

## SANCTIFICATION IV

A sermon by Ron Harvey

### INTRODUCTION

Now we should know by now that we initially received spiritual life by the sovereign act of God whereby he made us alive. We call that regeneration. The Bible also calls it a quickening. It is also called a new creation. But whatever it is called, it is the infusion of spiritual life where there was no life at all.

And, spiritual growth is the development of that spiritual life. Now that is a very broad statement and it does not convey to us what particulars are involved in spiritual growth, but it does convey in the broadest terms what spiritual growth is. It is the development of that spiritual life which was given us in regeneration.

Now in order to understand how we grow spiritually, it is necessary to first understand the nature of regeneration, because sanctification is the development of what was created in us upon regeneration.

And perhaps now is a good time to discuss the make-up of man.

I think first it is good to remember that man is made *“in the image of God.”*

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*

Gen. 1:27

And this is a marvelous thing – we are made like God in many ways. No other creatures are made in the image of God. Only man is made in his image. Certainly the bugs and the insects are not made in God’s image. And the wild beasts are not made in God’s image. But man is made in God’s image.

In many ways this world is made to be an illustration of God. And God has made man to be an illustration of Himself. Just think how superior man is to all other living creatures. Why, there is no comparison. There is a huge, unfathomable gulf, between the intellect of man and the intellect of the animals. In essence, God has made man god over all others in this world.

Now I know that evolutionists claim that we were once an amoeba drifting aimlessly out there in a chaotic and disorganized universe and that this amoeba became a bug and the bug became a frog and the frog became a chimpanzee and the chimpanzee became a human being. But there is yet a gulf of a million miles between the highest animal form and a human being. And no one has ever been able to find a link.

Now I know that some forms of human life can be so sunk down in depravity and debauchery that they would seem to be the missing link. But even these basest of sorts, are distinct from the animal kingdom by the plan of God because God created man in his own image.

Now one thing that we know about God is that he is a triune God. We know from the Scriptures that there is the Father, there is the Son and there is the Holy Spirit. And although they are one in essence, they are three distinct persons. They are three persons who fellowship with each other and yet they each have exactly the same attributes of perfection. And what a perfect fellowship that must be.

But the Bible says that man is made in the image of God. And it seems that God has made **man** with three distinct parts to **his** being. Now that would seem to make much sense. God has made a creature, man, to represent himself to the rest of the universe. And he made man as a triune being.

And so, man is a being that has three parts – a body, a soul and a spirit.

Now at this point, with no confirmation from the Scriptures, this would be speculation. We would speculate that we have three parts to our being, because God made us in his image. But, we will search the Scriptures for verification.

But before we look at the Scriptures, we also have some knowledge of the makeup of man from observation. We certainly can see that we have a material part – the body. And I can look at my hands and see that there is a material part of me. I have hands and feet and fingers and toes and legs and arms and skin that covers it all. And I know from reading books and from the testimony of doctors who have personally performed operations that I have various physical organs on the inside of my body. I have a heart and a liver and kidneys and a brain and various other organs. And so there is a physical part of me.

But we also sense that there is more to us than just a shell of a body.

**Example: Have you ever noticed how useless and unattractive an empty house seems. And a real estate agent knows that to sell a house and to get a premium price, she must put furniture in the house and make it look attractive and livable. And so, she stages the house and puts life in the house by furniture and knick-knacks.**

And we sense that there is more to us than just this shell of a body. How empty and lifeless would that be - to have a body and no person inside? We often see that glaring truth at funerals when the immaterial part of man has departed and left the body behind.

Now I want to show you from the Scriptures that there are three parts to man. There is a material part to man. And, there is an immaterial part to man. And the immaterial part of man is divided into two parts. And so,

I. Man is a complex being, made up of a material part and an immaterial part.

This is clearly shown in Genesis.

*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

Genesis 2:7

*The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.* That is the material part. That is the body. It was formed of dust and the Bible says to dust it shall return. But when it was first formed, it was just a shell. It was atoms and molecules and cells and bones and sinew and internal organs and an outer covering of skin. And the body of Adam lay there lifeless. And then, an amazing thing happened. For it says,

*God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.*

Now, scientists have worked themselves into exhaustion trying to reproduce this one great act of God – creating life. And they have never been able to do it. They claim that at one time the universe was just a mixture of gases and dead matter and somehow life came about on its own after millions of years of evolution, but they can't figure out how all that happened. And they have been utterly unable to create life themselves.

And that is because bestowal of life is the sole prerogative of the One who is life. John, speaking of Jesus, said, "In him was life." There is one life-giver and that is God. There is none other who will ever give life and there will never be any other.

