

THEOLOGY CLASSES · SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY V: SOTERIOLOGY

Lecture 9: The Doctrine of Sanctification

C. Michael Patton and Rhome Dyke · The Theology Program · 50 minutes

Lecture by C. Michael Patton, Th.M., and Rhome Dyke, Th.M., from The Theology Program, published on their public channel. Study notes below from Medina Community Church.

BEFORE YOU WATCH

The teachers admit they argued over who would have to present this session, because sanctification means growing holier and neither felt qualified to teach it. A new believer had just asked Patton the question this whole session answers: how do you make your life square up to what you believe? Patton laughed and said, welcome to the Christian life. Listen for why the teachers refuse to say Christians have two natures, and for which of the five views looks most like your own story.

THE LECTURE, SECTION BY SECTION

1. Welcome to the Christian life

Patton's new-believer friend called with what he thought was one more quick question: how do you make your life square up to what you believe? Patton found himself laughing, not at the question but at its size: that is the struggle of the whole Christian life. He read him Romans 7, Paul doing the very thing he hates, and the friend, who had read Romans, insisted he would have noticed a verse like that. Sanctification is the aspect of salvation happening now, daily, and the session's plan is the course's usual one: survey the views, then lay down guarding principles.

2. Still talking about salvation

Before the views, a correction of scope. The chart the class has followed all term puts sanctification under the one umbrella of salvation, not beside it. American evangelicalism tends to shrink salvation to the conversion moment; the Bible's scope is wider, past, present, and future, and the commands to holiness, be holy for I am holy in 1 Peter, pursue the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord in Hebrews, are salvation texts. The word itself means to set apart, to make holy: God conforming us to his image. There is a point in time when a person passes from death to life, the teachers affirm; but salvation is more than that point, and this session is still about salvation.

3. The Wesleyan view

Five views, with the usual caution that labels are rough and traditions overlap. The Wesleyan view: after justification comes a defeated struggle with sin, until a crisis of complete surrender, which Wesley called entire sanctification. Wesley taught perfectionism: a believer can reach the point of committing no known sin, generally late in life, since God would not command be holy if holiness were unreachable, and Galatians 5:24, those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh, is in the past tense. The teachers' gentle verdict: a noble aim, and everyone in the room is short of it, which is why the view has few takers; and note carefully, Wesley never taught salvation by works: the perfection sought is post-conversion, a sanctification goal, not a salvation ground.

4. The Holiness and Pentecostal views

The Holiness view keeps Wesley's ladder and adds a rung: only after entire sanctification comes the baptism of the Holy Spirit, evidenced, for most in this tradition, by speaking in tongues and the exercise of the gifts. The empowering follows the purifying, which is why, the teachers observe, the tradition can drift legalistic: to function in the church you must present yourself as entirely sanctified, and much gets hidden. The Pentecostal view, holiness Pentecostals aside, drops entire sanctification: justification, then the defeated struggle, then a subsequent baptism of the Spirit, after which the old man and the new man contend, with real ups and downs and the Spirit turning the tide. Down to earth, the teachers grant: everyone recognizes the ups and downs.

5. The crisis dedication and Reformed views

The crisis dedication view, common in dispensational circles and associated with Ryrie and the tradition many in the class come from: after justification a believer may live long in carnality, like the Corinthians Paul had to address as fleshly, babes, until some crisis brings a dedication: the Savior trusted at conversion is now entrusted with the life. Patton owns that this chart looks like his own story, converted at four, wandering until his early twenties, then broken and surrendered; but he will not build doctrine from his biography. The Reformed view, the majority evangelical view today: the struggle begins at conversion and growth begins with it; the baptism of the Spirit is not a later empowering but the indwelling, sealing, and incorporation into the body that happen at justification itself; and a professed believer showing no movement at all is not reassured but urged to make his calling and election sure.

6. The flesh, the old man, and the two plugs

Key terms next, against folk theology. The flesh in Paul is not the body, that is Gnosticism creeping back, but the principal force within human nature bent toward sin. And the teachers refuse the phrase sin nature where it implies two natures: we are not like Christ, one person in two natures; we are one human nature with a sin principle at work in it, not spiritual schizophrenics. The old man is the former way of life energized by the flesh; the new man is the new way of life energized by the Spirit. The session's governing illustration: every morning there are two outlets on the wall, and you plug into one. Plug into the flesh and you live the old way; plug into the Spirit and you live the new. The old outlet is never removed in this life, and it is always the easier reach.

