

Sanctification

I hear men talk of becoming less and less sinful and progressively holier from day to day. I hear men talk about their “progressive sanctification” a great deal. But the more they boast of their progressive holiness, the more harsh, judgmental and mean-spirited they become towards their ‘lesser brethren’. Their doctrine is this: ‘God’s children,’ they say ‘grow in righteousness and personal holiness until they are ripe for heaven.’ They actually teach that glorification is the end result of their own progressive attainments in ‘personal holiness’. If their doctrine is true, if it is possible for men gradually to become less sinful and more holy, then it is possible for men, by diligence, self-denial and mortification of the flesh, eventually to attain sinless perfection in this life.

Such doctrine, of course is contrary to Holy Scriptures (1John 1:8, 1John 1:10). Any man who says that he is without sin, even for a fleeting second, is deceived, the truth is not in him and he makes God a liar. And honesty compels me to acknowledge that this doctrine of ‘progressive sanctification’ is totally contrary to my own experience. I have, I believe, over the past nineteen years, grown in grace. My love for, faith in and commitment to Christ have grown, increased and matured by the grace of God. But my sin has not diminished. My outward acts of sin are more restricted and controlled than before, but the inward evil of my flesh has not lessened. If anything, it is worse now than ever. With aching heart, I confess my sin. Though I am redeemed, justified and sanctified in Christ, I am still a man in the flesh, and my flesh is full of sin. By painful experience, I have learned that ‘I am carnal, sold under sin. . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.’ Christ alone is my redemption. Christ alone is my righteousness. Christ alone is my acceptance with God. And Christ alone is my sanctification.

– Don Fortner