

# Doctrine of Sanctification

📖 Romans 6:1-8:17

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Last time we studied Romans 8:14-17. These verses conclude the doctrine of sanctification. There are a few more things about sanctification toward the end of the chapter but for the most part we have seen everything Paul wrote the Romans. At this point we want to review sanctification before we move on to glorification. Remember, there are three tenses of salvation. First, the past tense, I have been saved by grace through faith. Paul covers the past tense in Romans 3:21-5:21. The theological term is justification. Justification is the instant legal declaration of righteousness that sets us free from the penalty of sin. Second, the present tense, I am being saved by grace through faith. Paul covers the present tense in Romans 6:1-8:17. The theological term is sanctification. Sanctification is the gradual setting apart of the believer for the purposes of God so that we are free from the power of sin. Third, the future tense, I will be saved by grace through faith. Paul covers the future tense in Romans 8:18-39. The theological term is glorification. Glorification is the resurrection of the believer at the rapture so that we are free from the presence of sin. So the three tenses of salvation are laid out sequentially by the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

Sanctification is the tense of salvation most of the NT epistles are dealing with. What's so important about Romans 6-8 is that what is taught here undergirds every commandment in the NT. In other words, there are probably over 1,000 commands to follow in the NT, but what Romans 6-8 teaches is how we follow those commandments. If we think of those 1,000 commands as what we have to do then we are not thinking about them correctly. We can't do them. They are demanded of us but we can't do them. Only the Spirit of God can do them and so we have to learn to walk by the Spirit. That's what we can do and that's about as simple as I can put sanctification; it occurs in this dispensation as we walk by the Spirit. But like most doctrines, while they can be put simply the NT reveals much more about them, a more complex picture develops as we study. It's that more complex picture that we've been studying verse by verse and that we want to categorically develop today before we move on to glorification. I said we would try to put all the pieces together in one picture and hopefully you already have the pieces from the verse-by-verse and have figured out how they fit together, if not in whole then at least in part. If not we'll generate that today. One final note, as we go through we'll be referring to verses in Romans 5-8 and as I read the verses I'll be reading them as I've translated them. I won't give

explanation. If you need explanation go back and listen to the lessons. In the main the only thing I do is translate "sin" as "sin nature" so you'll hear that a lot.

We start with our position as unbelievers. There are four truths we want to make relative to our position as unbelievers. These four truths give us the background for understanding our new position as believers. First, we were identified with Adam in his sin and therefore condemned at conception. Rom 5:12 says that "through one man sin entered the world and death through sin and so death spread to all men because all sinned." Paul's evidence that we all sinned in Adam is 5:14 that "death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam." As a consequence 5:16 says that "on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation." The argument is that through the one sin of the one man Adam condemnation and death came to all men because all sinned in him. The explanation for how that can be is that Adam was at the same time one man and mankind and therefore since we are a part of mankind then when Adam sinned we as mankind sinned in him. This is the doctrine of seminalism or real imputation. It means that we really participated in that one sin, not as individuals, but as mankind. We deny that Adam sinned as our representative and his sin is legally imputed to us so that we are held responsible for something he did. We say that is unjust. Instead we maintain that we truly participated as mankind in the sin of Adam and therefore God is just in condemning us from the moment of conception. David said, "In sin my mother conceived me." That means David was a person at conception and that David as a person had a sin nature at conception. So when the sperm unites with the egg conception has occurred and the individual is a full person with a sin nature and is therefore condemned. How we get a sin nature, or the transmission of the sin nature occurs by our father through the act of procreation. The sin nature is not a material substance that is transmitted to us, it is a spiritual substance that is transmitted to us. So don't think of the sin nature as something that is physical. The sin nature is a disposition, not a physical substance. It is a spiritual disposition to do evil that Rom 7:17-18 says dwells in our flesh. It cannot be seen but the results, what comes out of it through the members of our body, the personal sin, can be seen. So there is a difference between the sin nature and personal sin. The sin nature is the source within, the personal sins are the thoughts, words and deeds that come forth from the source. We get the sin nature from our father which is why the patterns of personal sin are similar to that of our father. So the first truth is that as unbelievers we were identified with Adam in His sin, the doctrine of seminalism or real imputation and the sin nature is passed on to us by our father by procreation, and thereby we are condemned. Second, in this state we were unregenerate and therefore separated from life with God. In Rom 6:6 the phrase "old man" is used to describe the person that we were as unregenerate and separated from the life of God. The old man can live and move and exist because God is upholding him but he is separated from the life of God, he is unregenerate. The old man is not the same as the old sin nature. Rom 6:6 says "that our old self or man was crucified with Him for the purpose that our body used by the sin nature might be rendered powerless." It does not ever say that our old sin nature was crucified with Him. It was not our sin nature that was crucified but our old man that was crucified. Now we are a new man or regenerate. We are no longer an old man,

