

TRUTH MATTERS ABOUT SANCTIFICATION

1 Thessalonians 5:23

"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."

Introduction: All of the Apostle's prayers are remarkable for their spiritual proceeding and comprehensiveness as were all of his converts. Paul had followed their progress with keen appraisal, and knowing their needs, addressed his prayers specifically to meet everyone of these needs. It was not sufficient for him merely to ask that God might "bless them, but that He might bless them in such ways as He saw them standing in need. Hear the praise that *"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly"*; that is, that they might be completely **set apart** from worldly motives, aims, and plans. The subject of sanctification is both Scriptural and practical and as redeemed sinners, as our own experiences attests it, to be both urgent and necessary.

Notice God's plan for sanctification in the already justified sinner. Sanctification is of two kinds- **Positional** (1 Cor. 1:30). and **Practical**.

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE FATHER (1 Thess. 4:3)

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." The word "sanctify" holds no strange meaning; it simply means to make holy, to set apart for God's use and purpose. The NT lays great emphasis upon holiness. *"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness"* (1 Thess. 4:7; 1 Peter 1:15,16). God wants His people to be like Himself: *"Be ye holy; for I am holy."*

This is fundamental and to our "calling" and God desires that holiness should cover the realm of thought, desires and action. It should extend to each department of the believer's being. It is God's purpose to redeem the "whole" man (Heb. 7:25), beginning with renewed mind, continuing through new desires and culminating in a renewed body. God gave His Holy Spirit to indwell us that His purpose might be carried out in us. God's purpose is that sanctification is to permeate every particle of our being. Sanctification is-

II. THE PURCHASE OF THE SON

We see that sanctification is not only by the will of God, but by the Cross of the Lord Jesus. When Christ died on the Cross He took care of our carnal natures. *"Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be*

destroyed (annulled)." No redeemed sinner is compelled to respond to the dictates of his "old man." The old man's authority has been taken from him. Before you are saved he usurped his authority and had his way in the citadel of the heart, but through the Cross of Christ and our identification with Christ, the believer from henceforth "should not serve sin."

The believer is now indwelt by the risen, holy life, in reality, of the Son of God. Now the believer can *"walk in newness of life."* This is a life of holiness, purchased and made possible by the Cross of Christ. Sanctification is by-

III. THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

God works in the lives of His children, but God works by His Spirit. **It is Holy Spirit that makes us holy.**

Paul, writing in 2 Thess. 2:13, said, *"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit."* The Apostle Peter said the same in **1 Peter 1:2** *"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."* This is distinctly a New Testament truth. The Old Testament knows nothing of God working **continually** in any person... *"God which worketh in you"* (Phil. 2:13) is the New Testament norm of Christian experience.

If we grieve the Spirit of God He will not create in us the fullness of life, which is in Christ Jesus. **Obedience to and reliance upon the Holy Spirit are two qualities that are essential to a holy life.** A holy life is manifest in the *"fruit of the Spirit"* (Gal. 5:22,23). Sanctification is also-

IV. THE PAGES OF THE BOOK (John 17:17)

"Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth." So we notice here that we are sanctified and made holy by the Word of God. *"Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you"* (John 15:3). The Bible must not be read only for information and knowledge of spiritual matters in order to teach, in Christian service, but the Bible is to work in our lives and produce holiness of life and conduct.

In John 17:17 the Lord Jesus is desirous that His people experience the practical aspect of sanctification that comes through the application of the Word of God to the mind and heart of the believer. The Bible is not merely to be studied to find out what is, but it is to be applied to the believer's life in constant practice. The believer is to practice what the Bible says, Peter says, *"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in you ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation"* (1 Peter 1:14,15).

As long as Christians disobey the Bible they can never experience His sanctifying influence. It is not more light we need regarding the Bible; there is a flood of interpretation, but we fall short and lag behind in the application, of Truth to our lives.

When we stand before God to answer as to how we have lived and how effective was our ministry, it might be easier for us if we knew less and practiced more. God will do His part, yes. God's vigilance must be matched by ours. He can only work out His purpose for us by virtue of our willing cooperation.

We cannot expect God to preserve us in holiness if we deliberately place ourselves in circumstances which make it impossible. Obedience to His will, as set forth in His Word, will keep us out of such circumstances.