

name let him glorify God. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? 19 Therefore, **let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator** in doing what is right. NASB

And so we are called to **strive and exert God dependent effort** to see the battle or race won and the process of becoming like Christ completed to greater and greater degree.

2 Peter 1:5-8 - 5 Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence**, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For **if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** NASB

Hebrews 6:9-12 - 9 But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and **things that accompany salvation**, though we are speaking in this way. 10 For God is not unjust so as to forget **your work and the love which you have shown** toward His name, in **having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.** 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 **that you may not be sluggish, but imitators** of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. NASB

Our role is very much active and this **active role** is the **major goal of Christian life**. This of course is because God's chief purpose in our salvation is to manifest His own glory and excellence as God, and **He does this in us through sanctification, causing us to bear His image in greater degree** throughout the Christian life. This is emphasized again and again in large sections of the New Testament such as Romans 12-14, Ephesians 4:17-6:20, Phil 4:4-9, Col 3:1-4:6. 1 Pet 2:11-5:11, 2 Pet 1:5-8, 1 John 2-3). Since this is the major goal of Christian life, see then how important it is that **we continue to actively pursue holiness** in our lives until we achieve the goal, Christlikeness.

Now there is also a **passive role in sanctification** that we play and it is a very important part of the process. This passive role is seen in texts that encourage us to **yield ourselves in faith or trust in God**, and **looking to Him in prayer** for strength and in **dependence upon Him** for the grace and help that we need to become like Him and obey Him. In fact, most everything we do in Christian life, if it is to be done to the glory of God is an **act of faith and trust in God's strength** to accomplish. This is surely true about the process of mortifying sin and behaving in a godly righteous way.

Romans 6:11-14 - 11 Even so **consider yourselves to be dead to sin**, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore **do not let sin reign** in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, 13 and **do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin** as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. NASB

Colossians 3:5 - 5 Therefore **consider the members of your earthly body as dead** to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. NASB

We are **dependent** on the Holy Spirit's work to grow in sanctification, and this can be clearly seen in texts like Phil 2:13-13 and Romans 8:12-13.

Romans 8:12-13 - 12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if **by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body**, you will live. NASB

Grudem comments on this passive role in sanctification; *"Unfortunately today, this "passive" role in sanctification, this idea of yielding to God and trusting him to work in us "to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13), is sometimes so strongly emphasized that it is the only thing people are told about the path of sanctification. Sometimes the popular phrase "let go and let God" is given as a summary of how to live the Christian life. But this is a tragic distortion of*

the doctrine of sanctification, for it only speaks of one half of the part we must play, and, by itself, will lead Christians to become lazy and to neglect the active role that Scripture commands them to play in their own sanctification.” (from Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem)

Nevertheless we not only yield and submit ourselves to His divine will, but we are called to **exert God-dependent effort to press on** toward Christlikeness, as He molds and fashions us, thus **bearing His image** in greater degree. Below we will talk further about the role of the Gospel and of faith in Sanctification.

Sanctification Continues throughout life

Some have maintained that the idea of attaining **sinless perfection** in the Christian life is a **real possibility**. But the Bible nowhere teaches this, in fact it clearly teaches that sanctification continues throughout life until death and **only at the resurrection will we be finally free** from the constraints of mortality and bodies subject to temptation and sin. This erroneous teaching of **“perfectionism”** is founded on certain scriptures where we are given the goal of sanctification, which is to mortify and vivify (put off-put on) calling us to seek after the perfection of God’s holiness in our lives such as;

Matthew 5:48 - 48 "Therefore **you are to be perfect**, as your heavenly Father is perfect. NASB

2 Corinthians 7:1 - Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness** in the fear of God. NASB

1 John 3:4-6 - 4 **Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness**; and sin is lawlessness. 5 And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; **no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him**. NASB

In the case of Matthew 5:48 when Jesus calls us to God’s perfection, we see the clear and obvious goal of all Christian character and conduct, which is the very nature of God Himself. Shall the God who is holy and seeks to conform us to His character call us to less than His own perfection? We are called to strive for perfection, that is clear. But **nowhere** does the Scripture say or **even imply** that **such a goal can be obtained**, but on the contrary it clearly teaches that we are **not capable of attaining** such a goal (Rom 6-7, Gal 5:16-24, Phil 3:10-14), but are in many places **urged to strive** for it (Eph 4-6, Col 3, Rom 12:9-21, 1 Pet 1:13-5:9).

James 3:2 - 2 For **we all stumble in many ways**. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. NASB

1 Peter 2:11 - 11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers **to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul**. NASB

Both James and Peter acknowledge (as does John 1 John 3:7-10) that we sin in various ways because we are at war with “lusts” in our soul and we therefore “stumble in many ways.” And Paul gives this warfare an extensive treatment in Romans 7, but elsewhere is continually urging us to strive against sin and press on to the goal of heavenward perfection.

2 Corinthians 7:1 - Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness** in the fear of God. NASB

But the context of 1 John 3 clearly debunks the idea of sinless perfection. For if verses 4-6 were teaching sinless perfection, then verses 7-10 would disqualify every single Christian from salvation because we all continue to sin in the course of daily life.

1 John 3:3-11 - 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you; **the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil**; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 **No one who is born of God practices sin**, because His seed abides in him; and **he**