we are a new man, but we still have a sin nature. So the old man refers to the total person that we were as unregenerate and the old sin nature refers to the sinful disposition of that old man. So the second truth is that as unbelievers we were unregenerate and therefore separated from the life of God. Third, as unregenerate or old men we had as our master the sin nature. Paul uses the slave-master analogy to describe our relationship to our sin nature as unregenerate and now as regenerate. The slave was legally obligated to his master. As unregenerate we were slaves to our sin nature. We had to obey the will of our sin nature. We were obligated to sin. We had no other choice. This means that as unbelievers we could never please God. Rom 8:8, "those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Now, Paul usually uses this analogy to describe the fact that we are no longer legally obligated to our sin nature. For example, Rom 6:7 says that when we died with Christ we were "freed from the sin nature." That means that we were freed from the legal obligation to obey the sin nature, that as regenerate creatures we don't have to obey it anymore. It has no legal rights over us anymore. Rom 6:17 says, "though you were slaves of sin," showing that prior to regeneration our legal obligation was to obey the sin nature but no longer. Rom 6:18 says, "and having been freed from sin" the legal obligation to obey the sin nature has been broken. We have been freed from the sin as our master. So the third truth is that as unregenerate our master is the sin nature and we were legally obligated to obey it. This is part of the doctrine of total depravity. As depraved we are under the legal dictates of the sin nature. Fourth, as unregenerate we were referred to as "in the flesh" such that we could only sin and therefore never please God. Rom 7:5 says, "For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death." The expression "in the flesh" is Paul's expression for an unbeliever. It means the unbeliever's position is in the sphere of the flesh" or under the dictates of the flesh such that if any authority comes in, such as the Law, it only arouses the sinful lusts of the flesh to rebel and commit personal sin. Rom 8:8-9 uses the same expression saying, "and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, since indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." So the expression "in the flesh" designates an unbeliever in opposition to the expression "in the Spirit" which designates a believer. Of course, Rom 8:8, "those who are in the flesh cannot please God." So again, there is nothing that an unbeliever can do to please God because he is in the sphere of the flesh or under the dictates of the flesh. So then the only way he can come to Christ is by faith in Him, non-meritorious faith.

So those four positional truths give the background; to recap, first, we were identified with Adam in his sin and therefore stood condemned; second, we were unregenerate and therefore separated from the life of God; third, we had as our master the sin nature and were therefore legally obligated to obey it; and fourth, we were "in the flesh" such that we could only sin and therefore never please God. This was our position and it is a very bad position to be in.

Now we come to our experience or the results of living in that position. There are three truths. First, as unregenerate we continually committed personal sin. Rom 6:19 speaks of the life of an unbeliever, "For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so

now..." The aorist tense looks at the whole of our live as unbelievers. Our whole life we gave the parts of our body over to the lusts of the sin nature and the more we did this the more and more lawless we became. In other words, as an unbeliever you may have started out with what were considered private sins where you were trying to avoid being seen but the more you sinned the more and more public and involved your sinning became. This is part of the doctrine of depravity again. It says that the more one sins the more his conscience becomes seared to the guilt of sin and this paves the way for more and more open and vile sins. But the overall point is that the unbeliever can't do anything but commit personal sin. If he could do one righteous thing he could please God in that one righteous thing. But Rom 8:8 said that an unbeliever can't please God. So an unbeliever can't do a single righteous thing in God's sight. If they could Christ died for nothing. Second, because as unregenerate we continually sin the result is a continual experience of death. Rom 6:16, "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death..." Sin results in an experience of death. Rom 6:21, "Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death." Again, this is a reference to an experience of death. Living in sin always results in an experience of death. Rom 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death..." Death is the payment for living by the sin nature, an experience of death that ultimately leads for an unbeliever to an eternal experience of death in the lake of fire. Rom 7:5 speaks of us while unbelievers. "For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death." The fruit is that which comes out of the root. The root is the sin nature, the fruit is the personal sin that comes out of the sin nature, it bears death; things such as anger, hate, malice, rebellion, envy, disputes, factions, drunkenness, sensuality, sorcery, etc...Life is no fun being a sinner because while it may seem fun for a while, yet over time the dominos begin to fall and life of sin becomes a huge mess; warped lives, broken families, frustration, economic loss, stress, chaos, etc...So the second experience of unbelievers is a continual experience of death before their eternal death in the lake of fire. Third, the Law of God for an unregenerate person only agitates the sin nature. Rom 7:8, "but sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me." All that the Law does for an unbeliever is agitate the sin nature to rebel against the Law. This was one of the purposes of the Law, so that men would realize that they could not please God and would turn to faith. Galatians says the Law was a tutor to lead us to faith in Christ!

