

## **Be Sanctified**

August 30, 2020

Twenty five percent of the New Testament was written by the apostle Paul. Of the thirteen letters written by him, four were written to individuals and the rest to churches. Some of those church letters are sad to read. They deal with all kinds of problems in those churches that Paul needed to write about.

On the other hand several of the letters are very positive. The first letter to the church at Thessalonica is one of these. Paul feared that they might be backing off of faith because of persecution. But they had not. They remained true to Christ Jesus and persevered despite local opposition to their faith in Jesus.

The whole letter has a very positive feel to it. He writes out of concern for their welfare, much like a parent looking out for his or her child. And he is joyful at how they have remained true to Christ. He writes to affirm them, to encourage them.

By the fourth chapter he changes subjects and reminds them of something. Here he is acting much like a parent. It doesn't matter how old the parents are or how old the children are, parents continue to parent their children. How many of you are still reminded by your parents to be careful of certain things? Or as parents, how many of you still warn your children or remind your children of things to be doing or watching for, no matter how old they are? I do it. I try not to. I try not to offer any advice these days unless asked for. But when I hear what a son is doing that gives me concern, I can't help but remind him of something I tried to teach him in the past. I still care and still want him to be safe, to be wise to be careful. So I act like a loving parent.

So as we come to the fourth chapter, this is what we read Paul doing. He reminds them of some of what he taught them before.

**1 Thessalonians 4:1-3 (NIV)** Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified...

It is God's will that you be sanctified. I want to zero in on this word this morning. It appears all through Paul's letters and elsewhere in the New Testament. It is used in various ways, which makes it somewhat confusing. I hope to clarify its meaning for you this morning.

**sanctify = make holy = consecrate = "to dedicate to religious use"**

The words sanctification, holiness, and consecration are synonyms. They are three different words to used to translate one Greek word. Paul urged them to commit themselves fully and completely to God. We too are urged to do this.

The confusion comes in that the word sanctify is used in two different ways in the Bible. And here is the reason why: **Our sanctification is both an act (1 Cor. 6:11) and a process (1 Thess. 5:23).**

As an act, our sanctification is a one time act of God, a one and done, finished. Paul uses it this way in his letter to the church at Corinth.

**1 Corinthians 6:11 (NIV) ...you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

Note that they were sanctified in the past. It was something the Holy Spirit did to them. It is true of all Christians. Every Christian, upon conversion was sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

When you put your faith in Jesus, God adds your soul to his kingdom. Of the total number of people on the planet, God pulled you out and placed you within the special group of His children. God made you his very own. That is a done deal. It is finished, complete. Similar meanings come from his adopting us and his redeeming us. **Theologians call this act of God positional sanctification.** We live in a new position or relationship or status with God.

And yet, Paul wrote of these same Christians, in the same letter, that they were carnal. They were worldly. They were still behaving like sinners.

**1 Corinthians 3:3 (NIV) You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?**

They were. The church in Corinth had all kinds of problems. And Paul addresses each one in his letters to them. So while God had sanctified them, there was still a process of sanctification that needed to take place. We see this in Paul's next letter to this church.

**2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV) ... let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.**

To perfect holiness is the same process sanctification. Here we see both the act and process of sanctification. God declared us sanctified when we were saved. He separated us from the world to himself. But the process of living sanctified lives is still taking place.

We were sanctified by God when we put our faith in Jesus. But there is much about us personally that still needs change in order to be holy. The power for this work is the Holy Spirit working in us.

**The Holy Spirit is in process of conforming you to the image of Jesus, but you must cooperate.**

The Holy Spirit is in the process of forming the character and values of Jesus in each of us, to make us more like Jesus. But you must cooperate. You must work with God in this because God does not change you against your will. You need to be praying for this and working to do this.

This is what Paul is reminding them to do. "Be sanctified."

So How do we cooperate with this process? How do we work with the Spirit for our sanctification? The answer is two things.

### **1. Pray your commitment.**

Pray your dedication of self to God. Praying in faith is your spiritual connection to God.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NIV) But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.**

So the Holy Spirit is doing the work. But you have to believe. You have to believe in the spiritual truth that you are learning in God's word.

Pray that belief. Pray your commitment. Acknowledge that you belong to Him. Reaffirm that you are committed to Him. Pray yourself into his hands, your hands, mouth, ears, eyes, mind, dreams, goals, and values. Submit everything you are to him, to be reshaped according to his will.

We need to pray our faith every day. "I believe. I believe what you have said about me, about sin, about Jesus, about salvation." And we need to pray that every day. Because we drift. We drift from sanctification if we are not praying for it. No one drifts into sanctification. Instead, we drift away from it. We get busy with life and we drift from it.

I haven't been to the beach in years, but every time I have spent time playing in the water, I have drifted. I go out into the water up to about mid chest high and play in the water. In half an hour I look up expecting to be straight out from my spot on the beach. But I have drifted down shore from my spot. It is 50 yards to the left of where I currently am. I was busy playing and drifted from my spot.

Just like that, we get busy with life, if we are not living it in the power of the Holy Spirit, and we drift from being sanctified. So we need to pray our commitment every day.

Do it every day, at the start of your day. Do it during the day, so when temptation pops up you'll be ready to resist. Do at the end of your day as you prepare for a stronger tomorrow.

### **2. Plan your Obedience.**

You know the kinds of temptations you will face today, many of them. So plan how you will resist temptation.

Your sanctification means change to what you do, how you do it, and why you do it... all day long. It will change everything. Instead of acting independent of God, you will gradually live more and more for your Lord Jesus.

So, plan your day with Him. Think about what you now know of Jesus. And imagine that he was guiding you in how to live all day long. That's what it means to let the Holy Spirit lead you.

There have been several movies based on the idea that two people magically switch bodies. Some of these were friends or siblings or even parent child. Each suddenly has to function as the other person in order to fool everyone else. And yet, each brings the real them into the role.

Now imagine that Jesus removed you from your body and he took your place for a time. How would he live as himself in your life? What would Jesus do if he were living your life? This is what you must plan to do each day.

How would Jesus relate to my boss, my teacher, my neighbors. How would Jesus do my job, my chores. Would he go to the same internet sites as me? How does Jesus want me to live today?

So, as Christians we have already been sanctified by God. Our status to God has been changed. We are now part of his eternal family.

But we are not perfected yet as followers of Jesus Christ. Much change needs to occur in us. Let us recognize this and be sanctified.

I have recently been working on a project in the yard. My wife and I bought the home of a woman who believed in using rocks for mulch. Every flower bed has been filled with rocks. The project I am working on requires digging through dirt and these rocks, and then separating the rocks from the soil for planting.

The process of being sanctified means working with the Holy Spirit to dig out all of the hidden sins in us that prevent us from serving well. There are sins such as hate, resentment, unforgiveness, grumpiness, gossip and the like. These are hard to rid ourselves of. They take long to accomplish.

This is where most of us adults are living with Christ. The Spirit wants to bring to our attention these sins and we are resistant. We want to think that the biggest work of sanctifying us is over. We want to pretend that we are really good people. We resist being sanctified if it means being fully devoted to God. We want to settle for mostly devoted to God.

Resistance to such sanctification prevents us from being holy. They also prevent us from receiving some of the blessings Jesus has for us.

So make it a point this week to keep working on the process of being sanctified.