But notice in Genesis 2:7 it says,

*"And man became a living soul."*

So, in this one account of the creation of man, we discover that there is a material part of man and an immaterial part of man.

There are at least two passages of Scripture that teach that the immaterial part of man is made up of two parts.

*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I Thess. 5:23

Now here we see reference to three parts of man – the spirit, the soul and the body.

*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Heb. 4:12

Now again, there is reference to the three parts of man - the soul, spirit and body.

So, these verses mention all three parts as distinct parts of man. They are distinct from each other. The body is not the soul. The soul is not the spirit. There is a spirit and a soul and a body. And I want you to pay special attention to the order given by Paul. He says in Thessalonians - the spirit, the soul and then the body. And this would seem to be the proper order of importance. The spirit is most important, then the soul and last the body.

**Note: Man has completely reversed the order of importance in his perversion and in his depravity. He places most importance on gratification of the body and on all things that serve the body. And man fills his belly first and satisfies his bodily desires first before he considers his other parts. And even in our sayings we get things backwards because we often say, "I will give myself to this task body, soul and spirit."**

So, the natural man is very much aware of his body and his body comes first in his consideration and in his care. And his soul gets very little consideration or thought. And he is generally unaware that he even has a spirit, because his spirit is dead.

Now, my understanding is that since Adam sinned, the spirit of man is not a functioning part at least in its capacity to relate to God. God said,

*In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*

Gen.2:17

Now, notice that God promised that Adam would die if he ate. And, he said Adam would die in the very day that he ate.

“Adam, in the day that you eat, you will die.”

Now, when Adam ate, he died that very day. His body didn't die that day and his soul didn't die that day. But, his spirit died that day. And, the death of the body and the soul was to follow at some appointed day. Adam's body eventually died when he was 930 years old. But his spirit died when he ate.

So, we have seen that the Bible clearly suggests that there are three parts which make up the whole of man. And, let's take a moment to consider the nature of each part of man.

A. The spirit. The spirit seems to be the highest part of man's nature. It is the part of man's nature that gives him a consciousness of God. It is through his spirit that he knows and relates to God.

*God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

John 4:24

*For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit . . .*

Romans 1:9

And so, we understand that the part of man that has consciousness of God and is capable of worshipping God is the spirit. This is the part of man that died immediately when Adam sinned. And this is the part of man that is made alive in regeneration.

So, man was designed with three parts and it appears that the spirit part of man was intended to govern the other parts and to bring them into conformity with God's truth and God's will. But, when the spirit died, the soul and the body were left to their own devices without guidance and control of the spirit and the body and soul served themselves rather than God and there was no living spirit to direct their paths.

This death of his spirit left man in a very desperate condition.

**Example: Last year, my two sons, Brandon and Tyler, bought a remote control helicopter. And they were out in the driveway flying this helicopter all around. And it took some skill, but they got pretty good at controlling that helicopter. And they would catch you not looking and they would buzz that thing by your head. And they thought that was pretty funny. And they got the idea that they could put a camera on this helicopter and then they could fly it around and spy on people. And they perfected their ability to control where this helicopter would fly. But what if the batteries went out in that remote control? Well, then that helicopter would spin out of control and would go wherever it was naturally inclined to go.**

And that is the way it is with the body and soul of man. It is completely out of control without the direction of the spirit. Without that lifeline to our Creator, we are like an aircraft spinning out of control and we are headed for a certain crash.

There is an interesting verse in I Corinthians.

*For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*

I Cor. 2:9-11

Now this suggests that the unregenerate man is able to know human things by his spirit which is in him. So, a man can know and ascertain certain scientific facts by his human spirit. He is enabled to investigate, think and weigh evidence and he might become a great scientist and win Nobel prizes and have great accomplishments. However, his understanding is limited to the things of man. But the Bible says, "The things of God knoweth no man." The spirit that is within an unregenerate man has no connection to the Spirit of God and is dead to spiritual things. He has no understanding of the things of God and no capacity to understand them.

**Example: I was on a family outing a couple of weeks ago. And while the women were cooking dinner, the men were sitting in the den watching TV. And it was on the history channel. And the program was about how our present universe was born. And as I sat there listening I realized that there was absolute and total ignorance being spouted forth as though these people had some knowledge of what happened millions of years ago. Everything they said was "perhaps this occurred" and "maybe this occurred." And these**

**people seemed to suggest that they could pinpoint about when certain giant volcanos erupted millions of years ago and how this affected the earth. And the things they were suggesting were so outlandish and speculative that I wondered how anyone could place any credibility in it. And I thought to myself, these people can't tell you what happened 6000 years ago, much less a million years ago. Whatever they suggest about something that happened a hundred million years ago is mere speculation. And all of their theories are based on one huge assumption and that is that there is no God and God did not create this world. Now everyone knows that the validity of science depends on the input of correct data. And if you start with a bad assumption, you end up with a bad conclusion.**

Now the spirit of man has died. It has no connection to the Spirit of God and it does not understand the things of God. In fact, the Bible says,

*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

I Cor. 2:14

This is why Jesus said, *Ye must be born again.*

That is, God must bring our spirit to life. And this is what we call regeneration. And once he creates in us a new spirit, then there is the capacity to control the ship. That old body and soul that were out of control can now be brought under control by the preeminence of our spirit which is renewed within us.