So those three experiential truths depict life as an unbeliever; to recap, first, as unregenerate we continually committed personal sin; second, consequently we continually experience death; and third, all the Law of God does is agitate our sin nature to sin more and more. It's a dark picture indeed.

Now we come to that wonderful moment of faith in Christ and the truths that build upon our new relationship to God established by justification. Justification is the truth that Paul covered in Romans 3:21-5:21. It is the legal declaration of righteousness that is made of us at the moment of faith in Christ that sets us free from the penalty of sin. Having been justified we can now be sanctified. There are five truths that relate to positional sanctification, things that are involved and/or are necessary. First, if as unbelievers we were identified with Adam then as believers we are identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. This is necessary for sanctification to proceed. Rom 6:3, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to the sin nature; for he who has died is freed from the sin nature." Several times there Paul speaks of us being united with Christ in His death and a few times in His burial and resurrection. He states it occurred by baptism. Baptism refers to identification. It's the Spirit who identifies us with Christ so the baptism in view is Spirit baptism and has nothing to do with water. The Spirit is the One who takes us retroactively through the cross and kills our old man, buries our old man and raises us a new man so that as the end of 6:4 stated, "we might live a new life." So the first truth relative to our new position that is required for sanctification to progress is we must be identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. The Spirit is the One who does this work by His baptism. Second, if as unbelievers we were an old man, now as believers we are a new man. Paul does not use the term new man in Romans but he does use it in Col 3:9 and Eph 4:22. To be a new man is to be regenerate and therefore a partaker of the life of God. The regenerate person is therefore a saved person. Titus 3:5 says, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, but the washing of regeneration..." Having become a new man the new man we are needs to be renewed. Paul says in Col 3:9-11, "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old man with its evil practices, and have put on the new man who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all." The renewal of the new man is the process of sanctification. So the second truth relative to our new position that is required for sanctification is that we are now a new man, which is the term for regenerate and this man needs to be sanctified. Third, as unbelievers were slaves to the sin nature and obligated to obey it, as believers we are no longer slaves to the sin nature. We have been released from our former mastery. Now we are free. Rom 6:2 says, "How shall we who died to the sin nature still live in it?" Death releases all claims, as in a marriage. Therefore at the moment of faith, we died with Christ and released from the sin nature as our master so that we do not have to obey it any longer. It doesn't mean that we don't have a sin nature, only that it has no legal rights over us. Rom 6:7, "for he who has died is freed from the sin nature." In 6:11, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to the sin nature..." That's our responsibility. We are to consider ourselves dead to the sin nature. Rom 6:14, "For sin

shall not be master over you." Of course, you still have a sin nature. Rom 6:12 says, "Do not let the sin nature reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts." So it's still there, otherwise this verse wouldn't make any sense. Neither would 6:13, "and do not go on presenting the members of your body to the sin nature as instruments of unrighteousness." It's something we can do but should not do. In 6:16 he says, "you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of the sin nature resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness." A slave once set free was not allowed to put himself back into slavery, yet many slaves did. So it's not something we should do but it's something we can do. In Rom 7:17 he refers to the fact we have a sin nature and that it is activated when we put ourselves under the Law. "So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but the sin nature which dwells in me." The sin nature dwells in the believer. It gets in the way of sanctification. If we didn't have one we'd be perfect all the time. And 7:20, "But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but the sin nature which dwells in me." It is a powerful disposition still with us. And 7:21, "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good." Where he says evil is present within me he is speaking as regenerate because as regenerate he wants to do good. So as regenerate we still have a sinful disposition but the important point is that we don't have to obey the sinful disposition because it is no longer our master. It will try to rule as master but it is no longer master. Fourth, as regenerate we not only have a sinful nature but we have a new nature and these two war within. The new nature is a disposition toward holiness. It desires to please God but it is incapable of doing so by itself. Rom 7:15, "For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate." Middle of Rom 7:18, "for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not." The new nature has a desire to please God but it cannot do it. Rom 7:19, "For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man..." The new nature is that which is the seat of our new desire to please God but it is not capable itself of pleasing God. It wills to do good but cannot accomplish good. What ends up happening now that we are regenerate and we have an old sin nature and a new nature is described in Rom 7:23, "but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members..." The sinful nature, when it is challenged by the word of God that is in the mind of the believer, wages a war against the word of God in the mind and takes the believer captive to the sin nature in order to fulfill its lusts. So Romans 7 is about the fact that as regenerate you have a sin nature and a new nature. The sin nature wants to sin and the new nature wants to do righteousness. But the sin nature is more powerful than the new nature and therefore it will always defeat us. This is why Paul cries out in Rom 7:24, "Wretched man that I am, Who will set me free from the body of this death?" The answer is the fifth point. Fifth, the Holy Spirit is the one who will give us victory over the sin nature. Rom 8:2 shows that at the moment of faith in Christ He is the one who set us apart from the obligation to live according to the sin nature with its death dealing results. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." He sets us free once for all. But the actual enjoyment of being set free in our experience depends upon us

