

**Sanctification: Transformed into
The Image of Christ
Lesson 9**

What do we mean by the expression Carnal Christian? What makes one a carnal Christian? How much sin is necessary to qualify one as a CC? What types of sin? How serious? How frequent? How long?

CC=Christians who refuse to submit to Christ as Lord and who refuse to lead lives characterized by obedience and holiness

I. Introduction

- a. Throughout its history the Church has been plagued with heretical teachings regarding sanctification. Pervasive in the Church today is a heresy which completely *divorces* sanctification from justification. This is **antinomianism**.
- b. This is done in such a manner that the necessity of sanctification in the Christian life is completely denied. Sanctification is said to be **optional** for believers.
- c. Those who hold this position reason that if repentance and sanctification are required of Christians, then salvation is not by faith in Christ alone but also in **works**.
- d. In such a scheme, professing Christians who refuse to submit to Christ as **Lord** and who refuse to lead lives characterized by obedience and holiness are called "carnal Christians" This is also known as "*easy believism*."
- e. This error results in churches being filled with antinomian, unregenerate **professors** of Christianity who merely think of Christ as a fire escape from hell--who want the blessings of heaven but who are unwilling to depart from the sinful inclinations of their hearts.
- f. This heresy is refuted on at least **seven** biblical grounds.

II. Reason #1: God is holy

- a. The first and most important reason why Christians are required to be holy is because God is holy. Both Testaments teach that the imperative of personal holiness is founded upon God's holy **nature**. Lev. 11:44-45 "*For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy.... For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy*"
- b. The Bible emphasizes the Lord's holiness above all the other attributes. To argue that Christians are not required to be holy is an implicit **denial** of God's most exalted attribute
- c. When Christians understand God's holiness they will understand His **hatred** of evil. Jehovah of necessity hates sin with a perfect hatred; His whole Being reacts against it. Hab. 1:13 "*You are of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on wickedness*"
- d. The idea that God sent Christ into the world to remove the guilt of people's sins so they could continue to live wicked lives; so they could "sin as they please and still have remission" is an **insult** to God's holiness. Heb. 12:28-29 "*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire*"

III. Reason #2: Jesus is Lord

- a. The second reason that believers are required to be holy is that Jesus Christ is **both** savior and Lord. The carnal Christian heresy is dependent upon the idea that people can accept Christ as their Savior while at the same time rejecting Him as Lord.
- b. The Bible does not teach that people can pick and choose to trust in only part of Jesus and still be saved. Such teaching is unbiblical and ludicrous. One must believe in Christ as He is **revealed** in the Scriptures.
- c. A Christ who is not King and Lord over all is a **false Christ**, a figment of one's imagination, a god of one's own making. The carnal Christian heresy is an implicit denial that Jesus Christ is Lord. Phil 2:10-11 "*That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*KJV
- d. The New Testament preachers preached His *Lordship*, and sinners received Him as **Lord**. There is not one example of Christ being offered any other way

IV. Reason # 3: Personal holiness accompanies true salvation

- a. The requirement of personal holiness and obedience to God's word is not something only for the nation of Israel or only for a former dispensation. It also is the duty of **every** New Testament-era believer.
- b. Paul says that sanctification is **essential** if one is to serve Jesus Christ. 2 Tim. 2:19 "*Therefore, let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity*"
- c. One may be orthodox in doctrine, diligent in helping the poor, perfect in church attendance and zealous in witnessing to others. Yet without personal holiness such a person is spiritually **dead** and destined for hell. 1 Jn. 1:6 "*If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth*"

V. Reason #4: Repentance accompanies true salvation

- a. The idea that holiness is optional for believers is disproved by the Bible's teaching on **repentance**. Repentance is never presented in Scripture as optional or for Israel only but is a vital element of the gospel message. Luke 24:47 "*and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*"

