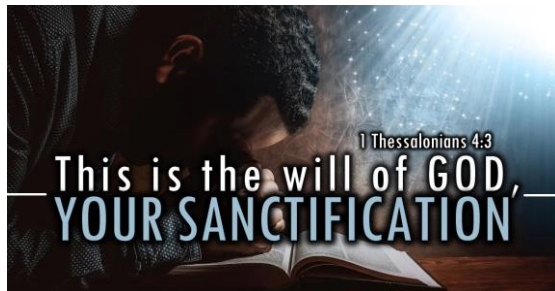


THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD - YOUR SANCTIFICATION

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"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." (1 Thessalonians 4:3).



To 'sanctify' -- to "set apart for HOLY use"

SANCTIFICATION is a Bible subject, and as such it demands our serious attention. The importance of this subject is shown by the apostle Paul above that it is **God's will** that we should be sanctified. The context of what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4 speaks of how we "ought to walk and to please God" (vs.1) and that we should "abstain from fornication", "possessing our vessel in sanctification and honour" (vs.3-4), because God has "called us unto HOLINESS" (vs.7).

God has ever been seeking to **sanctify a people unto himself**; and Bible writers, by inspiration of Jehovah, have dwelt much on the necessity of sanctification.

Just as God called His people to sanctify themselves and be holy in the old dispensation (Leviticus 11:44), God also calls His people in this dispensation now to also sanctify ourselves and be holy (1 Peter 1:15-16; Hebrews 12:14). While we cannot achieve this on our own, it is something that God calls for and something we must place great important upon in our lives.

In the holy Scriptures, sanctification consists in setting apart or consecrating something or someone to a sacred, holy use. In this sense the seventh day was sanctified during creation week, as God confirmed in Genesis 2:3. Even Christ Himself was sanctified, when he was set apart for the work of man's redemption (John 10:36), and Christ was sanctified that we too may be sanctified unto God through the truth:

John 17:16-19 ... 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.'

Oh that God's professed people would understand the importance of Jesus' above words. Just as Christ is NOT of this world and as the apostle John said in 1 John 2:15-17 that the things of this world are NOT of God, so we followers of Jesus Christ are NOT of this world and are NOT to love or take part in the things of this world. Why? Because we are to be **sanctified** unto holiness for God. The things of this world are of the devil. All its sin and entertainment

and sports and such like are of the devil to keep us UNSanctified and UNholy. This is why God told us through John in 1 John 2:15-17 that we are NOT to love the world or the things of the world, because if we do, then we DO NOT have the love of God in us. This is all part of our sanctification - being **separated from the world and the things of the world**.

Sanctification consists of cleansing from sin, in making pure and holy that which is impure and unholy. In this sense Christians are sanctified, and in the progress of their sanctification there is a setting apart to holy purposes; a self-consecration to the glory of God. The depravity of our race is a fact upon which rests the necessity of our being sanctified. The apostle Paul said that "*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). All are **naturally inclined, due to the fallen, sinful nature** to love the ways of the world, to sin and to do evil. The power of sin has so affected the human family, that they may, in their natural state, be called the servants of sin. But the work of sanctification purifies and frees us from the dominion of sin; destroys the corrupt propensities of our fallen natures; rectifies our affections and inclinations, and brings our entire being into subjection to the will of God, so that we may properly be called the servants of righteousness. This is what God is seeking to do in each of His people.

Romans 6:18 ...'Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.'

Paul didn't say we are free to CONTINUE living in sin. God forbid! We are made free FROM SIN to now live as servants of righteousness, in obedience to God's holy moral law, through the power of Jesus Christ. THIS is the will of God.

Sanctification is a great and much needed work in all of our lives. But the scriptures plainly tell us that it is God who sanctifies us, as in of ourselves, we have no power to overcome sin and make ourselves holy. Take a look at the following scriptures confirming this fact:

*Exodus 31:13 ...'Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths [THE SABBATH] ye shall keep: for **it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.**'*

John 17:17 ...'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.'

*Hebrews 2:11 ...'For both **he that sanctifieth** and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.'*

*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.'*

God graciously provides the means of sanctification, and helps his people to use them. It is impossible for man to devise means whereby he can sanctify himself, or to attain to holiness by his own strength. Man must accept through faith, the means which God has devised and the gracious assistance which he gives. And this is a key part of being sanctified. Although we cannot attain this ourselves, we must by faith **co-operate** with the working of Christ in us, making every effort in this regard. If we could become sanctified regardless of the course we pursue or freewill decisions we make, then as God's will is that ALL mankind be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), then it means God will sanctify ALL mankind and ALL mankind will be

saved. But this we know to be false. This is why WE have a part to play in our sanctification, look:

James 4:7-10 ... 'Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.'