walking according to the Spirit. Rom 8:4, "So that the requirement of the Law," which was righteousness, "might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." The believer can walk either by the flesh or the Spirit but only when he walks according to the Spirit does he have the requirement of the Law, which is righteousness, fulfilled in him. When we are walking by the Spirit our minds are set on the things of the Spirit. Rom 8:5, "For those who are (walking) according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are (walking) according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." The ability to walk by the Spirit presupposes the Spirit indwells us. Rom 8:9, "since indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." Since we do belong to Him then we have an obligation to live by the Spirit. Rom 8:12, "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." So the obligation of the believer is to live by the Spirit continually. As we do we put to death the deeds of the flesh.

So the five truths that relate to our experience of sanctification. First, we are in Christ by virtue of being baptized by Spirit into the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Second, as such we are no longer an old unregenerate man but a new regenerate man. Third, the new regenerate man has a new nature that desires to please God but can only serve Him in mind. Fourth, the new regenerate man also has the old sin nature that wars against the new nature and takes the believer captive to do its will. Fifth, the Spirit of God is the only means of victory for the believer.

Finally, we come to the believer's experience. There are two different experiences of the believer. We can try to live under law or under grace. What if we try to be sanctified by keeping the Law? We want to keep the 10 commandments or we want to try and keep the moral law or something like that. First, if we try to be sanctified by the Law we will not be sanctified. Why? Rom 6:14, "for you are not under law but under grace." We are under a new system for living the Christian life. Yet our new nature does agree with Law. It must because the Law was from God. Rom 7:14, "For we know that the Law is spiritual." Rom 7:16, "But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good." Rom 7:22, "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man." Rom 7:25, "So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God..." So the Law is good and our new nature agrees with the Law and in my mind I can serve the Law of God. However, when we try to accomplish the law we suffer defeat. Every verse in Rom 7:15-25 teaches this. It was constant defeat for Paul. Romans 7:14-25 is Paul trying to be sanctified by keeping the Law. We won't read all the verses. Rom 7:18 shows why, "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh, for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not." The flesh is more powerful than I. If I try to keep the law my flesh will overcome I. So there is no way to be sanctified by keeping the Law. All that happens when we try to keep the Law is our flesh is aggravated to rise up and rebel against the Law. Second, if we try to be sanctified by grace we will have the requirement of the Law fulfilled in us by the Spirit. Rom 8:1 is good news that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Because we are in Christ we are not condemned to live by the sin nature. There is

a new way to live. Rom 8:2 tells us that the governing influence of the Spirit is available. "For the governing influence of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the governing influence of the sin nature and of death." Our responsibility to see this actuated is Rom 8:4, to walk by the Spirit, "So that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Rom 7:6 also taught this life by the Spirit. "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter." As we walk by the Spirit our mind is set on the things of the Spirit. Rom 8:5, "For those who are walking according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are walking according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." The results are as follows. First, the righteous requirement of the Law is fulfilled in the believer. This requirement is righteousness. "Rom 8:4, "so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us. When we walk by the Spirit the production of the Spirit through us is righteousness. This product is of imperishable quality and is therefore rewardable for all eternity. Second, a new life is enjoyed. Rom 6:4, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." Rom 6:22, "But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life." Eternal life here is a quality of life enjoyed now, what elsewhere is the new life. Rom 6:23, this life is a free gift, "the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." This verse is a principle, the application Paul is making is to the new experience of life that we enjoy as we do not sin. Rom 8:2 speaks of the new life, "For the governing influence of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus..." Rom 8:6, "...but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace..." An experience of life is enjoyed as we live by the Spirit. Rom 8:11 refers to this life as a resurrection quality of life, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." And Rom 8:13 speaks of this life, "but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Multiple verses, as you see, speak of the experience of life that we enjoy as a result of living by the Spirit. Third, we bear fruit to God. Rom 7:4, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God." We don't produce the fruit, we bear the fruit, the Spirit produces the fruit through us. It is of imperishable quality. And finally, the fourth result, sanctification progresses. Rom 6:22, "But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification..." Spiritual growth results when we live by the Spirit and we are more transformed into the likeness of Christ. This is a process that proceeds only on the basis of the principles Paul has declared in Rom 6-8. Next week we will take one more step forward and look toward the third tense of salvation which is glorification. Until then, remember that these principles are presupposed in every NT epistle that gives us commands. We cannot live the Christian life, we can live by the Spirit and have the requirements of the Christian life fulfilled in us.