



Light from the Word

The Father Calls His Children to Sanctification

Key verse: *“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth”* (2 Thess. 2:13).

Much could be written about sanctification. For this article, the focus will be on definitions, the scriptural basis, the “source”, and the results of sanctification.

Sanctification means being set apart for and belonging to God, cleansed from sin and made holy. Thus we become separated unto God and away from the evils of the world. We are set aside for a sacred or holy purpose.

Our heavenly Father has no pleasure in anything less than the best for His children. In the beginning God created a perfect world and set man in the Garden of Eden. Satan destroyed the perfection that was in the Garden of Eden. However, Satan was not successful in destroying God's perfect plan for eternity because God, in His righteousness, and mercy, provided a way to salvation through Jesus. So great was God's love for His people that *“...he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved”* (John 3:16-17). *“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”* (2 Cor. 7:1).

One of the definitions of “call” is to invite. God has called His children to perfection. He has invited us to be restored to the condition for which He created us. An invitation requires a response. If we do not heed His invitation, we have rejected it.

Many scriptural principles direct us to sanctification. God separated the children of Israel from the Egyptians and said to them *“...ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy”* (Lev. 11:45). To help them understand holiness, God charged the priests with a high calling: *“And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean”* (Ez. 44:23). *They shall therefore keep mine ordinance, lest they bear sin for it, and die therefore, if they profane it: I the Lord do sanctify them”* (Lev. 22:9).

How is sanctification accomplished?

It is accomplished through the work of the Father, His Son, the Holy Spirit, and by fulfilling the responsibilities that God has given us. We must allow God to work in our hearts and lives and keep His commandments.

Our heavenly Father and His Son have always been holy and pure, yet they sanctified themselves. *“Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord”* (Ez.38:23). Jesus, the perfect example on earth, not only asked John to baptize Him to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15), but as He prayed for His disciples (and ultimately for us), He said *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth...And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth”* (John 17:17 & 19). *“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate”* (Heb.13:12). *“...even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish:”* (Eph. 5:25-27).

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Paul reminds us of the importance of the role of the Holy Ghost in directing the lives of believers and enabling them to be sanctified “...for which cause he (Jesus) is not ashamed to call (us) brethren” (Heb.2:11). “That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:16).

Finally, we must recognize that individually we have a responsibility in yielding to God’s work that we may be sanctified. After Israel was defeated by Ai, the Lord spoke to Joshua and said “Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you” (Joshua 7:13). Paul reinforced the importance of taking responsibility for our behavior when he wrote: “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2 :21). Ph.2:13 exhorts us, in humility and faith,

to walk in the power of God’s grace, recognizing “...it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”.

What are the results of sanctification?

Sanctification relates directly to a son/daughter relationship with God, by grace through faith. It, by definition, calls us to love God and His Word, to a spiritual mind, and to yield or present our bodies a living sacrifice, consecrated and devoted to God, walking in the Spirit. Sanctification becomes evident through a born again experience in which we have been converted from the desire to serve Satan to the desire for total submission to the will of God. When we are sanctified, our actions and our attitudes will display the fruit of the Spirit. The absence of the works of the flesh should be apparent to those who observe us. Do we abhor sin? Have we allowed worldliness to reenter our lives? Do we fill our minds with evil thoughts by reading unwholesome material? Do we give Satan an advantage by allowing inappropriate thoughts to remain in our minds? Do we seek entertainment that will draw us closer to the world, or do we spend our time on activities that will edify us and those who are with us?

The children of Israel were

separated from the Egyptians. In faith they made this separation obvious by obeying God’s instructions to prepare for the coming of the death angel. As a result of this separation, manifested by their obedience to God’s command regarding the Passover sacrifice, the life of their oldest child was spared. Likewise, we must also separate ourselves unto God and, in obedience to His Holy Word, walk in holiness, apart from the evils of the world. The death angel saw the blood of the lamb on the homes of the children of Israel and in mercy spared them from the judgment of sin. When we are called “...to give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead”, (1 Peter 4:5), our faith in the overcoming power of the blood of Christ will serve as a testimony for us so that the Lord in His mercy will “pass over” judgment of our sin and we can live forever with the Lord.

How strong is God’s love for His children? It is so strong that He allowed His Son to suffer so grievously for our sins that, in agony, Jesus cried “...My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” (Mark 15:34)?

Therefore the Father calls His children to sanctification.