why Paul tells us what we are, then admonishes us to bring our conduct in line with *that* reality.

*What shall we say the? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are **dead to sin**, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized **into his death**? Therefore **we are buried** with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we **have been planted** together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. . .*

*Knowing this, that **our old man is crucified with him**, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that **is dead** is freed from sin. Now if we **be dead with Christ**, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him, for in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise **reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin**, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Romans 6:1-11*

Simply put, we have to become what we *already* are. Don't you know, Paul asks, that (positionally) our old man *was* crucified with Christ? Don't you know that (positionally) we *were* baptized into His death; and that (positionally) we *have been* buried with Him. This is our legal position. This is what we are in the spirit. Positionally, we are seated in heaven with Christ, at the right hand of God (*Eph. 2:6*).

Therefore (because this is so), reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin. Understand that your (old) life is over. You can no longer live by the dictates of your (old) self will and (fallen) desires because those desires are the desires of the old man, and that man *was* nailed to the Cross (positionally) with Jesus. That old man died (positionally) and was buried (positionally) with Jesus. He's dead—you're life is dead—now start *acting* like it! Start identifying with the new man. Start living and walking in the new man. Don't live in the old man any more.

You see, we have to “reckon” ourselves dead because we are not yet dead in *experience*. Our position in Christ is that we have *already* died and been planted together with Him. But we have yet to walk in the *reality* of this truth. We must *possess* that position. What we are in the spirit, what we are legally, we must now become in life, and in reality. This not only applies to our death with Christ but with our resurrection as well. This is why Paul said:

*If ye then be risen with Christ [positionally], seek those things which are above [in this life], where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God [positionally]. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory*

*Colossians 3:1-4*

Our position in Christ is that we are already resurrected and seated in heaven. Our position is that we are living and walking in *resurrection* life—life that cannot die; life that cannot be overpowered by sin; life that always does the will of God. Now we have to *experience* what is already true of us positionally. Just as we have to reckon ourselves dead, so we have to reckon ourselves alive. Paul said we were buried with Jesus so that, just as He was raised from the dead, we too should *walk in newness of life*. Walking in newness of life only comes as we do our part and our position becomes our possession. What we are in Christ is what we must now actually become *in life*. All Paul is saying is this: if you are risen with Christ, then *act like it* by seeking those things which are from above. If you are dead with Christ, then *act like it* by mortifying your members that sin. Until we are acting out what we are positionally in Christ, the gap between our position and our possession remains.

The point is, none of what Paul would apply if God simply *removed* our old man (ie: the sin nature). Once that had been done, we would *no longer* have to do any kind of “reckoning”. We would not have to “reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin” or “reckon ourselves to be alive unto God” because sin and death would have been removed by God Himself. God Himself would have *closed the gap* between our position and our possession, without, and regardless of, our co-operation—and that's what lazy Christians have always wanted from God. They have always wanted Him to do everything FOR them.

You see, the object of Satan is to get God's people into a *passive* state where they don't believe they have to *fight* every day to get free and/or stay free from the sin and iniquity that's inside of them and around them. He comes up with all kinds of “Christian” teachings which eventually lead people into a passive walk. Some of these teachings cause people to think they don't have to fight against *the flesh* every day. Other teachings cause them to believe they don't have to fight against the *power of Satan* every day.

There are literally *hundreds* of these kinds of teachings floating around and the goal of every one of them is the same—to convince God’s people they don’t have to fight *every day* to either overcome sin, or remain free from the sin they have overcome. Once Satan convinces a person they don’t have to resist him, or sin, or self, it’s only a matter of time until that person will be completely overcome.

This idea that God removes the sin nature is one of Satan’s attempts to get people to stop fighting because they become convinced that the flesh is no longer there to fight. If you go to the official web site of the international “Church of the Nazarene”—which is a Wesleyan church—you will find a page called: “Articles of Faith”. Section ten of these articles deals with Entire Sanctification. It says:

“We believe that **entire sanctification is that act of God**, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers **are made free from original sin**, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of **love made perfect**.