1 Thessalonians 5:21-23 ... 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. 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.'

Colossians 1:27-29 ... 'To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, STRIVING ACCORDING TO HIS WORKING, which worketh in me mightily.'

Do you see the 'work' we are to do? We are to submit ourselves unto God, labouring and striving according to the mighty working of Jesus Christ in us. Do you see the **co-operation** taking place between Paul and Christ? This is something that many people miss today. God will not FORCE anyone into being holy, but He WILL help and cause us to become holy IF we co-operate with Him, as Paul did, **striving according to His mighty working in us**. What did Jesus say Himself we are to do? **STRIVE** to enter in through the straight and narrow gate (Luke 13:24). Many will end up going down the wide road to destruction because they didn't strive in co-operation with Christ.

Now the scriptures also makes clear that sanctification can only be obtained through **the truth** of God's Word. Jesus said in John 17:17 that we are to be "*sanctified through the truth*" of God's Word. Peter also stated that we "*purify our hearts in obeying the truth through the Spirit*" (1 Peter 1:22). So genuine sanctification comes through believing and following Bible truth. Error never brings sanctification, which is why the fallen churches of Babylon are drowning in sin and worldliness, due to its following of error and teachings of man, rather than of God. Neither is sanctification grounded on feeling. So many are deceived by mere 'feelings' and following after feelings at the expense of God's truth. True sanctification can only be based upon the immutable truths of God's word. It is the truth received through the mind, and practically carried out in the life. When the truth is thus received and carried out, there is a radical work and change that takes place in the heart and mind. And those who receive and obey the truth are not destitute of good feeling. They have an inward satisfaction for well-doing, and enjoy the approbation and blessing of the Lord to encourage and strengthen them in their great and glorious work.

Psalms 119:11 ... 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.'

Many set aside the truth and yet believe they are being guided by the Holy Spirit. This ecumenical movement between the fallen churches of Babylon is just such a case. And yet what is the 'office' and work of the Holy Spirit? "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth*" (John 16:13)

The Spirit is the great agent that God employs in sanctifying men. Hence Bible sanctification is called "*the sanctification of the Spirit*" (1 Peter 1:2). The Spirit helps our infirmities. It helps us to **understand, receive and practice the truth**. Therefore that spirit which is not in harmony with the truths of God's word, like the spirit behind the fallen churches of Babylon, is NOT the sanctifying Spirit of truth, but is a false spirit.

The Bible clearly portrays that part of our sanctification is the **continual addition** to our faith of the virtues and character of God. Now it is true that we are ALREADY sanctified in the sense that God HAS set us aside for holy use. Sadly, some will take Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:11 saying "*but ye ARE sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*" and they will believe the work is already complete and done, and they 'settle' in their current condition, without moving any further. Now while it is true that when we come to Jesus we are forgiven and 'washed' from our PAST sins (Romans 3:25), and we ARE sanctified **as far as we understand and practice the truth and light we have**; we also need to realise that the journey has only just BEGUN! Look at what else Paul said:

Philippians 3:12-14 ...'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

Hebrews 6:1 ...'Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.'

Does that sound like Paul had ALREADY attained perfection and complete sanctification and therefore had no more progression to make? No. Paul was ever moving forward in his faith in Jesus Christ and sanctification of the Spirit, pressing onwards towards the mark of the high calling of God in Christ. Look at what Paul said to CHRISTIANS in 2 Corinthians 7 and what Peter said to CHRISTIANS in 2 Peter 1:

2 Corinthians 7:1 .."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 Peter 1:4-9 .."Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

In these passages the apostles address those who have obtained like precious faith and urges a **progressive advancement in holiness** toward completeness in the Christian character. During our first conversion to Christ, a blow is struck at the corrupt propensities of fallen human nature, and a great change takes place. But the work of sanctification is not then complete. The young convert stands on the platform of faith. He has seen sin in its true light, has repented of his sins, and has been cleansed from the same by faith in the merits and

efficacy of the blood of Christ, and now rejoices in his Saviour. **But he then must advance** in holiness by **adding** to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge and the rest of the Christian graces, walking and progressing in holiness unto God.

The belief that sanctification is instantaneous at conversion, has a tendency to induce many to believe that *"they are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"*, and is a great hindrance in the way of true sanctification. Jesus cautioned every believer in this regard in His letter to the Laodiceans, confirming that anyone in this condition *"knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"* (Revelation 3:17) and that He WILL *"spue them out of His mouth"*, **because this condition of heart is utterly sickening to our dear Saviour who sacrificed so much to save us FROM sin and to set us apart for holiness.**

The most disturbing truth regarding Laodicean Christians is that they **don't know** they are *'wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.'* This should cause EVERY professed believer to *"examine yourselves"* to see if you are really IN the faith (2 Cor.13:5).

