

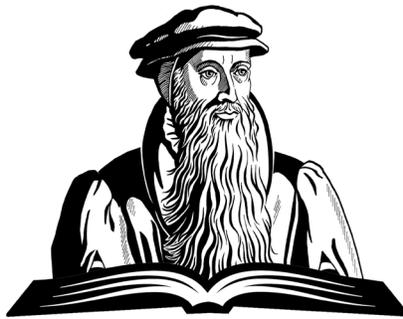
VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

# *The Application of Redemption*

by Rev. William Macleod

Lecture 9

## *Sanctification*



**The John Knox Institute  
of Higher Education**

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

## **John Knox Institute of Higher Education**

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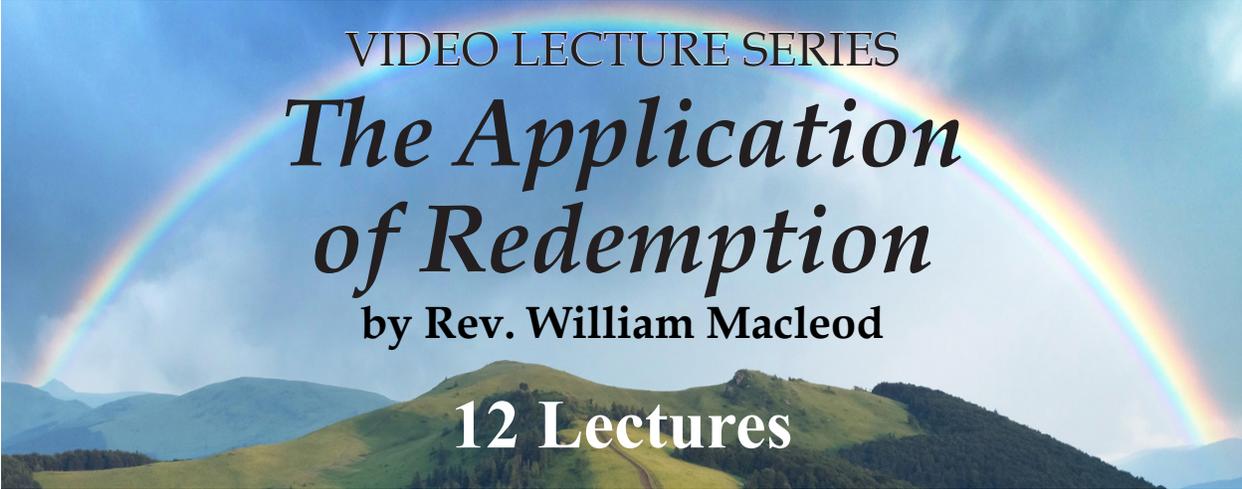
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Rev. William Macleod recently retired, after serving as minister of the gospel for 45 years at Knightswood Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), in Glasgow, Scotland. In addition, he was for many years the editor of the denominational magazine, *The Free Church Witness*. He was also Professor of Systematic Theology and Principal of the Free Church (Continuing) Seminary, in Inverness, Scotland. He is married and has three adult children and six grandchildren.

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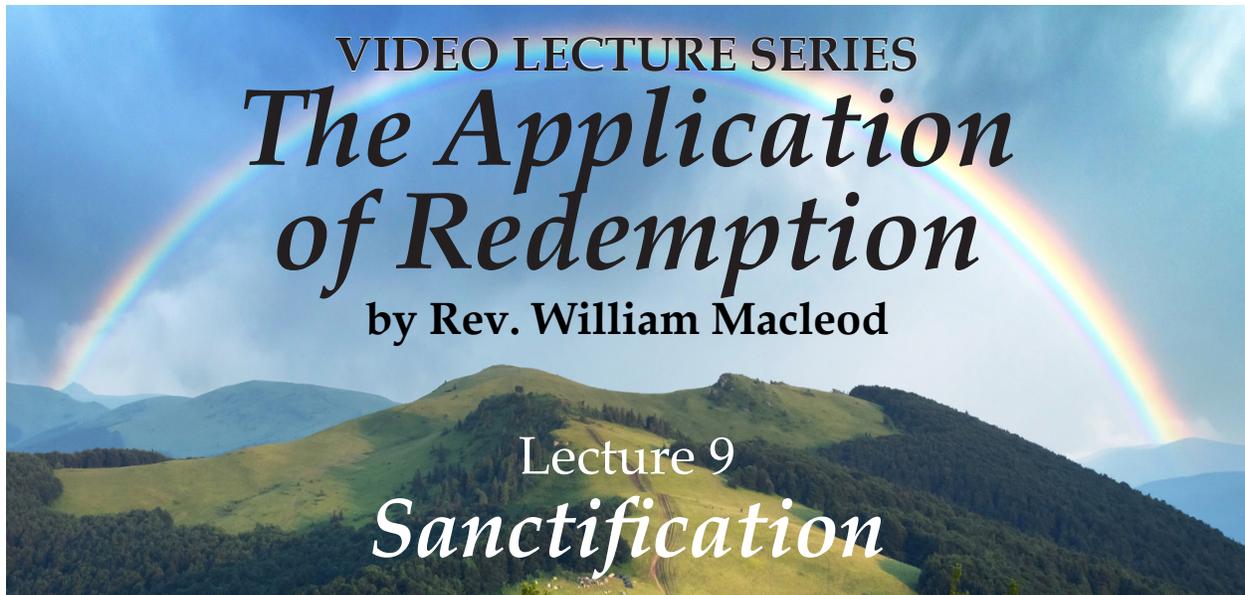
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# *The Application of Redemption*