It is wrought **by the baptism with the Holy Spirit**, and comprehends **in one experience** the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service.

Entire sanctification is provided by the blood of Jesus, is wrought **instantaneously by faith, preceded by entire consecration**; and to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.”

Pretty clear, is it not? Entire sanctification is an “act of God”, whereby believers are “made free from original sin” (ie: the sin nature). This act of God is “instantaneous”; though it is preceded by “entire consecration”, and is in fact the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Well, does the Bible actually teach that there is an experience that believers needs to seek for, which will completely sanctify them (ie: eradicate the sin nature)? And does the Bible call this experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The answer is clearly, no. And you have to wonder what kind of Bible these people read.

*And, being assembled together with them, [Jesus] commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but **wait for the promise** of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but **ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost** not many days hence. . .But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

*Acts 1:4-5 & 8*

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. **And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost**, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

*Acts 2:1-4*

When Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were filled with the Holy Spirit, He didn't say they would receive perfect love, sinless perfection, entire sanctification, a second blessing, or any such thing as a result of being baptized. He told them they would receive *power*. And what was the purpose of this power? The context is clear—to be *witnesses* of Him to the world! It was power to work miracles, power to do ministry, power to preach the Gospel with strong conviction, and power for service. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is *never* equated with perfect sanctification.

Not only is it clear in Scripture that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is an endowment of power for service and not equated with eradicating original sin, it is equally clear in Scripture that the sin nature—or the flesh, or the fallen Adamic nature, or the old man, or the self life, or the body of sin, or whatever you want to call it—can never be *eradicated* until final glorification takes place. In fact, there are so many passages in the New Testament that utterly oppose the whole notion of God removing our sin nature, I could spend the rest of this chat session just quoting them. But a few verses should be sufficient.

*For **the flesh lusteth** against **the Spirit**, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye **cannot do** the things that ye would.*

*Galatians 5:17*

This is a present-tense statement. Paul didn't say: "...once upon a time, before I received entire sanctification, my flesh lusted against my spirit; but now, since I have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, that struggle no longer exists". Sorry; this is the struggle all of us face in this life. The Scripture tells us we must WAR against and MORTIFY the deeds of the body and the flesh nature, in order to walk in the Spirit. These two forces are constantly struggling against each other in our lives.

*Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him **deny himself**, and **take up his cross**, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*

*Matthew 16:24-25*

If God removed our sin nature, there would be no need for Jesus to command His disciples to deny themselves and take up their cross daily, for the "self" we are to deny on a daily basis—which is the sin nature or the flesh—wouldn't even be there to deny!

*For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see **another law in my members**, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to **the law of sin which is in my members**. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from **the body of this death**? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but **with the flesh the law of sin***

*Romans 7:22-25*

The “law of sin”, or principle of the fallen nature, is within the flesh of all born again believers and must constantly be denied and crucified. If it was eradicated, Paul would never have said that he (presently) serves the law of sin with *his flesh* in Romans seven. Neither would he have gone on in chapter eight to assure us that even though we have this inner struggle, and that even though we cannot stop the flesh from serving the law of sin, we do not have to walk under condemnation regarding this fact as long as we do follow after that flesh, which is captive to the law of sin—but choose instead to walk in the spirit. Paul is clearly teaching that as long as we are in these fleshly bodies, we must continue to put to death the deeds of the flesh because they are always within as a result of our fallen nature.

*For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

*Galatians 6:8*

Here Paul warns that those who yield to the sinful nature with them will reap corruption. Again, there would be no need for such a warning if the flesh has been removed from our lives.

*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness** in the fear of God.*

*II. Corinthians 7:1*

Please notice, Paul doesn't say, “having perfect holiness”. He says, “perfecting holiness”. Perfecting holiness is a continuous process—a lifelong walk with Jesus whereby we are increasingly cleansed and purified from sin. This shows that sanctification as a process, not an instantaneous experience.

