

“THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SAINTS”

Part 3

The Sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit

I Thessalonians 4:3

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification.”

How would you like to have an invisible partner present with you every second of your life, praying for you, perfecting you, protecting you and promoting you along in the Christian life? Wouldn't that be a wonderful provision? That is precisely Who the Holy Spirit is and what He does!

He is our Comforter, Sealer, Teacher, Baptizer, Witness, Prayer Partner, Guide, and Sanctifier! The ministry of the Holy Spirit within the believer is a multi-faceted work carried on silently and simultaneously.

There is a word used to communicate to us the nature of His ministries which, if we understood, would gladden the heart of every child of God. It is the Greek word, *“paraclete”*. It is translated into the English as counselor, comforter, helper or partner. The word means “one called to the side of another to assist him.” It was used in a variety of ways, one of which was as follows: when the Greek soldier went into battle, he went with a partner. When the enemy attacked, they could stand together back-to-back, covering each other's blind side. One's battle partner was called the *paraclete*." **Isn't that interesting?**

That is the word that Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit, “ But the Helper (*“paraclete”*), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” (John 14:26) The Holy Spirit is our permanent Partner, our Helper. Today's study concentrates on His help in the work of sanctification.

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification.” (1 Thess. 4:3)

One of the ministries that our Holy Partner exercises on our behalf is that of Sanctifier. I hope no one blinks at the usage of that word. The words sanctify, sanctified and sanctification occur in the New Testament more than 25 times. My personal opinion is that Christians should become acquainted with all Bible terms before they master the Crossword Puzzle!

Question: Is the Christian “sanctified”? Answer: “Yes” and “no”! Confused? You need not be for I will explain by reviewing with you:

The Meaning of Sanctification,
The Minister of Sanctification and
The Means of Sanctification.

THE MEANING OF SANCTIFICATION

To “sanctify” means to make holy by separating from the world and consecrating to God; To “sanctify” is to set apart a person or thing for holy use. Whatever is set apart is separated from unholy influences so that the holiness of God becomes its dominate element.

The Bible teaches us that sanctification is in three tenses:

- *Past sanctification* – accomplished by Christ at Calvary. Heb. 10:10 tells us that “we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.” And, Heb.13:12 “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.”– We were set apart from the *penalty of sin*.
- *Progressive sanctification* – accomplished by the Holy Spirit’s ministry after we are saved. – We are being set apart from the *power of sin*.
- *Perfected sanctification* – accomplished by the coming of Jesus, removing us from earth. We shall be set apart from the *presence of sin*.

Salvation is what God does *for* us as sinners; sanctification is what God does *with* us as saints. It is the work of progressive sanctification that the Holy Spirit accomplishes. His ministry is to set us apart progressively more and more to God, delivering us from the power of sin, making us more like Christ. However, not without our willing partnership!

This “setting apart” ministry involves two actions: first, the setting apart *from* sin and second, setting apart *unto* God. A good illustration of the truth is seen when the Apostle Paul commended the believers in the church at Thessalonica because they “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” (1 Thess. 1:9)

Illust. Eugene Peterson writes, “There is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship in what earlier generations of Christians called holiness.” – From *A Long Obedience In The Same Direction*

THE MINISTER OF SANCTIFICATION

Who sets us apart from sin unto God, from unholiness unto holiness? Who enables us to grow up in Christ and to go on with God? The answer is seen in several separate scriptures each saying basically the same thing. No professorial exposition is needed – only pointed self- examination!

Romans 15:16 - “sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 – “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13 – “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”

1 Thessalonians 4:3-9 – “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.” (sanctification and holiness are from the same word)

1 Peter 1:2 – “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit.”

Is it surprising that the *Holy* Spirit desires to make us *holy* ? Or that the *Holy* God desires us to be *holy*? Or that the *Holy* Son of God desires us to be *holy*?

THE MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION

What means does the Holy Spirit use to wean us away from living according to the desires of the old nature in Adam and to woo us to live according to the designs of the new nature in Christ? It is some instantaneous ritual? Some secret formula? Some ceremony? Is there a special prayer to pray, some deed to perform?

How does the Holy Spirit progressively set us apart from unrighteousness to righteousness; sinfulness to sanctification; unholiness to holiness? Some will not like the answer for we tend to want instant everything, quick fixes, easy How-To-Do-It Seminars, a book on “How To Be Sanctified For Dummies,” or a ten minute video showing in one giant leap “How To Be Everything God Wants You To Be.”

Folks, it's not going to happen! Jesus said the road is narrow and “few there be that find it.” (Matt. 7:14) Only those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6) will pursue the path to holiness. If you really want to be godly, clean, righteous, Christ-like, pure and holy, then here is God's method: you have to get on God's Diet and begin God's Exercise Program!

A. The Sanctification Diet. Here is the menu:

Item #1 - “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth....” (John 14:16,17);

Item #2 - “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” (John 15:26);

Item #3 - “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.” (John 16:13);

Item #4 - “Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth.” (John 17:17).

Item #5 – “And for their sakes, I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”

Are you beginning to get a taste for what God wants to feed us in order to grow us up in Christ, setting us apart from sinful behavior to sanctified behavior? The only way we will be more like Christ, evidence practical holiness, be more set apart for God, is to feed upon the Word of Truth! We must get into the Word of Truth and get the Word of Truth in us!

To grow as a Christian is to be sanctified. Peter writes, “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (II Peter 3:18) Why do we grow physically? We eat and exercise! How do we grow spiritually? We eat and exercise! God’s soul-food is His Word – the Bread of Life. There is absolutely no possible way to be progressively more like Jesus Christ apart from regular meals of the Word of God. As we feed on God’s Diet, the Holy Spirit ministers it to our souls. After all, He wrote the Book! That isn’t all – not only do we need the Sanctification Diet but we need:

B. The Sanctification Exercise.

Paul practiced the Sanctification Exercise. He said, “I exercise myself.” (Acts 24:16) and he tells Timothy to “exercise yourself unto godliness” (1 Tim.4:7)

Eugene Peterson in *The Message* expanded translation renders I Timothy 4:7 like this: “Exercise daily in God—no spiritual flabbiness, please!” I like that! It is not enough to masticate and assimilate the Word of Truth, we must activate it by “doing the truth.”

Illust. There is currently on TV an advertisement about a popular soft-drink that is supposed to increase one’s energy. The ad appeals to youth and the slogan is, “Do The Dew!” Those who drink Living Water from the fountain of the Word of Truth should “Do The Truth!”

CONCLUSION

We have seen that the meaning of sanctification is to set apart a person or thing for holy use; The Minister of sanctification is the Holy Spirit and the Means He uses is the Word of Truth. We are sanctified *by* the Holy Spirit *through* the Word of God. “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.” (Eph.5:26)

Illust. A fashion store in Arlington, Texas sponsored a contest to find “the dirtiest kid in town.” The award offered was \$25.00. There were two conditions: (1) Dirt must be naturally accumulated and not purposefully applied and (2) Parents must be present and admit that their child is dirty. The contest aimed to recognize those kids who like to look “natural”. (From Dallas Morning News)

Are you a “dirty Christian”? Do you look like the “natural man” in 1 Corinthians 2:14 or the “spiritual man” in 1 Corinthians 2:15? Our heavenly Parent wants to sanitize us by sanctify-

ing us progressively with the water of the Word and by His Spirit. But we must partner with our silent Partner!

Paul's salutation at the end of the first letter to the Thessalonians reads, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely...." (1 Thess.5:23)

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