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- b. Repentance means that a person has a change of mind concerning God, Christ, self and **sin**. A person who repents understands that Jehovah is the one and only true God. He is a God of righteousness and holiness that will not tolerate evil.
- c. A person who **sincerely** repents leads a godly life; that is, he brings forth fruits worthy of repentance. Repentance does *not* save anyone and does not eliminate the guilt of sin, only Christ's atoning death can do that Luke 3:8 *Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance.*
- d. However, true faith and real repentance are the **fruits** of regeneration. This is imparted by the Holy Spirit. Just as no one is saved without the instrument of faith which lays hold of Christ, no one is saved without a change of mind concerning Christ and sin. 2 Tim 2:25 *In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; KJV*

VI. Reason # 5: We belong to Christ

- a. The Bible teaches that Christians have been bought with a price-the precious blood of the Son of God. Therefore, believers are not their own, but **belong** to Jesus Christ. Rom. 14:8 *"whether we live or die, we are the Lord's"*
- b. Paul instructed the Corinthians to **stop** sinning with their bodies because Christ bought them. 1 Cor. 6:19-20 *"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's"*
- c. If a person is a Christian he belongs to Christ and must serve Him with both body and soul in **every** area of life and will have a desire to do so. 1 Pet. 2:15-16 *"For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men-as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God"*
- d. The professing Christian does not have the option of serving **sin and self**. Rom. 6:16 *"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness"*
- e. If one is *not* living for Christ then one is living **against** Him. Matt 12:30 *He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. KJV*

VII. Reason # 6: The life of the believer is not characterized by habitual sin.

- a. The Scriptures teach that people who **habitually** engage in wicked behavior are *not* Christians. 1 Cor. 6:9-11 *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God"*
- b. The apostle John repeatedly condemns the idea that someone can be a Christian yet continue in a sinful **lifestyle**. Christians still have a sinful nature, but it manifests itself in isolated acts of sin, not in continuance of sin. 1 Jn. 2:3-4 *"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him"*
- c. James in contending against antinomian hypocrites says that faith that does not result in good works or obedience is a **dead** faith. It is not a real saving faith but is merely a hypocritical profession. Genuine faith over time results in a changed life.

VIII. Reason # 7: Justification results in sanctification

- a. The Bible teaches that those who are regenerated are also **justified** and sanctified. Justification refers to God's legal declaration based on the perfect satisfaction of the Law by Christ and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer. Rom 8:30 *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified , them he also glorified. KJV*
- b. In other words, justification cannot occur unless a person is regenerated; for true faith cannot exist apart from the new birth. Also, **everyone** who is justified is sanctified because regeneration automatically begins the process of sanctification.
- c. Regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit in man which changes a person's heart and creates a new nature. The carnal Christian heresy asserts that a person is justified while continuously living according to his **old nature**.
- d. While justification with God is apart from the **merit** of works that does not mean that justification is apart from the **existence** of works.
- e. To assert that believers can be justified without also being sanctified is to say that Christ removes the penalty of sin but not the **power** of it. Such thinking is a denial of the comprehensive nature of salvation which is taught throughout Scripture.

IX. Distinguishing between an earnest believer and a carnal Christian

- a. No living Christian is sinless. Therefore, the process of sanctification is a lifelong process and like the layers of an onion being peeled back, progressively reveals in us the ways in which we fail to live up to the image of Christ.
- b. The difference between a CC and an earnest believer who sins is that of the will. An earnest believer will ultimately acknowledge sin when confronted by the Spirit, will exercise his will to repent of it and will eventually follow after Christ.
- c. The length of time that it takes an earnest believer to come to that repentance is indeterminate. God alone is the judge of man's heart and the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life occurs at a pace determined by the Holy Spirit alone.
- d. However, one who is forgiven will ultimately love the God who has forgiven him and the strength of that love will over time manifest itself in the submission of the will to Him.
- e. Are you forgiven? To what extent do you manifest this kind of love for the God who has forgiven you?