7. Positional and progressive, commanded and never finished

The principles begin. One: sanctification is both positional and progressive. Paul tells the Corinthians, after the terrible list of what some of them were: you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified, set apart already; and Philippians says work out your salvation, the process. Work out, the teachers stress, not work for. Two: sanctification is commanded, be holy in all your conduct, cleanse ourselves from every defilement, perfecting holiness; it is not an optional program for the keen. Three: it is never completed in this life. Paul himself says he has not already attained or been perfected, but presses on; now we see in a mirror dimly. The teachers push past Wesley here: sanctification is deeper than the tally of known sins, because sin has darkened the mind itself, the noetic effects, so that even our seeing is bent until glory straightens it.

8. Synergistic, fought in real personalities

Four: sanctification is synergistic, God and the believer cooperating, and Philippians 2 holds both in one breath: work out your salvation, for it is God who works in you. Let go and let God is not the biblical pattern; there are too many commands. Five: the fight runs through real temptations and personalities. Galatians 5 lists the deeds of the flesh; Romans 6 commands, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, a command that would be pointless if reigning sin were impossible for a believer. Each person carries different inbuilt tendencies, and two cautions follow: never excuse a sin as just how God made me, for God never made anyone sinful and never said leave it unfought; and never judge another believer's battle by your own, for the sin that has never tempted you is someone else's daily war.

9. Sin no longer necessary, the flesh mortified

Six: sin is no longer necessary for the Christian. Believers are not sinless, but they are no longer slaves; those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh in the sense that it no longer rules. Before conversion there was one plug and no choice; now there are two, and every temptation is a decision that can go the other way. Seven: mortification of the flesh involves a real dedication of the life to God and a continued reliance on the Spirit: Romans 6:13, do not present your members to sin as instruments, but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead. There is a presenting to be done, and it is done again and again.

10. Orthodoxy precedes orthopraxy

Eight, the principle the teachers call the most important Paul gives by example: right doctrine comes before right practice. Romans spends eleven chapters on what God has done before its first therefore: I urge you, by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Come to God to pay him back and you have misunderstood everything, for a gift paid for is no longer a gift; the only motive that survives the doctrine is gratitude. The deeper the understanding, the truer the presenting. And thinking itself is part of obedience: the Sermon on the Mount moves adultery from the act to the look, because what you think, feel, and intend is part of what makes you Christian. A church that says it does not care what you think, only what you do, has an interesting idea that happens to be unchristian.

11. Love, not law; the Spirit, not the flesh

Nine: the motivation for sanctification is love, not law. Romans 7 is Paul's testimony that the law sanctifies no one; we love because he first loved us. Ten: the power is the Spirit, not the law. Galatians 3 asks the deciding question: having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? You were not saved by law-keeping and you will not grow by it; take up the law as your engine of holiness and you have plugged, every time, into the flesh. Rules cannot do what only the Spirit does.

12. Growing dedications, and the trade to the other team

Patton sketches the view he currently holds, a Reformed picture with honest texture: justification, then ups and downs, with dedications that recur and grow, small at first, larger as God is known better, crisis moments scattered across a lifetime rather than one great surrender, each morning's presenting stronger than the last, hopefully. Not the walk-the-aisle dedication, but the daily one: my life is yours, said again with more understanding than yesterday. Dyke closes with the illustration the session is remembered by: a ballplayer under contract to the demons, all black uniform, whose contract is bought out by the angels. Positionally everything changed in a moment: new team, new uniform, new coach, Christ instead of Satan. But he still plays like the old team taught him, and changes only gradually as the new coach works, and sometimes he can hear the old manager yelling from the other dugout, and sometimes he still listens, though the man has no authority over him anymore. That is positional and progressive in one picture. The definition the session leaves: sanctification is the lifelong process in which believers are conformed to the image of Christ, relying on the power of God to mortify sin. And since Christ is the second Adam, the image we are conformed to is what we were made to be in the beginning: salvation, the teachers finish, is re-creation, God's patient recovery of his original design, and it takes the whole of a life.

