

WALKING OUT HIS WORD EACH DAY THE 1 THESSALONIANS SERIES

COMMENTARY ON MESSAGE #9

March 18th, 2018

The doctrine of sanctification, when it is rightly understood, is a beautiful testimony of the love God who sets us apart unto Himself. This doctrine maps out for us what it means to live out the Christian life on a practical daily basis. It also provides a wonderful glimpse into the future plans God has for His children. Let's take one last look at the definition of sanctification.

- A) The Greek root word for sanctification (the noun form) and sanctify (the verb) means to set apart. Depending on the context of how it is being used, the word can also be translated "holy", "saint." The primary thought in calling something (or someone) holy is to say that it is set apart from other things unto God.
- B) Sanctification can be defined as the process by which God sets a person apart unto Himself and changes that person into the image of His son, Jesus Christ.

KEY: Genuine sanctification always has as its goal the transformation of a Christian's character so that he becomes more like his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
How encouraging it is to think that God has this level of interest and involvement in our lives!

*"May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.
May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless
at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it."
I Thessalonians 5:23-24*

One of the best ways to study a particular passage of Scripture (in this case 2 verses) is to write down as many observations you can make about the text, and as many questions as you can ask about the text.

Q1: If you had to explain these verses to a new Christian, what would you say?

A lengthy book could be written in an attempt to fully explain all that is being taught in these two verses, so don't feel badly if you are bit overwhelmed by Q1. Still, God does expect us to be

adding to our knowledge and growing in our understanding of what the Bible teaches and how to walk it out in our daily lives.

Q2: Based on I Thessalonians 5:23-24, who does the work of sanctification?

It seems as though the work of sanctification is God's work: *"May God Himself sanctify you"..."He will do it."* It is true that God is the One who initiates our sanctification and He is the One who guarantees it will be completed.

*"Being confident of this,
that He who began a good work in you will
carry it on to the day of completion
until the day of Christ Jesus."
Philippians 1:6*

Q3: In what way are the past, present, and future all included in this single verse?

There is no doubt that God is the key in our sanctification. But we are also involved in our sanctification. Indeed, we are responsible for our sanctification.

Q4: Please read Philippians 2:12-13. What are we supposed to do to *"work out our salvation"*?

We must be careful here about a tiny but important preposition. We are NOT to work for our salvation, for it is a gift that cannot be earned by works. But we are to work out the new life that comes with our salvation. We do this by obeying the commands in the New Testament (see Ephesians 2:8-10).

NOTE: As we obey the commands of the Lord (and this includes doing it willingly and joyfully, not reluctantly and unhappily), our character is gradually transformed. We become more like Christ. Sometimes we forget that this is the ultimate goal of sanctification, and the ultimate benefit of joyfully WALKING OUT THE WORD EACH DAY...we become more like Jesus.

Q5: How many specific commands can you identify in I Thessalonians 4:1-12 and 5:12-22?

At this point in the commentary I want to make sure that we are very clear on the two types of sanctification. We haven't developed this much in the sermons or in the commentary, but it is of vital importance. When a Christian does not understand both categories of sanctification it can lead to certain verses being misunderstood. The Bible addresses these two categories, or types, of sanctification.

1. Positional sanctification
2. Practical sanctification, sometimes referred to as progressive sanctification.

Let's start with positional sanctification. This label means exactly what it says. At the very moment of our salvation, the exact instant we place our faith in Christ, we are given a new position or new standing with God. We are considered to be righteous, holy and blameless from that moment on. We are "set apart" by being joined or united to Christ.

KEY: This is closely related to or connected with the term "justification," which is a legal declaration by God through which we are declared to be righteous. Like positional sanctification, justification happens the moment we are saved. Justification changes our status (though once guilty we are now declared to be righteous), but sanctification changes our character.

*"May He strengthen you hearts so that you will be blameless
and holy in the presence of our God and Father
when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.
Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live
in order to please God, as in fact you are now living."
I Thessalonians 3:13-4:1*

In this passage we see that the Thessalonians displayed lives that had been changed or transformed. This is the second category of sanctification, called practical or progressive sanctification. This is the process of daily applying, obeying, and walking out God's Word in our daily lives. At Grace Community Church you have often heard this described as "3 steps forward, 2 steps back."

This is a good time to remember the meaning of the word "sanctify." It means "to be set apart, to be holy, to be a saint." God set us apart unto Himself when He saved us. He will finish what He started. At the moment we die there will never again be a process of growing in sanctification. We will be instantly transformed. This will perfectly complete our sanctification. Our character and our practice will be 100% conformed to our position.

Living out the Christian life can be described as a process of growing (progressing) into the character of Christ. We imitate Him so that our practice matches up with our position. By the power of God, as we yield to the Holy Spirit, we who are already (and permanently) in a position of being blameless before God seek to actually live that way!

Q6: What areas in your life are in need of further sanctification?

It is the Lord's will that you be sanctified! He will help you if you ask Him!