

SANCTIFICATION – SET APART FOR A PURPOSE

Selected Scriptures

Introduction:

In Jesus' prayer for his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, just hours before his crucifixion he prayed:

"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth." (John 17:17-19)

A few weeks ago, the last time we had communion, I introduced a series of messages related to our salvation. At that time, we looked at the wonderful truth of justification – a new standing, a new position. Justification means that, because of Jesus Christ's death as a payment for our sin, we are declared righteous before God.

There are two significant things that occur related to justification. First there is forgiveness. The past record of our sin, and the penalty that goes along with it, is forgiven, forever removed, not because we deserve it, or even because God overlooks our sin, but because He paid the penalty for it. The second thing is that we are given his righteousness in exchange for our sin debt. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, credited to our account.

The result of this is that we are reconciled to God – brought back into a relationship with Him. Rom. 5:1 – we have peace with God. Not only that but we are free from condemnation – Rom. 8:1. Since we have been justified—declared righteous before God—no accusation can be made and held against us.

Today, I would like to continue in this theme, looking at another aspect of our salvation – sanctification. The word *sanctification* means to be set apart for a special purpose – specifically to be holy. In our study in 1 Peter we saw that in last week's text – *"...as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"* (1 Peter 1:15-16)

Justification means a new standing – declared righteous before God. Sanctification is the process by which we are made righteous in our daily walk with God.

This week I started reading an amazing book by David Levy, entitled "The Tabernacle: Shadows of the Messiah." In it he describes the design of the OT tabernacle, the sacrificial system and the priesthood and how they foreshadow the person and ministry of Jesus Christ in salvation.

The tabernacle courtyard contained two items of furniture that were critical in their purpose in order for the priests to enter into the tabernacle for worship and service. The first was the brazen altar where the sacrifices were offered for sin. It was at the altar that atonement was made so that the guilt and penalty of sin could be removed. The altar of sacrifice was where justification took place.

But after the sacrifice was offered and the debt of sin was dealt with, the priest would move to the brazen laver, for washing. The brazen laver stood in the outer court between the brazen altar and the Tabernacle.

Here I would like to pick up the description that David Levy uses in his book as I believe he portrays the truth of sanctification so clearly from the symbolism of the tabernacle. For the next few minutes I will be reading directly from his words.

The Strategic Position of the Laver

Each year the high priest washed on the day of atonement, put on the holy linen garments, and made an atonement for himself and the children of Israel (Lev. 16:24). But on every other day of the year, the priests only had to wash the defilement from their hands and feet before entering the Tabernacle to serve. Carefully dipping their right hands into the laver, they meticulously washed their right hands then their right feet; reversing the process, they washed their left hands and left feet.

The priests knew all too well the strategic placement and symbolic meaning of the laver. Their sins being atoned for at the brazen altar

made it possible for them to approach the Tabernacle in worship, but not before they stopped at the brazen laver to wash the defilement of the dusty Tabernacle court from their bodies. They had to be both spiritually and physically clean before they could enter into the presence of a holy God in communion and fellowship. The Word of God was clear on this matter: "ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44).

The Sanctifying Provision of the Laver

The laver was used only by the priests for purification. We who have put our faith in Jesus Christ are called believer-priests. We are also called "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people of his own" (1 Pet. 2:9); therefore, we can offer spiritual sacrifices and praise that are "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5; cp. 1 Pet. 2:9). As Aaron and his sons were born into the priesthood (Ex. 28:1), so each of us enters the priesthood by means of the new birth through the "washing [i.e., bath] of regeneration" (Ti. 3:5) in the blood of Jesus Christ. We who have been washed from our sins in the blood of Jesus have been made a "kingdom of priests" (Rev. 1:5-6).

The ministry of the laver is of great spiritual significance in our Christian experience. In the brazen altar we see our justification. In the brazen laver we see our sanctification.

The word sanctified means to be set apart. First, we are set apart from sin, both spiritually (2 Chr. 29:5, 15-18) and physically (1 Th. 4:3). Second, we are set apart for divine service through Christ our high priest (1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11).

Sanctification is described in three ways. First, we are positionally sanctified. We are eternally sanctified to God the moment we accept the atoning work of Jesus Christ for our justification (Heb. 10:10, 14; 13:12). Instantaneously we are separated from sin unto salvation. It is called positional sanctification because it signifies a position or standing before God that does not depend on our daily walk for its maintenance, although this position should lead us to holy living.

Second, we are progressively being sanctified, a process whereby we are daily sanctified as we walk in obedience before God, separating ourselves from sin and allowing the Holy Spirit to cleanse us through the

truth of the Word of God (Jn. 17:17). Believers progress in sanctification as they appropriate and apply the Word of God to their lives (2 Tim. 2:19-21; 2 Pet. 3:18).

Third, we will be perfected in sanctification. Believers are promised an ultimate (complete) sanctification. We will be perfected when we receive our resurrected bodies at the Second Coming of the Lord (Eph. 5:27). At that time, we will be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29), for we shall be like Him (1 Jn. 3:2).

The Servant's Purification by the Lord

The need for purification in our walk was beautifully illustrated during the final hours of our Lord's ministry on earth (Jn. 13:1-10). Rising from the Passover table, Jesus took a towel and a basin of water and began to wash the disciples' feet.

When it was Peter's turn to be washed, he blurted out, "Thou shalt never wash my feet" (v. 8). Jesus quickly informed Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (v. 8).

Jesus was not saying that if He did not wash Peter's feet, Peter could not have a relationship with Him, for his relationship with the Lord had already been established. Rather, Jesus was saying that if He did not wash Peter's feet, Peter could not have fellowship or communion with Him. As usual, the impetuous Peter went overboard and responded, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head" (v. 9). Jesus answered, "He that is washed needeth not except to wash his feet" (v. 10). The words washed and wash in verse 10 have different meanings. The word washed (Gr., *louo*) means to bathe one's body completely. It speaks of the complete ablution that takes place when we are declared justified at the moment of salvation. The word wash (Gr., *nipto*) is used of those who wash their hands and feet, symbolizing sanctification. The picture is of people returning home from a public bathhouse. Their bodies being completely bathed, they need only wash the dust from their feet to be clean when they enter their houses.

By washing the disciples' feet, the Lord taught that we who have been thoroughly cleansed through His blood must still be cleansed in our daily walk with Him. Daily sins must be confessed to God in order to

maintain an unbroken communion and fellowship with Him. John explicitly stated this when he wrote, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:8-9).

The Servant's Privilege Before the Lord

As believer-priests who have been justified and sanctified, we are now ready to offer worship and service to the Lord. The greatest privilege of all is to have direct access into the presence of God (Heb. 10:19-22)—something the Old Testament believers did not have. The priests, being cleansed for service, were prepared to enter the holy place for communion with a holy God. We who are cleansed in our walk before God are prepared to do the same thing.

We must respond to the Lord's admonishment, "But, as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of life, Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Only then will we be able to walk through the veil into the holy presence of our Lord and then forward into each new day prepared for spiritual service for Him.

Conclusion

I share that with you because I believe it gives us a very real picture of sanctification and the importance of cleansing in our daily walk with God. As believers, we are set apart for a purpose. We are called out of the world, justified, forgiven, and called to be holy, because the one who called us is holy.

As we prepare our hearts for communion this morning, let us consider the condition of our own heart. Let us respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as he shows us the things we need to deal with—the dust and the defilement of daily living that needs to be washed away so that we can be wholly clean as we come before our holy God.