The spirit is often closely associated with the mind and in order to worship God it is our mind that must be first made alive and then transformed and renewed.

Remember, it says,

*They that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.*

And that implies a certain mental capacity. And it appears that the spirit of man is the seat of the mind and the intellect. And if we are to grow spiritually, it will involve to some extent a mental growth.

*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

Romans 12:2

So, think of the human spirit as that part of you that communes with God. It is an intelligent part of you. It is a thinking part of you. It is a spiritual part of you. And this part of you is just as much a part of you as is your soul or your body. In fact, it is the most important part.

B. The soul and the body.

The Bible also speaks of the soul which is the seat of the affections and the body which is our contact to the material world. But our focus for now is on the spirit which is the seat of our mind and of our spiritual consciousness.

Now we want to begin to discuss the nature of spiritual growth. And we won't get too far this morning, but we will say first that,

I. Spiritual growth consists in an increase in spiritual knowledge.

It is indisputable that God made man as an extremely intelligent creation. And he made man more intelligent than all the other creatures so that man, in some way, could know God.

**Example: Can you imagine me trying to get my miniature schnauzer to worship God. Now Kelsey is a great dog as dogs go. And she is a part of the family. And she brings us a lot of joy. But she has no capacity to love God because she has no capacity to know Him. She was not made with an intellect like a man because she was not designed to have communion with God. She is endowed with instincts and she knows how to chase a squirrel, but she has no idea how to chase after the Creator.**

But how different is man than the animals! God gave man the capacity to know Him. Our mind, or our spirit, is fashioned in such a way that we can comprehend and commune with God. But our communion with him is founded in knowledge.

**Example: Just as you cannot speak to a Spaniard unless you have some knowledge of the Spanish language, you cannot commune with God without some knowledge of Him.**

**Example: Just as you cannot play a violin without some knowledge of the instrument and some knowledge of music, you cannot fellowship with God without knowing something about Him.**

**Example: Some people assess Christianity as a religion of ignorance and baseless faith. But in reality, Christianity is a religion of knowledge and faith based on knowledge and very solid evidence.**

Salvation itself is inextricably linked to knowledge.

*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

John 17:3

You see that salvation is about knowledge and particularly about knowledge of God.

*Lie not to one another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds. And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.*  
Col. 3:9, 10

When we were first saved the Bible says we were renewed in knowledge. That is, our spirit was enlightened so that we comprehended God. But remember, salvation is a process. And our salvation is in many ways an ever increasing knowledge of God. In regeneration we were given an **intuitive** knowledge of him and a **capacity** to know him.

But Peter says,

*Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*  
II Peter 3:18

It is clear to me that our new life in Christ is mysteriously and yet directly tied to a knowledge of God and particularly as he is revealed in the person of Jesus. After all, the Bible says, "In Him is life," and "In Him is light," and "In Him was grace and truth." And the fact of the matter is that in Him is the very fullness of God. And if we shall ever grow in grace, then it must be by a knowledge of Him. If we are ever to abound in spiritual graces, then it must be by knowing Him more fully.

*Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace.*  
Job 22:21

What a lovely, lovely verse and one to be pondered often.

**Example: What if you had a neighbor who won millions in the lottery. And he was a generous man and you found out that his greatest joy was sharing his money with his friends. And when his friends would come visit him he would give them a thousand dollars or maybe even more. Why, you would go visit that neighbor quite often and you would get to know him quite well and he would share with you out of his large estate.**

And Jesus has a very large estate and he is very generous and one of his greatest joys is sharing his estate with his friends. And I would strongly encourage you to go visit often with Him and to get to know Him and He will share his riches with you. Though he owns the cattle on a thousand hills, his greatest riches are spiritual riches and he will grant you to be rich in spiritual graces. But you must get to know Him, because knowledge of Him is the key to all of his treasure.

I would like for you to see what spiritual growth entails by considering some of the prayers of the apostles in the Scriptures.



*Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.*  
Eph.1:15-18

And you will note that Paul prayed in reference to their knowledge of Him and for their understanding to be enlightened. Our spiritual growth is obviously tied to an increase in knowledge and understanding.

