



The Good and Right Way

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Sanctification – Attaining the likeness of
Christ

Why is it important?

Two roads lie before us

The Bible in the book of 1st Samuel tells how the Israelites demanded of Samuel that the Lord appoint a king to rule over them like the other nations around them. Samuel disliked the idea, but the Lord told him to listen to the people and appoint a king for them. In this demand the people had rejected God as their king and had asked for a man to be their ruler. So Samuel said to them,

1 Samuel 12:13 “Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the LORD has set a king over you. 14 “If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the LORD, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God. 15 “If you will not listen to the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the command of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as it was against your fathers.

The Israelites had two roads before them: they could show respect for the Lord and keep His commandments, or they could rebel and follow the idolatrous practices of their neighboring countries. If they chose to follow the Lord they would prosper both materially and spiritually, but if they chose to rebel and follow the ways of the idol worshipers they would suffer accordingly. Samuel said that they must not turn aside, for then they would go after futile things which cannot profit or deliver, because they are unavailing.

Samuel added to his admonition,

1 Samuel 12:22 “For the Lord will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the Lord has been pleased to make you a people for Himself. 23 “Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way.¹

The good and right way is still the way to sanctification.

Holiness and sin are mutually exclusive

In the Old Testament story of Adam and Eve we are told that our first parents sinned against God by eating the forbidden fruit. They then suffered the result—God put them out of Paradise. This was great punishment because their life after that was hard; they suffered injury and illness and eventually died. The rigorous suffering they endured after that was not merely for punishment, but it was for discipline divinely imposed to prevent further sin. However, perhaps of greater importance though is the unhappy truth that no sinner can live in the presence of a holy God. In fact, man cannot even approach God without rigorous preparation. Therefore, God separated them from Himself.

Under the Law of Moses only the High Priest could enter the holy place in the Tabernacle, and he could not do that without carefully following the instructions that God had provided. The Bible says,

Leviticus 16:2 The LORD said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

On the Day of Atonement God permitted only the high priest to enter the holy of holies. Before entering he had to take a bath, and then he had to dress himself in the holy white linen garments. He brought a young bullock for a sin offering, for himself and his family, then two young goats for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. The ritual was elaborate, but among the reasons for the things he had to do was this,

¹ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.* (1995). (1 Sam. 12:13–23). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

Leviticus 16:11 “Then Aaron shall offer the bull of the sin offering which is for himself and make atonement for himself and for his household, and he shall slaughter the bull of the sin offering which is for himself. 12 “He shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil. 13 “He shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the testimony, otherwise he will die.

- Otherwise he will die.

It should be clear from even a cursory reading of Genesis and Leviticus that no one can enter the presence of the Lord without preparation. But that is not the end of the story because we read in the book of Hebrews,

Hebrews 12:14 Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

The Hebrew writer said, you will either be sanctified or you will not see the Lord. So, is sanctification important? Yes. It is important because unless we receive the improvements God intends for us to have we will not see His face.

What is sanctification?

It is separation to God and separation from evil things and ways.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

“I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;

AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

17 “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord.

“AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;

And I will welcome you.

18 “And I will be a father to you,

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,”

Says the Lord Almighty.

- So, sanctification involves separation from sinfulness, lawlessness and fellowship with darkness—in a moral sense.

Sanctification is the process of becoming consecrated to God.

In Numbers the 6th Chapter Moses wrote concerning the vows of a Nazarite. He said,

6:2 “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When a man or woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to dedicate himself to the LORD, 3 he shall abstain from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar, whether made from wine or strong drink, nor shall he drink any grape juice nor eat fresh or dried grapes.

All the days of his separation he was to avoid anything that was produced by the grape vine. The consecration of the Nazarite was analogous to the consecration that is expected by the disciple of Christ. Does this mean that we are to abstain from wine and allow our hair to grow long as a Nazarite? No, but it does mean that the disciple is expected to devote himself completely to Christ.

Collatia was an ancient town located in central Italy. The legendary fifth king of Rome, Lucius Tarquinius Priscus, captured the town among many of his other military conquests. It is said that after their capitulation that Egerius, a member of the royal family, negotiated their surrender on behalf of the Romans. History tells us that Egerius asked the

ambassadors of the town, “Are the people of Collatia in their own power?”

The ambassadors answered, “Yes.”

Egerius next asked them, “Do you deliver up yourselves, the people of Collatia, your city, your fields, your waters, your boundaries, your temples, your utensils, all your property, divine and human, into my power, and the power of the Roman people?”

They answered, “We surrender all.”

And so, said Egerius, “I accept you.”^{2 3}

Jesus said,

Matthew 10:37 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 “He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

Dedication to Christ is to be as complete as the dedication of the Collatians to Rome.

Sanctification is being made holy through the work of the Holy Spirit.