Sanctification may well be represented by the growth of plants. It commences with the seed, the grain, and grows up into the lofty tree. It is receiving with meekness the ingrafted word, and growing thereby, growing in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, growing up into Christ our living head, being changed from glory to glory into the image of Christ. Jesus confirmed this Himself when He said *"the kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed ... Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof"* (Matthew 13:31-32). It starts small, just like our new faith, but as a seed doesn't stop growing until it becomes the full tree, neither should we stop growing until the character of God is perfected in us and we are *"filled with all the fulness of God"* (Ephesians 3:19).

As we contemplate the truth, we gradually behold in it the glory of the Lord, and fall in love with His lovely character. Under the influences of divine truth, we see some beautiful trait in the Christian character and we conform to it, and thus grow up into Christ and become assimilated into His likeness. Light shines on another excellence, and then on another, and we overcome and overcome more, growing stronger and stronger, becoming more and more holy in imitating the perfect Pattern, and thus we are changed from glory to glory into the image of Christ. This is the divine work of sanctification through the Spirit.

It is manifest that light increases in the truth as the work of sanctification progresses, and that sanctification involves the necessity of advancing in the knowledge of the truth. For this reason we should *"cry after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ... seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures; **then** shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God"* (Proverbs 2:3-5).

*2 Timothy 3:16-17 ...'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: **that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished** unto all good works.'*

The word of God was given to be a light, to show us our duty and path in this dark world, and it is through that Word, that truth, which we are sanctified unto every good and righteous work in Christ. Speaking of the last days, the prophet Daniel said that *"Many shall be purified, and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked*

shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:10). Those who continue to grow in the light and truth of Jesus Christ will continue to be sanctified, ever adding to their faith the virtues and character traits of God, being purified and made white. But those who resist the light will continue to live in sin and worldliness and no more light will be given them. Thus they grope around in darkness and never come to a knowledge of the truth.

This message of sanctification is especially important for those of us living here in the last days. Why? Satan's claim has ever been that man cannot keep the law of God and thus to justify his own disobedience to God's law. Jesus silenced this claim, living a perfect sinless life in fallen human nature. But Christ has something to also achieve in His church - especially His end time church, to even further silence the claim of Satan forever, look:

*Ephesians 5:26-7 ...'That he might sanctify and cleanse it [the church] 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.**'*

*Revelation 14:1 ...'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and **with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads ... These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.**'*

*Revelation 14:12 ...'Here is the patience of the saints: **here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.**'*

What Christ did Himself in fallen flesh, He is also seeking to do in His end time church, not only blotting out our sins from the record books, but also to blot out our sins from our very lives now, so *"that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world"* (Philippians 2:15).

The burden of this message is *"the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."* These are kept in opposition to the worship of the papal beast and its image of fallen Protestantism. By the commandments of God, we understand is meant, those commandments which God proclaimed in person, and wrote with his own finger on stone, **but now writes them upon the tables of our heart.** These are emphatically God's commandments. When the commandments of God are spoken of in distinction from the faith of Jesus, as referenced in Revelation 14:12, they **must include the ten commandments.** And those who are living by and keeping the faith OF Jesus, not just faith 'IN' Jesus, are those who will be keeping the ten commandments in the fulness of spirit and truth, BECAUSE they have Christ abiding in the heart.

To change or do away with God's ten commandments is to change or do away with the character of God Himself, which is impossible! And it is in obedience TO this law which God is sanctifying unto Himself a people. Thus those who seek to reject, or change, or do away with one single piece of God's moral law contained in His ten commandments, **cannot** be sanctified. This is why the various churches are now fallen Babylon and God is calling HIS PEOPLE OUT of Babylon, because the churches have rejected the commandments of God in trampling upon the very day (the 7th day Sabbath) that God Himself sanctified at creation

and the very commandment which we are to keep to SHOW that we believe it is God who sanctifies us (Exodus 31:13). This is the design of the three angels messages of Revelation 14. To set apart a people unto God. A sanctified, holy people who are keepers of God's commandments through the faith of Jesus being lived out in their lives.

When we study God's Word with hearts open to the truth, we can see the clear teaching of sanctification and the necessity of it in our lives. But we can only be successful in this work by abiding in Christ. God says ... "*My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways*" (Proverbs 23:26). It is only through the surrender of the heart to God and His ways that we can be sanctified. Jesus said that without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). Just as the branches which are separated from the vine have no life and wither and die, so will be the Christian who does not abide in Christ. But this means the opposite is also true. WITH Christ we can do ALL things (Philippians 4:13). So let us abide in Christ every day, continually drawing from Him, life, truth and holiness, and He will sanctify us wholly!

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.'