SCRIPTURE IN THIS LECTURE

1 Corinthians 13 · 1 Corinthians 6 · 1 John 4 · 1 Peter 1 · 2 Corinthians 7 · Galatians 3 · Galatians 5 · Hebrews 12 · Matthew 5 · Philippians 2 · Philippians 3 · Romans 12 · Romans 6 · Romans 7

KEY TERMS

Sanctification

To set apart, to make holy: the lifelong process in which believers are conformed to the image of Christ, relying on the power of God to mortify sin. Part of salvation, not an appendix to it.

Entire sanctification

Wesley's doctrine of a post-conversion crisis of complete surrender after which a believer commits no known sin; perfectionism. A sanctification goal, the teachers stress, never a salvation ground, and one no one in the room has reached.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

In Holiness and Pentecostal theology, an empowering subsequent to conversion, evidenced for many by tongues; in the Reformed and dispensational views, the indwelling, sealing, and incorporation into Christ's body that occur at justification itself.

The carnal Christian

The crisis dedication view's category, from Paul's fleshly Corinthians: a genuine believer living in prolonged immaturity until a crisis brings dedication. The Reformed view answers that such a person should examine whether he is in the faith at all.

The flesh

Not the body, which is Gnosticism's error, but the principal force within human nature bent toward sin: the pull that remains in the believer and must be refused daily.

Old man and new man

Not two natures in one person, the teachers insist, but two ways of life: the former way energized by the flesh, the new way energized by the Spirit. One person, two outlets, a daily choice of plug.

Positional and progressive

The two tenses of holiness: you were sanctified, set apart once for all in Christ, and you are being sanctified, worked out with fear and trembling. The ballplayer's bought-out contract and his slowly changing game.

Noetic effects of sin

Sin's darkening of the mind itself, so that even our seeing is dim until glory; the reason sanctification runs deeper than Wesley's tally of known sins.

Orthodoxy precedes orthopraxy

Right doctrine before right practice: Romans' eleven chapters before its first therefore. The only motive that survives the doctrine is gratitude, for a gift paid for is no longer a gift.

COMPREHENSION CHECK

Eighteen questions from the lecture. Circle your answers, then check them against the key at the bottom.

1. What question from a new believer frames the session?

- A. Which Bible translation should I read?
- B. How do you make your life square up to what you believe, to which Patton answered, welcome to the Christian life
- C. When was the canon settled?
- D. Should Christians observe the sabbath?

2. Why do the teachers insist sanctification is still about salvation?
 - A. Because sanctification replaces justification
 - B. Because salvation and sanctification are synonyms in every verse
 - C. Because the Bible's scope of salvation runs past, present, and future, and the commands to holiness are salvation texts under one umbrella, wider than the conversion moment
 - D. Because the conversion moment is unimportant
3. What did Wesley teach about perfection, and on what grounds?
 - A. That perfection is reached at baptism
 - B. That no believer should pursue holiness
 - C. That perfection concerns doctrine, not conduct
 - D. That a believer can reach the point of committing no known sin, since God would not command holiness that is unreachable, and the crucifying of the flesh is spoken of in the past tense
4. What careful qualification do the teachers add about Wesley?
 - A. He never taught salvation by works: the perfection he sought was post-conversion, a goal of sanctification, not a ground of salvation
 - B. He privately abandoned perfectionism
 - C. He restricted perfection to the clergy
 - D. He believed perfection came at conversion
5. What rung does the Holiness view add to Wesley's ladder?
 - A. A second justification
 - B. The baptism of the Spirit only after entire sanctification, evidenced for most by tongues, the empowering following the purifying
 - C. A final anointing at death
 - D. Membership in a holiness church
6. Why can the Holiness structure drift legalistic, on the teachers' reading?
 - A. Because its hymns emphasize the law
 - B. Because it forbids assurance
 - C. To function in the church one must present oneself as entirely sanctified, so much gets hidden
 - D. Because it requires vows of poverty
7. How does the Reformed view treat the baptism of the Spirit?
 - A. As a later empowering evidenced by tongues
 - B. As a reward for entire sanctification
 - C. As an experience reserved for leaders
 - D. As the indwelling, sealing, and incorporation into the body that occur at justification itself
8. How does Patton handle the fact that the crisis dedication chart looks like his own story?
 - A. He therefore adopts the view
 - B. He denies his story ever happened
 - C. He owns the resemblance, converted at four, surrendered in his twenties, and refuses to build doctrine from his biography
 - D. He concludes all stories follow that chart

