

A prayer guide in the series: The Way to the Kingdom

The Way of Sanctifying Grace

By Kevin M. Watson

John Wesley is perhaps most famous for his discovery of salvation by faith and the experience of justification and new birth he experienced at a Religious Society meeting at Aldersgate Street on May 24, 1738, where his “heart was strangely warmed” and he received assurance of his salvation.

Wesley did have a profound and life-changing encounter with the Lord on that day. And as essential as justification is for the Christian life (and it surely is essential), we do well to remember the full picture of Wesley’s understanding of salvation. Wesley’s sermon “The Scripture Way of Salvation” is one place where Wesley describes the faith by which we are saved with particular clarity.

Wesley affirmed that “at the same time that we are justified.... sanctification begins.” But what is sanctification? It is when people who have been forgiven and pardoned of all our sins by the work of Jesus Christ, are also “born again... born of the Spirit.” From the time that we are born again, Wesley says, “the gradual work of sanctification takes place.” Here is how Wesley describes that gradual work:

We are enabled “by the Spirit” to “mortify the deeds of the body,” of our evil nature; and as we are more and more dead to sin, we are more and more alive to God. We go on from grace to grace, while we are careful to “abstain from all appearance of evil,” and are “zealous of good works,” as we have opportunity, doing good to all men; while we walk in all His ordinances blameless, therein worshipping Him in spirit and in truth; while we take up our cross, and deny ourselves every pleasure that does not lead us to God. [I.8]

But how does sanctification happen?

Wesley asks exactly this question in “The Scripture Way of Salvation.” His answer is essential for a right understanding of sanctification:

Exactly as we are justified by faith, so are we sanctified by faith. Faith is the condition, and the only condition, of sanctification, exactly as it is of justification. It is the condition: none is sanctified but he that believes; without faith no man is sanctified. And it is the only condition: this alone is sufficient for sanctification. Every one that believes is sanctified, whatever else he has or has not. In other words, no man is sanctified till he believes: every man when he believes is sanctified. [III.3]

It is time for all who walk in Wesley’s footsteps to reclaim the entire way of salvation, which means walking in the way of justifying *and* sanctifying grace.

A Suggested Pattern of Prayer

As you pray through the following prayer points, invite the presence of the Lord into your time of prayer. Each day's prompt has a Scripture reference for you to pray through. As you pray also allow time to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. When you have prayed through the Scripture and prayer point, you may be led to add your own prayers. Pray and consider what action steps might you take in response to the Lord's leading. Repeat this prayer pattern weekly for the month.

Sunday: Thank the Lord for the gift of salvation by grace through faith. Ask the Father to show you where you need to receive this gift more completely. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Monday: Praise God for old things that have been made new. Ask the Spirit to open your eyes and ears to see and hear where He is making things new and where you can participate in what He is doing. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Tuesday: Ask God to reveal to you where he has already brought you out of dead places and into fruitful space. Rededicate yourself to doing the work he has called you to do there. (Leviticus 11:44-45)

Wednesday: Remember that "It is God's will that you should be sanctified". Ask the Lord to reveal to you where you most need to go from grace to grace to become more like Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)

Thursday: Seek the Spirit's empowerment for an alert and fully sober mind for what is before you today. Commit to obedience to the will of God in all you do this day. (1 Peter 1:13-16)

Friday: Ask the Lord to reveal to you any relationships that need to be restored and any place where unrighteousness is preventing you from full intimacy and connection with the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14)

Saturday: Trust Jesus that what he commands us to do he will enable us to obey. (Matthew 5:48)

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3: 14-21)

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