

# Sanctification: A Taste of Heaven

John Huizenga

“And Enoch walked with God” (Gen. 5:24). “And Noah walked with God” (6:9). David’s heart was “perfect with the LORD his God” (I Kings 1:14, 9:4). Walking with God with a perfect heart; what a beautiful picture. Our hearts are glad when we read of men who walked with God and kings who did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. As we read the history of Israel in the Scriptures, it is so plain that the people enjoyed peace and prosperity when they and their king walked with God, and were miserable when they turned away from God. Sometimes we wonder why the children of Israel could not see this obvious pattern and continue to walk in obedience to God. But we must understand that a sanctified life is a sovereign work of God in the hearts of men and is not something that man of himself decides to do in order to attain blessings from God. Sanctification is a difficult, life-long process that grows out from the seed of regeneration and is based on justification in Christ. It is that stage in the order of salvation in which we begin to bear spiritual fruit and have a small taste of that heavenly glory which God prepares for us.

You will recall that regeneration is that first implanting of the new life of Christ in the heart, that the Holy Spirit calls the regenerated sinner into that new life, that God ingrafts him through faith into Christ, the only source of life, and that justification is that gracious act of God whereby He graciously imputes the perfect righteousness of God in Christ to the elect sinner. After these things are mightily worked by God in our hearts, God graciously, gently, continually and persistently turns our hearts away from sin so that our hearts are changed and we desire to obey God and walk with Him in the way of obedience. God draws us into a relationship of friendship and we desire to please Him by obeying His will. God pours His love into our hearts and we are then able to love our neighbor and do works that are pleasing to God (I John 5:2-3; I Cor. 13; Canons of Dort 3/4 A. 11 & 16). What a marvelous thing: walking in friendship with the Sovereign God of the universe. It brings that peace that passes all understanding.

But this walk is not easy. We are still sinful by nature and our new man in Christ continually battles against the old man of sin (Col. 3:5; Gal. 5:16-22; Rom. 8:12-13; 7:14-23). We will never be able to walk with God perfectly on this earth. We repeatedly fall into sin and displease our God (I John 1:8). But God is faithful and will finish that work which He has begun in us. We need not despair.

God is sovereign in our salvation, but this does not mean that we stand passively with no action on our part. God commands us to work out our own salvation and present our bodies as living sacrifices (Phil. 2:12; Rom. 12:1-2). We walk with God. He does not push us in a baby buggy. Our walk with God requires daily conversion (see the Heidelberg Catechism LD 44; Canons V 1,2,4; Belgic Conf. A. 24). We must also listen to God when He speaks to us in His Word and the preaching, and we must speak to Him in our prayers: praising Him, confessing our sins, and asking for our daily needs.

There have been and always seem to be those who do not like the way God walks with His children. They think that man should have some credit for this blessed walk with God. Some imagine that God waits for man to begin the walk and then God helps when man falters. But they ignore the sovereign work of God in regeneration, faith, and justification, and then say that the fruits of sanctification come from man himself. This idea is called “Pelagianism.” It is unbiblical and leaves us hopeless and full of despair.

Others imagine that the children of God are never willing to walk with God and God has to drag them along. This idea is called “antinomianism.” But the child of God knows this is not true because he desires to walk with God and he experiences the struggle within him between the old man of sin and the new man in Christ. God works in our hearts so that we willingly and freely walk with Him, yet there are times when we would like to go our own way and God chastises us and makes us see our foolishness.

Sometimes we are brought very low, but God is faithful, and when we pray for help, God will forgive us, cleanse us, and restore us to His side (I John 1:9). As we walk with God and grow in love and knowledge of Him, we receive a taste of that heavenly glory for which God is preparing us, and long for the time when we can walk with Him perfectly. Praise God for that sovereign work of salvation in our rebellious hearts.

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