The Scripture is clear: we will never be free from our fallen sin nature this side of eternity—at least not in the sense of it being eradicated or removed from us. However, this does not mean we cannot be free from it in sense of *overcoming it* daily and not walking according to its dictates and lusts. Those who are hoping to be free from the sin nature through daily presenting their bodies as a living sacrifice are on solid Scriptural ground—this is God's will for us. But those who are hoping to be free from that sin nature *without a struggle*, by having God come a zap them, are walking in a religious delusion.

If you do your own study on Wesley and this whole sanctification thing, just be aware that many modern scholars try to paint a more orthodox picture of him by quoting statements he made regarding *progressive* sanctification. Progressive sanctification is what that Church of the Nazarene article referred to as “*complete consecration*”. Wesley believed that in order to receive Entire Sanctification, there first had to be a walk of complete consecration for a time. Complete consecration was Wesley's version of progressive sanctification. As the person walked in complete consecration, their faith would grow to the point where they were able to believe for, and eventually receive, the much coveted Holy Ghost “zap” that would remove their sin nature. So when you read some scholar who says Wesley believed in “progressive” sanctification, understand that they aren't really lying—at least not technically. But neither are they telling the *whole* truth. He did believe in progressive sanctification, but only as a *necessary prerequisite* for entire sanctification. Entire sanctification was clearly the desired goal and end result.

The question one has to ask about all this confusion is, how do these people, who think they no longer have a sin nature, explain or deal with *the evidence* that the sin nature is *not* really gone? When they get angry or do things they know are wrong, which clearly come from the sin nature, what do they do? Well, the answer is simple. They *change* the definition of the word “sin”. The things they once called sin, they now refer to as “failures”, “mistakes”, “miscalculations” and “short-comings”.

In Wesley’s mind, sin was primarily outward and voluntary. Once, when describing sin, he referred to it as the “voluntary transgression of the law of God, and of any commandment of God, acknowledged to be such, at the time it is transgressed”. He also said:

“Not only sin, properly so called, (that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law) but sin, improperly so called, (that is an **involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown**) needs the atoning blood. I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the **ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality**. Therefore *sinless perfection* is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself. I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to **these involuntary transgressions**. Such transgressions **you may call sin, if you please: I do not**, for the reasons above-mentioned.”

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So “sin” is a *voluntary* transgression of a *known* law. But those involuntary transgressions are just the ignorance and mistakes that are inseparable from mortality. They are not to be considered as sin. It was certainly confusing on Wesley’s part to give the name *perfection* to a state which from many standpoints was one of *continued imperfection*. It was even more confusing to define sin subjectively as voluntary transgression of a known law, rather than objectively as failure—whether conscious or unconscious, whether voluntary or involuntary—to conform to God’s *revealed* standards. And it was folly indeed to speak of entirely sanctified people as being *without* sin because they were not consciously breaking any known law, while at the same time, affirming that they still need the blood of Christ every moment to cover their *actual* shortcomings. That’s “double-talk” and “theological pretzel bending”.

This kind of thing naturally tends to produce a state of denial and religious delusion in the person who thinks they have had their sin nature removed. Sins become mistakes and human failures and so on. The effect of this error is much like the one caused by the error we exposed the other week, regarding not needing to ask forgiveness for our sins because Jesus already forgave all our past, present and future sins at the Cross. Just like the person who thinks they don’t have to ASK forgiveness for their sins because they were already forgiven 2000 years ago, so likewise, the person who thinks they can no longer sin because the sin nature has been removed, will never ASK forgiveness for the sins they commit because they refuse to acknowledge them as sins. They maintain that they are only mistakes and human failings.