Look at Philippians 1:9

*And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.*

Phil.1:9-11

Paul prayed that their love would get bigger and bigger, but in knowledge.

Look at Colossians 1:9

*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

Col.1:9

Now, we can safely say that spiritual growth consists to a large degree on an increase in spiritual knowledge. The more we apprehend of Him the more we share in the riches of his grace.

But, remember, we are not talking about a mere intellectual knowledge, because mere intellectualism is devoid of all power and effectiveness. True knowledge of Christ is a supernatural and a saving knowledge of Him and of all his attributes and graces. True knowledge of Him is one that deeply affects the heart and produces reverential awe and a holy fear. The Bible says,

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*  
Proverbs 9:10

An unregenerate person may gain some theoretical knowledge of God but it has no effect on him. His spirit is not affected at all, his soul remains dark and dismal and the lusts of his flesh dominate his life.

But the regenerate person, when he gains an increased knowledge of God, his mind is transformed and the affections of his soul are moved within him and he brings his flesh more under control and into conformity with the will of God.

The unregenerate man, though he may make a scientific study of the Bible, he never perceives the infinite evil of sin and the havoc it has wrought in his own soul.

But the regenerate man, when he increases in spiritual knowledge, he discovers the horribleness and totality of his own depravity. And therein lies the ability then to appreciate the remedy for sin.

**Example: Have you ever been driving down a busy highway and to your horror noticed some animal about to meander into harm's way. And the animal is oblivious to any danger. And if he is very lucky, cars may swerve and against all odds he may make it to the other side. And being oblivious to the danger that he just survived, he wanders on his way.**

This is the way of the unregenerate man. He doesn't see his own wretched condition. He does not perceive that he is wandering along a dangerous and ultimately deadly path. And if someone tried to shepherd him away from danger and onto a safer road, he wouldn't appreciate it because he doesn't apprehend his sinful condition at all.

The Bible says,

*The way of the wicked is as darkness.*

Proverbs 4:19

But knowledge has a way of transforming the regenerate man, because he is alive by the Spirit of God and in him is the capacity for spiritual understanding. And so he, that is, the regenerate man, must go to school and learn of Jesus because knowledge of Him is the source and the substance of spiritual growth.

So, if knowledge is so critical to our growth, what does that mean for us? It means,

1. We should have an attitude in us that knowledge is an important foundation of our spiritual life.

Did you know that in some churches, there is very little emphasis on knowledge at all? In fact, in some religions, knowledge is discouraged. This has always been the case in the Roman Catholic Church because the Roman Church preys on the ignorance of the people. And the Roman Church prospers especially in backward and unenlightened territory. And personal knowledge is not encouraged so that the priests and the clerical hierarchy can maintain absolute control and the organization can dictate the affairs of the "Church" without opposition from the rank and file. And they have no desire for the people to hear the true Word of God.

Even in evangelical churches, the modern trend is away from deep spiritual knowledge and toward programs and processes and efforts to meet social needs rather than a commitment to developing a deeper knowledge of the Savior.

But let's not ever let it be so here at Grace Baptist Church. Let's understand the critical importance of knowledge – knowledge of the written Word of God and personal knowledge of Jesus who is himself the very Word of God.

2. Our preaching and our teaching should be thoroughly biblical and exclusively biblical.

You know, there are many things in the world that are not addressed in the Bible. There are laws of science in the area of physics and chemistry and biology. There are mathematical formulas. There are principles of psychology and sociology and philosophy which are accepted as truth by many. But that is not what we are about in church. Our goal is to learn about our God. And this is the highest form of learning. And our preaching must be thoroughly biblical.

You know, a preacher could get behind this pulpit and try to teach about all kinds of things that may be of some interest to you. He may try to teach about what investments to make in our present economy. Or he might try to educate on the advantages of capitalism over socialism. He may even try to teach some theories of child rearing and family relationships. And all of that may be useful information, but God's church is for the faithful and thorough administration of the Word of God. I say let the universities teach their philosophies and their worldly learning, but let the church teach the Word of God.

I want our church to be so demanding about that, that we will never accept anything less than thorough Bible exposition. And I don't think we have time to be dabbling in other forms of learning from the pulpit. There is too much of God's Word yet to be learned and too little time to learn it. We don't have time for man's opinions. We don't have time for worldly wisdom. We don't have time for the preacher to dance off into his own pet, extra biblical philosophies. Our only focus should be the Word of God which is the only means to spiritual growth. If we are ever to grow spiritually, it will be in large part because we are coming to a greater knowledge of the Word of God day by day and week by week.

The churches which are the strongest spiritually are the churches that preach and teach the Word of God week after week after week after week and year after year. And you will find that where the Bible is thoroughly and exclusively and effectively preached year after year, the people will grow in grace.