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**12 Lectures**

1. The Order of Salvation
2. Total Depravity
3. Effectual Calling
4. Regeneration
5. Repentance
6. Saving Faith
7. Justification
8. Adoption
9. Sanctification
10. Union with Christ
11. Perseverance of the Saints
12. Glorification



We come now to our ninth lecture; and this lecture is on *Sanctification*. What is sanctification? Basically, it is the process by which sinners are made perfect saints. It is the transforming of the wicked into holy men and women. The aim of sanctification is that we should be like Christ, perfectly holy. The essence of holiness is obedience. The word “holy” means “separate.” It is a twofold separation: separation from sin, and separated unto God. Christ said, “Be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5, verse 28). Your duty is to “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2, verses 12 and 13). We are to put energy into it and labor at it. Yet, it is not all of man, not even is it part of man and part of God. Rather, it is you working, and God enabling you to work. As you strive to be holy, he gives you the desire the ability, and all the glory, at the end of the day, must be given to God.

*Definitive Sanctification*—what is it? Regeneration takes place in a moment. The dead sinner is resurrected and brought to spiritual life. Justification and adoption also take place in a moment; they are acts of God. Sanctification has two aspects. There is the act, by which God transforms us in an instant, which is known as *definitive sanctification*—it changes a sinner into a saint, and yet, that saint is far from perfect. Then, there is the ongoing work of making the born-again saint perfectly holy, which is known as *progressive sanctification*. It follows definitive sanctification, and it takes place during the rest of the Christian’s life. Definitive sanctification involves a radical break with sin. You die, and are buried, and rise with Christ—died to the old life, buried to it, rising to a new life. The old man, or the unconverted man, is crucified (Romans 6, verses 4 to 6). The world is crucified to you and you to the world (Galatians 6, verse 14). You are dead with Christ to the past. The old master, Satan, is dead. We must not play down the immensity of this change. Be what you are: “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin” (Romans 6, verses 11 to 13). Be as those dead to sin. No longer be Satan’s slaves. Be God’s servants. You are freed from sin, and therefore, you should walk in this liberty. (Romans, 6, verse 22).

*Perfectionism*—taking the biblical language for definitive sanctification, some have argued

for perfectionism. This is the idea that it is possible for some to achieve perfect holiness in this life. Such special people claim in every way to be dead to sin and free from sin. They usually speak of an experience subsequent to conversion—the second blessing or the baptism of the Holy Spirit, following of which they stop all sin, or at least all conscious in. But in Romans 6, Paul is not speaking of a very few special Christians, but he’s speaking of the universal experience of all Christians. All who have been converted have died to sin. John says, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin” (1 John 3, verse 9). All who are born again do not commit sin, yet earlier in the epistle, he writes, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1, verse 8). Those who claim to have stopped sinning deceive themselves and call God a liar; his word is not in them (1 John 1, verse 10). Every Christian is a sinner, but there has been a huge change at conversion, and those born again will not sin unto death and unto damnation. The Christian life is one of constant warfare against sin (Romans 7, verses 14 to 25). Sometimes, conscious of our sin and failure, we cry out in disappointment, “O wretched man that I am,” but at the end of the day, we will have the victory: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (verse 25).

Looking now at *Progressive Sanctification*. Following the act of definitive sanctification, progressive sanctification continues for the rest of our lives. It involves, negatively, dying to sin, turning from sin, and positively, growing in grace. “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8, verse 13). There is an ongoing work, a pilgrim’s progress. *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* refers to this progressive sanctification as follows: “What is sanctification?”—“Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness”—that’s the answer to Question #35.