There is the story of the carpenter who was nailing shingles on the roof of a house. He lost his footing and began to slide off. As he was sliding he began to pray, “Lord, oh Lord, help me!” But he kept sliding. So again he prayed, “Lord, oh Lord, help me!” But he kept sliding until he came to the edge of the roof and a nail that was sticking up caught hold of his pants. After he came to a stop he said, “Never mind, Lord. The nail’s got hold of me now.”

Why are we biased as this carpenter was so that we call upon God in our desperation, but when He answers we immediately look for another

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collatia>.

³ Elon Foster, *6000 Sermon Illustrations*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1992, p. 130.

cause for our deliverance? We only call upon God when the situation appears to be completely out of hand but then immediately revert to our own abilities when it looks like we will escape the consequence of our own mistakes. We should give the Holy Spirit His due credit when He rescues us from our troubles. God is like a father to his believing children and He provides both providential care and instruction in wise behavior. This is to bring His children to spiritual maturity. It is on the road to sanctification.

But you ask, “Why should God do this for me?” Think, would you not have this same attitude toward your own son or daughter. For your children you provide wise guidance and patience when they are guilty of wrongdoing. You do not immediately abandon them. God does the same for his sons and daughters.

In matter of becoming righteous the Pharisees thought they could make themselves holy by their strict observance of the Law of Moses. Some of them thought they could make themselves so pure that they could provide advice to God about purity, but that is not true!⁴ God provides his own righteousness in Christ through faith. Our obligation as children of God is to persevere in the course that He has prepared so that we might be like Him.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

- It is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies.

Paul states that Christians as in Thessalonica have become God’s people and are to be saved rather than suffer under a deadly delusion as do people who do not love the truth. The delusion of Satan ends in

⁴ Edersheim, A. (1896). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Vol. 2, pp. 409–410). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co. “A Rabbi went so far as to order that he should be buried in white garments, to show that he was worthy of appearing before his Maker. But perhaps the climax of blasphemous self-assertion is reached in the story, that, in a discussion in heaven between God and the heavenly Academy on a Halakic question about purity, a certain Rabbi—deemed the most learned on the subject—was summoned to decide the point.”

judgment, but the discipline of the Christian leads to sanctification by the Holy Spirit and belief in the truth.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

1 Corinthians 6:9 Or 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 effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

- The Corinthians had received justification and sanctification in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God.
- The walk of life as led by the Holy Spirit avoids immoral and sinful behavior.

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

- The Christians who lived in Asia Minor were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, and by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote to the Roman Christians,

Romans 15:15 But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

- Paul was concerned that his work of evangelism among the Gentiles might be sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Sanctification rests upon the sacrificial death of Christ.

In Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, there is the grave of a Civil War soldier. The stone bears the date of his birth and death, and then these words: “Abraham Lincoln’s substitute.” In the woe and anguish of the war, realizing that thousands upon thousands were falling in his place on the field of battle, Lincoln chose to honor one particular soldier as his substitute and make him a symbol, as it were, of the fact that the soldiers who perished in battle were dying that others might live.⁵

Christ died that others might live. His death on the cross becomes the death of the one who comes to Him in faith, and in Him the sentence of death for sin is carried out rather than in the one who committed the sin. By dying with Christ through faith the just penalty for sin is carried out, and the believer is justified; that is, acquitted of the guilt of sin. It follows, therefore, that the person so freed of the guilt of his sin ought to abandon the life of sin that was his before his conversion.

Paul wrote to the Romans,

Romans 6:3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

“Walking in newness of life” is the sanctification that follows upon justification.

Sanctification is the consequence of justification and is dependent upon a person being in a right relationship with God.

⁵ Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 1186). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

Paul reminded the Corinthians of their previous sinful condition and then pointed out that they had been sanctified. No one should think that he can maintain the immoral behaviors that were his before he became a Christian and remain a Christian. Those behaviors are to be abandoned. Christ has opened the door to a new walk of life, a walk in sanctification.

Sanctification is that relationship with God which is entered by faith in Christ.

Paul said in his defense before King Agrippa that the Lord told him that He had sent him to the Gentiles,

Acts 26:18 “ ... to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”

Faith, therefore, is required. As the scripture says in Hebrews,

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Sanctification is grounded in the holiness of God.

The sanctification of the believer in Christ is grounded—i.e., has its basis—in the holiness of God. This is why those who are saved must be justified and sanctified.

The process of being made holy through the work of the Holy Spirit ultimately rests upon the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, which the Old Testament anticipates and foreshadows.

There are people who believe that they have to become good before they can come to God. That view is backwards. They come to God (i.e., Christ) first, and then the Holy Spirit endeavors to guide them on the road to becoming holy. Jesus informed the Pharisees of this,

Luke 5:30 The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?” 31 And Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but

those who are sick. 32 “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

God is holy

Ezekiel 39:7 “My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

God is holy. His name is to be treated with veneration and the utmost respect. He tolerates nothing less. He will not allow it to be profaned in the least. Thus He said to Israel.⁶

God demands that His people be holy

1 Peter 1:14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”

What is here declared of God is His absolute purity, majesty and glory.⁷

The story is told of a soldier in the army of Alexander the Great, who was brought before the great world-conqueror for court-martial. When the emperor had listened to the charges and the evidence, he turned to the soldier facing condemnation, and said,

“What is your name?”