Like I said the other week, all unconfessed and repented sin in UNFORGIVEN sin. So these people who think they have no more sin nature, and who, as a result, refuse to acknowledge their sin as sin and seek forgiveness for it, don’t realize that all those sins are piling up, week after week, month after month, year after year—and one of these days God is going to *give them the bill* for all those sins. Since they never turned them over to Jesus for payment, they are going to have to the whole bill themselves!

Not everyone who accepts this error is willing to live a lie indefinitely, once they realize they are still sinning, even after (supposedly) having the sin nature removed. When these kinds of believers find themselves struggling with evil thoughts, wrestling to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and fighting off evil temptations within, they don't go into a permanent state of self delusion. Instead, they become terribly confused, deep within their souls; they go into deep depression and sometimes become demonized as a result; and some get so disillusioned with God they abandon the faith.

One particular person who, after having the Second Blessing and then realizing he still was not free from sin, became so disillusioned he gave up on Christianity altogether for a time. His name was Harry Ironside, the famous American Bible teacher, (1876-1951). H. A. Ironside authored more than 60 volumes as well as many pamphlets and articles on Bible subjects. For 18 of his 50 years of ministry, he was pastor of the Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. His story regarding this error is fascinating, and can be read in his book: *"Holiness- The True And The False"*. Let me share a little bit from his own testimony.

Converted as a youth, Dr. Ironside was zealous to lead others to Christ. During these days, the Salvation Army was in its prime. Back then, it wasn't a humanistic relief organization; it was an evangelistic movement that preached constantly on the streets and to the down-and-outs—the outcasts of society—trying to win souls. Dr. Ironside, being zealous for souls, joined the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army was a branch of Methodism, and as such, in its early days, promoted the Entire Sanctification error strongly. Second Blessing holiness was a constant theme in their meetings. They emphasized the difference between those who were "sanctified" (ie: had their sin nature removed) and those who were merely "justified". Those who had not experienced the Second Blessing were constantly exhorted to seek it and "enter in".

As a young Christian and a fairly new convert, Dr. Ironside found himself flooded with evil thoughts and temptations—things he resisted tooth and nail, and which he hated. The perfect holiness that the preachers of the Salvation Army were promoting sounded great to this young convert. It was exactly what he wanted. No more sinful nature to tempt him from within; no more evil thoughts bombarding his mind; no more fears when preaching in the famous open air meetings; no more doubts as to matters of faith. The inward inclination to sin being removed and original sin being eradicated, the struggle would be over and the battle won once and for all. This "Second Blessing" was exactly what his heart truly desired.

He sought it for months. He wanted the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire that would purge out the inbred sin of his heart. Finally, one day he had enough. He was going to get it. He ran out into a field and prayed in agony for hours, determined not to let God go until he gets the blessing of entire sanctification. Finally he fainted, and a peace and euphoria came over him. He began to thank God for cleansing him and claimed the "blessing". He went back and began to testify in all the meetings that he entered in to Canaan, that he found the Promised Land, that original sin was removed, the sinful nature destroyed, and he obtained perfect holiness. He was in a fool's paradise, convinced that those evil thoughts and inward temptations would never trouble his weary soul again. But he was sadly mistaken. When the buzz of the moment died down, he found himself struggling with the same things. He went to his ministers and confessed that he was having evil thoughts at times.

"Don't worry", they told him. "Those are just temptations; temptation is not sin. It's only sin if you yield to it". As Dr. Ironside records: *"This gave me peace for a time. I found it was the general way of excusing such evident movings of a fallen nature, which was supposed to have been eliminated. But*

*gradually I sank to a lower and lower plane, permitting things I would once have shunned; and I even observed that all about me did the same. . . We did not commit overt acts of evil: therefore we were sinless. Lust was not sin unless yielded to: so it was easy to go on testifying that all was right”.*

Dr. Ironside goes on to tell about how he was constantly assailed with doubts and fears, and under a constant cloud of condemnation, never being able to be good enough to profess the “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord”. He would constantly confess to God his shortcomings, pray for perfect love, and make himself believe he had entered in to that experience again. Thus he would once again become sinless; only to have something happen within a few weeks that proved he was not perfect.

