

Study 0035

Scripture Text: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

The Holy Spirit tells us through our scripture text that God had chosen us to be saved from the final judgment through sanctification by Him, and by faith in the word of God. He then goes on to encourage and challenge us to hold fast or firm to the doctrines or teachings which we are being taught either through direct preaching/teaching or documented/recorded messages. In other words, our salvation from past sins was only the beginning; salvation from the present wiles of the devil presently and from the future judgment of the world must now follow. And these are accomplished through sanctification on the one hand, and faith in the word of God on the other hand. This can be illustrated using the growth of a child. In the early days of a baby, he is dependent on his mother one hundred percent [salvation]; but after he is weaned, or as he grows older, he is taught the things that will make him able to function in society [sanctification]. In **Acts 2:41-47**, after the people had received salvation from past sins and were baptized, they continued to receive teachings and to do things that enabled them to be sanctified.

Sanctification is thus, the missing link in the ‘Christianity’ that is presented today. Some people have asked, “Is all there is to being a Christian just to be born again and attend church on Sundays?” No! There is more to being a Christian than just being born again and going to church on Sundays; you need sanctification. A person cannot be said to be a Christian, in the real sense of the word, unless he is sanctified! There are people who are born again, but who are still struggling with living the life expected of a Christian in accordance with the word of God. The solution to the challenge of living like a Christian is sanctification. There are born again individuals who are unable to obey God or the word of God. The solution to the difficulty of obeying God and His word is sanctification! Also, there are people who want to serve God, but find it difficult to do so for one reason or the other. Here again, the way out is sanctification! Then there is the problem of carnality in our Christian walk, where it is difficult for us to detach from the flesh. The answer still lies in sanctification! Indeed, many of the challenges we face in Christianity can be resolved if we are sanctified. Two of such challenges are; the grace to forgive those who have offended us, and the grace to love the unlovable.

In **Luke 1:74-75**, the Holy Spirit tells us that “*we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies [salvation] might serve Him [God] without fear, in holiness [sanctification] and righteousness [uprightness or divinely approved living], all the days of our life [earthly life]*” Thus, although ***we are saved to serve; we must first be sanctified for our service to be acceptable to God!*** In the course of our teachings on Christian foundation, we mentioned the in-filling of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. At that time, our focus was essentially on the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of serving God. However, if our service is to be acceptable to God, the in-filling of the Holy Spirit must take its full effect. While the Spirit of God upon the believer in Christ empowers him to serve God, the Spirit of God within him makes the believer able to live as he ought to—in a Christ-like manner; that is, sanctified. It is the Spirit of God within the believer, Who makes him sanctified and helps him to live a sanctified life!

An unholy man cannot do holy work! Hence, before our service in the house of God can truly be acceptable unto God, we must be sanctified (**Malachi 3:1-5**). Salvation from past sins is therefore, but the beginning of a journey that must of necessity include sanctification, if that salvation is to be thorough and complete at the end of the age. By being born again,

the believer in Christ is declared righteous; and as good as it is, it does not make him holy, neither does it bring him to the place where he can be useful in the hands of God until he is sanctified! In **Ephesians 5:25-27**, the Holy Spirit tells us that Jesus' atoning work/sacrifice was not just to cleanse us from sin, but it was also to sanctify us (make us holy), so that he might present us to Himself, a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle. Thus, without sanctification, Christ cannot even present us to Himself, not to talk of His Father in heaven! How far-reaching the benefits and usefulness of sanctification are in the believer's life!

What Then Does It Mean To Be Sanctified?

Just like beautification is making something beautiful, and clarification is making something clear, sanctification is making a person sanctified. It is a process which happens instantaneously and in degrees (We shall talk more about this in the next study). To be sanctified is to be:

- i) Made holy (**1 Corinthians 1:2**);
- ii) Set apart unto God for holy use/purpose (**2 Timothy 2:20-21**);
- iii) Purged from sin and purified of evil and iniquity (**Malachi 3:3**);
- iv) Separated from evil things/deeds (**2 Corinthians 6:14—7:1**);
- v) Separated from the workers of iniquity and unrighteousness (**2 Thessalonians 2:5-15**);
- vi) Separated from behaviour of the people of the world in all things (**Romans 12:2**);
- vii) Able to say "No" to the desires of the flesh (**Galatians 5:16-18**); and,
- viii) Able to obey God and His word (**1 Peter 1:2**).

Just like salvation and righteousness can be interchangeably used, sanctification and holiness mean the same thing, because sanctification makes us holy. When we are born again (or saved from sin), we are washed and cleansed from sin, and are declared righteous; but, it is through sanctification that we are made holy. Holiness enables us to say "No" to the things that are contrary to the will of God. It is also through sanctification that we are being prepared to be useful in the house of God, and to be able to do good works. (**1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 5:25-26; 2 Timothy 2:21**).

There are two sides to sanctification:

- (i) The removal or getting rid of sin, and the separation from sinful living; and,
- (ii) The making of the person holy and enabling him to obey God and His word.

Conclusion

In our next study, we shall look at how a believer can become sanctified. But for now, let us take the lyrics of the song (**Refiner's Fire** by *Brian Doerksen*) below as a prayer focus.

Purify my heart,
Let me be as gold,
And precious silver;
Purify my heart,
Let me be as gold;
Pure gold.

Chorus

*Refiner's fire,
My heart's one desire
Is to be Holy;
Set apart for You, Lord;
I choose to be Holy;
Set apart for You, my Master;
Ready to do Your will*

Purify my heart,
Cleanse me from within,
And make me holy;
Purify my heart,
Cleanse me from my sin;
Deep within.

EXERCISE

Please answer true or false to the statements below.

1. Once a person is born again, he is set for heaven and he does not need to do anything else.
2. Salvation is a doorway into something more than just attending church.
3. Sanctification is something reserved for believers who desire to serve God.
4. Sanctification is what makes us Christians.
5. Without sanctification a person cannot truly be a Christian.
6. Sanctification enables the believer to live as God wants him to.
7. Sanctification enables the believer to forgive others.
8. Sanctification enables the believer to be able to obey God and His word.
9. The only way to getting round sanctification is to die immediately after salvation.
10. You are saved to serve: so after salvation, go to a church and start serving.
11. To be sanctified is to be made holy.
12. To be sanctified is to be isolated from all men so that they don't contaminate you.
13. Sanctification gives you victory over the flesh.
14. Sanctification means holiness.
15. Sanctification is a process, but can also be instantaneous.