What then is *the Pattern*? There’s a pattern set before us that we are to aim at, and it’s, first, *the Ethical Holiness of God*: “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1, verse 16). Then secondly, there’s *the Example of Christ*: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2, verse 5). We are to “be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8, verse 29). And then, thirdly, there is *the Preceptive Will of God*, his commandments, which we are required to keep. Holiness is essentially obedience to God’s revealed will.

What is *the Goal of Sanctification*? In sanctification, we aim at perfect conformity to the pattern that God has given us. But we strive for something more than mere obedience. We must also struggle to know God: “That I might know him” (Philippians 3, verse 10). That was a great longing of the Apostle Paul. Knowing God is not simply an intellectual thing, rather, it is a relationship. We are to strive personally for an intimate knowledge of God. A holy person is one who has warm piety, love and devotion to God. It involves delighting in God, and enjoying him. We must be content with nothing less than experiencing God, as we walk with him, listen to him, and talk to him.

Then, considering *Legalism*. Today, if you stress the duty of keeping the commandments, many will accuse you of legalism. But legalism is adhering to the law as a way of salvation, rather than to the gospel. It is trusting in your own keeping of the commandments and your own goodness rather than the cross of Christ. Legalism is seeking salvation in the covenant of works, rather than in the covenant of grace. It is putting faith in your own efforts to save yourself, rather than receiving the gift which God freely offers. Legalism is trusting in your own abilities, rather than union with Christ as the dynamic power, the energy to expel sin from your heart and life. Legalism is failing to look to the enabling of the Spirit. Although we are saved by faith in Christ alone, yet God’s law

summarized in the Ten Commandments, has a vital part to play in our salvation.

*The Law's Three Uses:* First, it is the God-given code for life in society. Secondly, it's a schoolmaster to convict you of your sin and force you out of every refuge till you come to Christ. And thirdly, it is the rule of life for the Christian. "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14, verse 15). Our love for God is expressed in our keeping of the commandments. Paul, who so forcefully stated, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6, verse 14), also declared that he is "under the law to Christ" (1 Corinthians 9, verse 21). John, the Apostle of love, puts it quite plainly: "For this is the love of God, that ye keep his commandments" (1 John 5, verse 3). Sadly, the heresy of Antinomianism, which rejects the law as a rule of life for the Christian, is very common. Rabbi John Duncan, called it "the mother of all heresies," the one from which all other heresies come.

*The Means of Sanctification*—sanctification is the work of God's Holy Spirit. He is called "holy" because his work is to make men holy, not because he is holier than the other persons of the Trinity. It is through the Spirit that we are to "mortify the deeds of the body" (Romans 8, verse 13). Yet, the Spirit uses means in our sanctification, and the means are as follows.

First, the primary means is *the reading and especially the preaching of the Word*, and also the reading of good books which explain the Word: "Sanctify them through thy truth" (John 17, verse 17).

Secondly, there's *the sacraments*, a very important means of grace. Being baptized, separate yourselves from your sins and seek to live according to your high profession. Remember, you are baptized, united to Christ, and therefore, carry the name of Christ to the world. In the Lord's Supper, feed on Christ and remember the Lord's death till he come.

Thirdly, *prayer* is vital. Pray against temptations; pray for forgiveness; pray for grace to persevere and grow. Meet God in prayer; there, you will get to know him.

Fourthly, *the fellowship of the saints* stirs us up and encourages us. It is dangerous to be isolated. "Provoke one another to love and good works" (Hebrews 10, verse 24). In the old illustration, a lump of burning coal will soon cool down and blacken, if it is removed from amongst the other coals on the fire and placed alone on the hearth. In the same way, Christians grow cold without fellowship.

Fifthly, *providence* has a role. God chastises and corrects us for our sins and backslidings. We must learn from this. Also, the trials of life, the troubles, the difficulties, the illnesses purify faith and strengthen it, and weaken our attachment to this world, and make us long for heaven.

So then, *in Conclusion*—children need to see holy parents who walk with God. What an impact that has upon them. Nothing is more effective in bringing them up for the Lord than the example of happy godliness. Congregations need holy pastors and elders. This reinforces the message, and provides an example to the flock. Paul could say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11, verse 1). The world needs to see a holy church walking with God. Then they will no longer be justified in saying that the church is full of hypocrites. Then Christians will truly be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Amen.