Unsure of his own salvation at this point, he found himself becoming a blatant hypocrite, pretending to have no sin when in actuality being aware of sins and shortcomings within. As he became deeper and deeper involved with the Salvation Army movement, and grew to know more and more ministers who had professed to be sinless, he was shocked to discover that they too all had the same experience. He knew many of them who had *lost their minds* trying to become holy enough to be sinless, backsliding to all-out infidelity, and saying the Bible is a sham because it promises sinlessness but such a thing is impossible. By this time, Dr. Ironside had seen many converts, who, after professedly finding justification and peace with God, struggled for months—sometimes even years—trying to attain a sinless state which was impossible to attain, only to sink back into despair and give up on God.

So Ironside couldn't take it any more. His fellow soldiers were falling away; his converts were falling away; and he himself was falling away—all because of this “Second Blessing” doctrine which they could never attain to. Burned out, he decided to resign from the Army. So they put him in a Rest Home for six months to recover. There, he met many others who had exactly the same struggles and doubts concerning perfect holiness, and also, fears concerning whether or not they were truly saved.

During this time, Dr. Ironside almost gave up on God as well. He stopped reading the Bible; stopped praying for sanctification; and began to mope around in despair. He took up reading secular novels for a pastime. He tried to push the knowledge of God out of his mind. The battle was over. He had lost. Holiness was a delusion, the Word of God a lie—or so he thought.

It was there that he met a precious lady friend of his, and they began to share with one another what they were going through. She experienced many of the same things. The Lord used her to get Dr. Ironside back in the Scriptures, searching them for the truth. “*Perhaps I've been deceived all along*”, he began to think to himself. “*What if my definition of holiness is different from the Bible's?*” he would think. He hungered for the truth, prayed for the truth, and searched with all his heart for the truth.

Before long, he stumbled across a tract. Through reading this tract his eyes were opened and he saw the light. Both he and his lady friend came to the knowledge of the truth. The doubts left; the fears ceased; and Dr. Ironside obtained peace with his God. He would eventually not only leave the Salvation Army, but also seek to lead others out of that legalistic mess of depression and hopelessness. He would continue in the ministry for almost 50 years, preach around the world, teach the truth about true holiness, author many books, and write commentaries on much of the Bible. He was used by the Lord to lead many others to true salvation in the finished work of Christ.

So in the end, the people who accept this error will either live in a terrible state of self-delusion and denial regarding their true spiritual condition; or they will become depressed and give up on the whole idea of living a life of holiness. In both cases, Satan has won. True righteousness (sanctification) has been either thwarted or completely abandoned.

Understanding what the Scripture actually teaches about sanctification will keep us from being seduced by the many counterfeits and errors that are being propagated under that doctrinal banner. I know I have touched on this before, but because of how important the issue is, and because there is such an attack on it by Satan's ministers of righteousness in this hour, let me go through it one more time.

What most Christians don't understand is that even though forgiveness, justification and imputed righteousness are very *important* elements of our redemption, they are not the *central issue* of our redemption. So as to not be misunderstood, let me say again that I believe forgiveness, justification and imputed righteousness are *very important* elements of our redemption because they are the foundation of our redemption. Nobody can be saved without them. But as important as they are they do not constitute the *totality* of our redemption, or even the most important part of our redemption. The central issue of redemption, under both the Old and the New Covenants, is *sanctification*.

