

SANCTIFICATION (cont) - God's METHOD for Holy Living

- 1) **SANCTIFICATION AS THE WORK OF GOD** - See **John 17:17** - "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." Also, **1 Thessalonians 5:23** - "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

While man must also do his part in the purifying of his life, these texts speak of more than mere moral reform through human will-power. It is ultimately the *work of Christ* that lays the foundation and makes sanctification possible - **1 Corinthians 1:30** - "He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

While sanctification is linked with Christ and the Word, most frequently it is the *Holy Spirit* who is portrayed as the *energizer* in sanctification - **1 Peter 1:2** - "...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you."

See also **Galatians 5:16 and 25** - "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh....[25].... If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." Here we see the work of the Holy Spirit in *preparing* the heart for obedience. While the Holy Spirit does not renounce sin *for* us, He *gives strength* for the ongoing battle for holiness.

- 2) **THE TWO SPHERES OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK** - There is both an *individual* and a *corporate* work of the Spirit:

- a) **He indwells each believer INDIVIDUALLY** - Each believer's body is the "temple" of the Holy Spirit - **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** - "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

This sanctifying work is an *internal work*. It is the Spirit who turns the affections away from sin and toward Christ Jesus. This is a deeper work than the mere *restraint* of evil, though that is included. The Spirit helps us remember the teaching of Jesus - **John 14:26** - "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." This is not merely a *memory aid*. He helps us to remember the *significance* - the *importance* - of the teaching of Jesus.

- b) **He works uniquely in the CORPORATE gatherings of believers** - See Paul's important words in **Ephesians 2:19-22** - "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

The Spirit leads believers into *community*. Make no mistake about it, the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit can never be brought to completion in a life isolated from the body of Christ. Much of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit must be accomplished through the irritating lives and gifts and attitudes of other believers. God has so ordained it.

- 3)

THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN WILL IN

SANCTIFICATION - In terms of our involvement in sanctification, the Scriptural teaching is too abundant and clear to be brushed aside. See **2 Corinthians 7:1** - "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God." Also, see **Hebrews 12:14** - "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."

The human task is *twofold*:

- a) **We must DIE TO SIN** - In one sense, the Bible teaches the believer is already "dead to sin" - **Romans 6:11** - "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." The main thought here is because of Christ's work on my behalf sin need no longer *dominate* my life. Notice Paul does *not* say *sin itself is dead*. Rather, the *believer himself* is dead to sin. It is not the *sin in you* that dies. Rather, *you* die to the sinful pull of your own desires. Paul says that this is a truth that must be constantly reaffirmed in our lives on a daily basis.
- i) **Dying to sin is the BELIEVER'S RESPONSIBILITY** - **Romans 8:13** - "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." The Spirit *enables*. But He will not put sin to death *for* us.

- ii) **Dying to sin is more than CONFESSING sin - Titus 2:11-12** - "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...." Grace *trains* as well as *forgives*. Confession must lead to *forsaking* sin. Otherwise it becomes meaningless and separated from the *Scriptural pattern of repentance*.
- iii) **Dying to sin must be CONSTANT and ONGOING - Luke 9:23** - "And he (Jesus) said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.'" These words from Jesus drive home this point with the words "take up his cross *daily*". Christ's work on the cross is a *finished* work. The Spirit's refining work in my heart is an *ongoing* work. It will go deeper and deeper into the attitudes and priorities of my life.
- iv) **Dying to sin must be SPECIFIC - Colossians 3:5-10** - "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. [6] On account of these the wrath of God is coming. [7] In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. [8] But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. [9] Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices [10] and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."

The Christian who tries to renounce sin *generally* will get nowhere. Notice Paul's specific list. Many Christians mistakenly think these lists (there are several) reflect Paul's legalistic tendencies. This badly misses the point. Paul isn't being legalistic. He's teaching *how grace works*. The lesson is I must *deal with sins one at a time*. When I deal honestly with one, the Holy Spirit will help me with another.

- v) **Deal firmly with sin, without living under CONDEMNATION - Hebrews 4:15-16** - "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

This is the Biblical understanding of sanctification and grace. *Deal ruthlessly with specific sins* and yet maintain *great confidence in the power of the blood of Jesus to cleanse from all guilt*. Crucify personal sin and remember the priestly work of Jesus Christ.

- b) **LIVING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS** - The thrust of sanctification is ultimately not negative, but positive. Undergirding the believer's life must be a hunger for righteousness (**Matthew 5:6**). The pursuit of righteousness must be the *highest priority* in the believer's life (**Matthew 6:33**). Sin is hated, but only *indirectly*. We hate sin as a *by-product* of our hunger for likeness to our Redeemer.

FIRST - Obey the Word - Soak your mind in its truth. Apply it instantly to your life. Act on what it teaches. See **2 Timothy 3:16-17** - "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

SECOND - Keep looking to Jesus - Hebrews 12:1-2 - "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." This is what keeps the pursuit of holiness on track. It keeps us from becoming *proud* of our moral improvement. It keeps our hearts set on the prize set before us.

THIRD - Daily dress your life in righteousness - Colossians 3:12-14 - "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, [13] bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. [14] And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." Like the clothes you put on every morning, *consciously decide to dress your soul in the attitudes and desires of righteousness each morning*.

FOURTH - Walk in the Spirit - Galatians 5:25 - "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." Notice the emphasis on *walking out* what the Spirit works *inwardly*. Learn the art of *listening to the Spirit's voice*. He will speak *internally* - to your heart.