

Lesson 12 **SANCTIFICATION, GOOD WORKS**

12.1 **The Nature of Sanctification**

Sanctification means to **make holy**, and refers to the daily process of renewal in the Holy Spirit by which the lives of God's children are more and more directed to His service. **Holy** means that we are separate from the world, consecrated to God. Thus, we deal here with the power of renewal in the Christian life which makes us separate and different from the world, Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Peter 1:13f.

Although the time and order is beyond what has been revealed to us, normally we say that sanctification **follows** justification, and that our renewal is based on our righteousness in Christ. One of the great heresies in the time of the Reformation held that justification was based on sanctification, that is, we are renewed and then, on that basis, are justified. In opposition to this, the Reformers maintained that the foundation of our renewal and sanctification is the free declaration of grace made wholly outside of us and apart from ourselves.

Sanctification is entirely the work of God in Christ, and not man. The Bible primarily ascribes this work to the Holy Spirit, but the other Persons of the Trinity are not excluded from it, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24; Hebrews 10:10, 12:10; John 17:17; Ephesians 5:25, 27; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

At the same time, we are actively involved in the process of sanctification. The Bible describes repentance as something we must do, and something we must actively pursue, Romans 6:19, 22; 2 Corinthians 6:17; 2 Corinthians 7:1. We must be renewed and sanctified to enter the kingdom of God, 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Ephesians 5:5; 1 John 3:14.

12.2 The Elements of Sanctification

Sanctification manifests itself in repentance, faith and good works. We must daily turn away from our sins, and turn to God in Christ, and in renewed faith and trust resolve to live according to His law. In this daily process, we are more and more renewed after the image of Christ, and so restored to our original place in God's creation, Ephesians 4:23, 24.

12.2.1 Conversion

Conversion means **to turn about**, to **return**, a word often used in the Bible. Two parts are distinguished in the daily process of conversion:

a. The mortification of the old man

A heartfelt sorrow for sin, and a firm resolve to hate it, avoid it, and flee from it, 2 Corinthians 2:1f; James 4:9, 10.

b. The coming to life of the new man

A heartfelt joy in Christ, and a firm resolve to live according to the will of God in all good works, 1 John 5:1, 2; Colossians 3:5-10; Galatians 2:20.

12.2.2 Good Works

A holy life before the Lord must be a life of good works in which we live in true love and unity with our neighbour. We must bear good fruit before the Lord, John 15:1-3.

a. The **basis** of good works

Good works must be based on a true faith, in which we seek no merit in ourselves, but rest entirely in Christ, Romans 8:1,8; 14:13. Only in the knowledge of complete justification and redemption outside of ourselves in Christ can we do good works which are pleasing and acceptable to God, Galatians 3:10f.

b. The **rule** of good works

All our works must be measured according to the standard of the holy law of God. The law is the rule for thankfulness for us and teaches us how we are to live before God and men, Galatians 5:13, 14; 1 John 5:1-5.

c. The **goal** of our good works

All our works must be done to the glory of God, which is the original calling and duty of man, 1 Corinthians 10:31. We must live as those who seek to please the Lord first of all, Matthew 6:1; Colossians 3:22, and also care for our neighbours.

12.3 Faith and Good Works

We are justified by faith apart from works, Romans 3:21, 4:1f, and this faith is the instrument by which we put on the righteousness and holiness of Christ. Our justification is effected completely in Christ, wholly apart from ourselves. Yet the faith which justifies us must be a **living** faith, a faith which expresses the desire to bring, and actually does bring fruits of thankfulness to God, James 2:18f.

Exercises Lesson 12

I. Reference Passages

Study and Review: Belgic Confession, Article 23,24.
Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 7, 24, 32, 33, 44, 49.
Canons of Dort, Chapter III/IV; Chapter II. 1; Chapter V. 5, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14. See also Rejection of Errors III/IV. 5-9; V. 7, 8.

II. Review Questions

1. What does **sanctification** mean?
2. What does **regeneration** mean, and when does this happen?
See Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:21; Revelation 21:5.
3. How can we do good works if we are still sinners?
4. How are our good works made acceptable to God? How do Christ's works on earth relate to our own?
5. What is the standard for our good works? Why?
6. Can there be true faith apart from good works? Explain your answer.

III. Extra Questions

1. Compare the words of Paul in Romans 4 and Galatians 2 with James, especially James 2, on the relationship between faith and works. Do they conflict? How can we find harmony between them?
2. Who taught and later maintained the doctrine of **presumptive regeneration**? What does it mean?
3. What is the relationship of baptism to sanctification? To regeneration?