The English term, sanctification, comes from a Greek verb which means, "to sanctify something". To sanctify something is to *set it apart* for God's use. Thus, it's considered holy or sacred. The term is used various ways in Scripture, most often with either objects or people which have been consecrated to God's use or purposes. Concerning those individuals who have been consecrated, there are two distinct aspects of sanctification: (1) separation to God, and (2) the course of life befitting those who have been separated—that is, separation *from* sin. Separation to God and separation from sin are absolutely necessary if we are to be truly sanctified. Both aspects can be seen in God's dealings with Israel:

*Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord **that doth sanctify you.***  
*Exodus 31:13*

*For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore **sanctify yourselves**, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: **neither shall ye defile yourselves** with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*  
*Leviticus 11:44*

***Sanctify yourselves** therefore **be ye holy**: for I am the Lord your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord **which doeth sanctify you.***

*Leviticus 20:7-8*

The act of sanctifying something or someone for God's use has *nothing* to do with the present moral condition of the thing or person. To be set aside has to do with God's choice. It has to do with our *association* with God. The fact that God has chosen to set someone or something aside for His use does

not necessarily mean that the object or person possesses a holy character in and of itself. To be set aside is to be sanctified. So in this sense every Christian has *already* been sanctified. Yet this does not necessarily mean that every Christian has *sanctified himself*. Just because we have been chosen and set aside, that does not mean that we are exhibiting righteous behavior or living a holy lifestyle.

It's this *second aspect* of sanctification that God is concerned with—and Satan too. Satan is anxious that we *neglect* it because in order to fulfill the purpose for which we were set aside in the first place, we must sanctify ourselves. We must separate ourselves from every desire, every relationship, every habit, every mind-set, every demon spirit, and any material possession that God declares evil. The person who refuses to do this will eventually frustrate his call and his preordained destiny.

God sanctified the Hebrew people by choosing them and separating them unto His divine purposes. But they were responsible to then *sanctify themselves* by obeying His statutes. The story of Israel is the story of what happens to a people who have been sanctified, but who then *refuse* to sanctify themselves. Though a minority of the people did walk in faith and fulfill their call, the majority did not, thus annulling the whole purpose for which they were called. Instead of being a light to the surrounding nations, they blasphemed the name of God wherever they went.

This second aspect of sanctification is also God's will for the New Testament Christian (*I. Thess. 4:3*), and it is the primary reason God saved us (*I. Thess. 4:7*) in the first place. This kind of sanctification can *never* be imputed to us because it must be learned (*I. Thess. 4:4*) and pursued (*I Tim. 2:15; Heb. 12:14*). It's *not* a legal state but an *individual possession* which is acquired over time, little by little, as a result of obedience to the Spirit of God, the Scripture, and the example of Jesus (*Matt. 11:29; John 13:15; Eph. 4:20; Phil. 2:5*). It is not gained by self-will or religious self-effort, but through the power of the Holy Spirit (*Rom. 8:13; Eph.3:16*). However, we are responsible to yield and submit to the power that is working in us.

Both the Old and New Covenants were designed to produce sanctification—that is, righteousness and godly behavior. The difference between the two covenants lies in the level or *kind* of righteousness each was designed to bring forth in the individual. The Old Covenant only dealt with what the New Testament calls our “old man” or the fallen Adamic nature (*Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9*). Until the Lord Jesus made atonement for sin, there was no such thing as a new man.

Before the establishment of the New Covenant there was only one man—the old man. Until the resurrection of Jesus, man was stuck with his original, fallen Adamic nature. God had no choice but to work within the framework of that first nature. The Law of Moses was designed to produce a level of righteousness which the old man *could* bring forth. It was not the actual character of God. It was only a human representation of that character.

The different levels of sanctification produced by the two covenants has to do with our *experience*, not our position in Christ. It has to do with what we can *demonstrate*. Old Testament saints received the same forgiveness and imputed righteousness we do. However, they could not experience and demonstrate the righteousness that was imputed to them. Though God's nature was reckoned to them by faith, they were unable to *manifest* it. They could only experience and manifest *human* righteousness. The Adamic nature will never be able to bring forth the actual character and nature of God. When God said “be holy, for I am holy” (*Lev.19:2*), He was *not* demanding that they be as holy as He Himself is. This was not possible for

them to do. Rather, He was telling them to walk in the level of righteousness that He had designed for them, that which was explained by the Law, that which the Adamic nature could bring forth.

