

THE GOSPEL

3. SANCTIFICATION

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One worrying aspect is that many Christians make the mistake of seeming to live as if Christ were dead. Others believe He is the entertainment business and that church services should be a Royal Variety performance.

Holiness is no longer thought of as a virtue. The meaning of the word includes having to do with the opposite of being common or profane. God is so different and distinct from us and all creation, but He wants His people to be different, to be holy and to conform to His will and requirements.

God has said, "Be ye holy for I am holy." (1 Peter 1.16)

The Christian life is one of sanctification, one of holiness.

We are saved eternally when we respond to the Lord Jesus as Saviour and thereby avail ourselves of the grace of God and, in doing this, we exercise faith which began with our hearing the Word of God. Once saved, however, the Christian life is to have certain characteristics and we are to become conformed to the likeness of the Lord Jesus.

This process is called sanctification; it is the matter of holiness.

"Be ye holy, for I am Holy, "saith the Lord (1 Peter 1.16).

Holiness is a major feature of Biblical teaching. God is described in Exodus 15.11 as glorious in holiness fearful in praises, doing wonders. In 1 Samuel 6.20 the men of Bethshemesh said, "Who is able to stand before this Holy Lord God?"

The psalmist in Psalm 99 writes, "Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His holy hill, for the Lord our God is holy."

Isaiah 6. 3 refers to one who cried, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

Luke 1 75 informs us that we should show holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

2 Corinthians 7. 1 states, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord."

2 Peter 3.11 asks, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?".

Holiness is sanctity hence sanctification. It also carries with it the meaning of separation.

Separation from evil associations is a Biblical teaching from Isaiah 52. 11 to 2 Thessalonians 3.6 where we are told to withdraw or separate from the disorderly and those who do not follow apostles tradition and teaching from the Lord. In the last days God will separate the righteous and the wicked. (Matthew 13.49, 25.32).

As Christians we are to separate from false teachers and those who have teachings and practices which are not in accord with the Bible (2 Timothy chapters 3 and 4).

We are to be separated from the world as much as we can (1 John 2.15). We are to be separated unto Christ.

Romans 6 verses 3 and 4 deal with the matter of believers baptism, which is the only authorised water baptism in the New Testament. "All ye who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death. Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death. "

Baptism by immersion is akin to a burial and the rising out of the water speaks of the newness of life of which Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5.17.

This is identification with Christ. It marks the beginning of the sanctified life. One cannot say, "I have become a Christian. That's done. I can now carry on as before!"

Paul says in Galatians 2.20, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

You cannot live the holy life, the new life without being dead to self and alive to God. This means that sin is not to be reign in you (Romans 6.12). Christ is. Sin is not to be the master, Christ is.

A Christian who was made a prisoner of war in 1942 was later asked what he had to do when he surrendered. He replied, "I had to do three things, Lay down my rifle, put up my hands and do as I was told." Here is a picture of the sanctified life. I willingly surrender to the Lord and do as He bids me.

But it is not easy, is it? After he was converted, Paul could say, "The good that I would do, I don't do; the evil that I don't want to do, I do. O wretched man that I am "(Romans 7. 19, 24).

Christians, Biblical characters and sanctified believers still sin.

Isaac tried to pass his wife off as his sister (Genesis 26. 7)

Moses failed to sanctify God in the congregation of Israel (Deuteronomy 32. 51)

David sinned with Bathsheba, had her husband slain and numbered Israel.

Elijah suffered from depression (1 Kings 19.4) which, although it may not be sin, it hindered his life.

Peter was sometimes rash (Galatians 2.11)

We are not called upon to change the flesh but recognise that it has been crucified and buried.

We are not to forget the cost of our salvation.

We are not to forget God's promises to us. Here are some of them:

2 Corinthians 12.9 My grace is sufficient for you.

1 John 2. 25 What He has promised us is eternal life.

John 1.12 But as many as received Him, to them gave them the power to become the sons of God.

John 3.15 Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish.

1 Corinthians 10.13 God will not test you more than you can bear.

Hebrews 13.5 God will never leave you nor forsake you.

1 Corinthians 15.58 Your work for the Lord is not in vain.

Ephesians 3.20 He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that you ask or think.

Jude 24 He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the glory of God with exceeding joy.

We are not to forget the holiness and sovereignty of God. We often use the name of Jesus as if he were Bill next door, and tend to forget that God is sovereign, far above us. He is the captain of our salvation and not one of the crew as A W Tozer put it.

But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe.
Here, Lord, I give myself away
'Tis all that I can do.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise man
I would do my part
Yet what I can I give Him?
Give my heart.

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