9. Why do the teachers refuse the phrase sin nature in its popular sense?
- A. Because sin is not real after conversion
 - B. It implies two natures in one person; we are not like Christ, one person in two natures, but one human nature with a sin principle at work in it
 - C. Because the phrase is too old-fashioned
 - D. Because nature is a philosophical term
10. What is the two plugs illustration?
- A. Two churches competing for members
 - B. Two baptisms available to believers
 - C. Two covenants running in parallel
 - D. Two outlets on the wall each morning: plug into the flesh and live the old way, plug into the Spirit and live the new; the old outlet is never removed and is always the easier reach
11. How is sanctification both positional and progressive?
- A. You were washed, sanctified, justified, set apart already, and you work out your salvation, the process; work out, never work for
 - B. It is positional for clergy and progressive for laity
 - C. It is positional in this life and progressive in the next
 - D. The two terms are interchangeable
12. Why does sanctification run deeper than Wesley's tally of known sins?
- A. Because known sins cannot be counted
 - B. Because sin has darkened the mind itself, the noetic effects, so even our seeing is bent until glory straightens it; now we see in a mirror dimly
 - C. Because unknown sins do not matter
 - D. Because the tally resets at each communion
13. Why would Romans 6:12, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, be pointless on some theologies?
- A. Because the verse addresses unbelievers
 - B. Because sin cannot touch the body
 - C. The command assumes a believer could let sin reign; there is no need to forbid the impossible
 - D. Because reigning is a political metaphor
14. What two cautions follow from personality-shaped temptation?
- A. Never excuse a sin as just how God made me, and never judge another believer's battle by your own, for the sin that never tempted you is someone else's daily war
 - B. Avoid all self-examination, and avoid all accountability
 - C. Assume every believer fights identically, and say so
 - D. Treat personality as unchangeable, and sin as personality
15. What is the force of Romans' structure for principle eight?
- A. Romans has no practical section
 - B. The commands come first and the doctrine after
 - C. Eleven chapters of what God has done come before the first therefore; the presenting of our bodies is urged by the mercies of God, so gratitude, not payback, is the motive that survives
 - D. The structure is accidental

16. What question from Galatians 3 carries principles nine and ten?
- A. Who has bewitched the Corinthians?
 - B. Is the law of Moses abolished entirely?
 - C. Must Gentiles be circumcised?
 - D. Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? You were not saved by law-keeping and will not grow by it
17. What does the ballplayer illustration teach?
- A. That conversion guarantees immediate maturity
 - B. The contract is bought out in a moment, new team, new coach, positional change complete; but he still plays like the old team taught him and changes gradually, sometimes still hearing the old manager yell from a dugout where he has no authority
 - C. That believers change teams repeatedly
 - D. That the old manager retains authority over the traded player
18. In what sense is salvation re-creation?
- A. God creates a second, different humanity
 - B. The world is destroyed and remade at conversion
 - C. Conformed to Christ, the second Adam, we are being recovered to what we were made to be in the beginning; God's patient recovery of his original design, taking the whole of a life
 - D. Re-creation refers only to the resurrection body

Answer key (fold under before you begin): 1 B · 2 C · 3 D · 4 A · 5 B · 6 C · 7 D · 8 C · 9 B · 10 D · 11 A · 12 B · 13 C · 14 A · 15 C · 16 D · 17 B · 18 C

TALK IT OVER

1. How do you make your life square up to what you believe? Answer the new believer's question yourself, out loud, using what this session gave you: the two plugs, the ten principles, the ballplayer. Which piece would you lead with, and why?
2. The teachers warn against both excusing sin as personality and judging another's battle by your own. Which error is more native to you? Name, before God, one tendency you have quietly reclassified as just how I am.
3. Trace your own dedications: not aisle-walks, but the mornings you said, my life is yours, and meant more of it than before. Are they growing, as Patton's sketch hopes? What would tomorrow's presenting include that last year's did not?

ONE VERSE TO CARRY

Peter carries the old command into the new covenant in 1 Peter 1: as the Holy One who called you is holy, so be holy yourselves in all your conduct, for it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy.

GO FURTHER

The teachers admit sanctification could fill a program of its own and offer the ten principles as guardrails rather than a system; Ryrie's *Balancing the Christian Life*, already on the course list, represents the tradition discussed under crisis dedication. The final session takes up the question every view of sanctification eventually meets: can the person God has begun to change be lost along the way?