God wants His people to possess and experience His very holiness. He does not want us to go through eternity only having the *imputed* righteousness of Jesus. As wonderful as this is, we must realize that whatever is imputed to us is not really ours *by experience*. It's only ours legally. God wants us to be able to experience what we have by divine legal right. Under the Old Covenant this was not possible. That is why a "new" and "better" covenant had to be established. The New Covenant is designed to bring forth in us the very character and nature of Almighty God!

Under the Old Covenant, the saints were justified by faith and sanctified by obedience to God. That is, to His Law and the guidance of His priests and prophets. The Law and the Prophets explained and defined what sin was, not in order to condemn everyone to hell but to show the people how to sanctify themselves.

Under the New Covenant, the saints are also justified by faith and sanctified by obedience to God; that is, to Him personally. This is why the Holy Spirit is sent into the lives of the saints. He is our Torah. He is our Law. He is our Priest and Prophet. His task is to show us what God says is sin. He does this so we can sanctify ourselves.

Under the Old Covenant, the people of God could be delivered from the penalty of sin but they could not be delivered from the *power* of sin. The reason is because the power of sin resides in the fallen, Adamic nature. That is why, even though justification, forgiveness and imputed righteousness were available to all who walked by faith under the first covenant, God still had to institute another better covenant. Under this New Covenant a new experience, referred to as the "born-again" experience, becomes available to us. As a result, we receive power over the sin nature.

God is doing much the same thing with New Testament believers as He did with Old Testament believers but on a *deeper* level. He has sanctified us by calling us and setting us apart as His people. He has given us His Spirit, His Word and the example of His Son, so we, like the ancient Hebrews, can sanctify ourselves and fulfill our call as a light to the nations. The only difference between us and them is that our light (righteousness) can be the very light of God Himself. The Hebrew's light was only a dim (human) representation of that light.

Sanctification is critical because it *and it alone* produces light. Light is not what we say. Talk is cheap, extremely cheap. Light is what we do. God is not content that we spend our lives talking about light. He wants to make us light. As we become light we will discover that people who would never listen to what we say about God, many times will be affected by how we live in spite of themselves.

Satan knows much better than we do just how important sanctification is to fulfilling our destiny. So everything he does is geared to one thing—frustrating any work in or lives that will produce actual righteousness (or sanctification). This is why there are so many doctrines that attack what the Scripture teaches about sanctification in one way or another.

Some of Satan's ministers tell us we have *already* been fully sanctified as a result of being saved and justified, so there is no need to seek any further sanctification. In fact, they tell you if you try to add anything

to the sanctification you received at salvation, you are guilty of trying to be saved—or of trying to keep yourself saved—by “works”. Other of Satan’s ministers tell us it’s *impossible* to be fully sanctified in this life, so we might as well just get used to sinning on a regular basis. Still other of Satan’s ministers tell us that we can be fully sanctified in an instant, with a Holy Ghost “zap” that will remove our sin nature.

The goal of all these doctrines is the same: to keep God’s people from coming forth in actual, visible, tangible righteousness. And the multitudes of those who accept these errors will wake up one day and realize too late that they made the same tragic mistake Israel did. After being called, chosen and set apart by God; after being brought into a covenant relationship with Him; after being given the Holy Spirit who has the power to free them from sin; they *refused to sanctify themselves*. They will realize that they allowed themselves to be deceived by coming under the influence of another spirit, and by accepting another gospel which caused them to forfeit their call and destiny as the “chosen people”.

God wants to see ACTUAL righteousness in the earth, people. He wants you and I to come forth in, and manifest, His very own righteousness before the nations of this earth. In order to do this, we will have to struggle against the sin nature that resides inside of us. We will have to deny that nature and let God crucify it every day. That’s what God wants, and that’s what Satan doesn’t want. So don’t let the enemy trick you into *not* doing what God is clearly requiring of us.