“Alexander!” was the reply.

Again the emperor questioned, “What is your name?”

And the second time the soldier answered, “Alexander!”

With a cry of rage, the emperor roared, “I say, what is your name?”

⁶ Ezekiel 36:20-22.

⁷ Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, ἅγιος.

And when the soldier answered for the third time, “Alexander!” the great general angrily replied, “You say your name is Alexander? You are found guilty of your crime as charged, and now you must pay the penalty. Either change your conduct or change your name, for no man can bear the name of Alexander, my name, and do the things that you have done.”⁸

God has said that he does not want his people to have unholy practices that reflect poorly on His holy name.

Sanctification is the will of God for His people.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality...

The *Expositor's Greek Testament*, commenting on this passage, says,

“The gospel of Jesus, unlike some pagan cults, e.g., that of the Cabiri at Thessalonica, did not tolerate, much less foster, licentiousness among its worshippers. At Thessalonica as at Corinth Paul found his converts exposed to the penetrating taint of life in a large seaport.”⁹

The Christians there were nevertheless expected to practice ethical behavior until the coming of Christ. For the Thessalonians, men and women alike, Paul demands chastity. It is not simply a feminine virtue. Contemporary ethics, both in the Roman and Greek world, was often disposed to condone marital unfaithfulness on the part of husbands and to view premarital unchastity with indifference or as a comparatively venial offence, particularly in men. However, biblical doctrine condemns both fornication and adultery whether committed by man or woman. These are behaviors that should be avoided inasmuch as they are paths that lead away from sanctification and into ruin.¹⁰

⁸ Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 1138). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

⁹ Nicoll, W. Robertson, *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. 4, p.p. 33-34.

¹⁰ Ibid., Nicoll, W. Robertson, p. 34.

The Underlying foundation for sanctification

God's election of His people

1 Corinthians 1:2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

Christians are saints; that is, God has called them out of the world and set them apart to be His people. Saints are persons who belong to God, and as such constitute a religious entity—God's people.¹¹

The term “selective service” refers to the system by which men are called by the government for military service. It means to be selected to serve the nation in a war. Not all men who are considered for the military under this system are accepted.

Ancient nations used similar systems to select the soldiers who would fight for their country. It was considered an honor to be chosen and was regarded as a reward for superiority. Among the Romans the high ranking officials such as consuls summoned to the capitol all citizens from the age of seventeen to forty-five capable of bearing arms. They came by tribes. And then they drew lots to determine in what order every tribe should present its soldiers. The first order chose the first four citizens who were judged the most qualified to serve in the war. The six tribunes who commanded the first legion selected one of these four whom they liked best. The tribunes of the second and third legions, likewise, made their choices and he who remained entered into the fourth legion. The following tribes presented their soldiers in the same manner until all the legions were complete. When the soldiers of the legions had been selected, the citizens who had been refused; i.e., not chosen,

¹¹ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 124). New York: United Bible Societies. οἱ ἅγιοι (occurring in the plural as a substantive): persons who belong to God, and as such constitute a religious entity—‘God’s people.’ κλητοῖς ἁγίοις ‘to the ones called to be God’s people’ 1 Cor 1:2.

returned to their respective jobs as civilians, and served their country in other ways.¹²

This is typical of the way men choose.

God's method of election—His choosing of His people—is not as men would choose.

1 Corinthians 1:26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God.

God's method of election is a firm foundation. God chooses through the Gospel of Christ. Paul wrote to the Ephesians,

Ephesians 3:4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.

Christ's atoning death

Hebrews 13:12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

- Jesus suffered to sanctify the people.

God sent His own Son to the Jewish people to inform them that salvation had come to them, but it came in a form that the rulers and rabbis could not accept. So, instead of receiving and honoring the Son,

¹² Elon Foster, *6000 Sermon Illustrations*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1992, p. 224.

the men cast him out of the vineyard—in the words of the parable—and killed him. Jesus was crucified “outside the gate.”¹³ They utterly rejected Him.

Milligan wrote,

To suffer without the gate was the same as to suffer without the camp; for Jerusalem was then the metropolis and camp of Israel. And as the blood of Jesus was taken by Himself into the heavenly Sanctuary to make an atonement for the people, so also, according to the law of the sin-offering, it was necessary that he should bear our sins on his own body without the camp. All therefore who would partake of the benefits of His sacrifice must do so without the gate. They must forsake the camp of Israel, leaving Judaism behind them, and take upon them the reproach of Jesus, if they would be made partakers of the benefits of His death.¹⁴

For Jew and Gentile alike it is the blood of Christ that provides for sanctification—the setting apart unto God.

The grace of God

2 Tim 1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

It is told that when the learned, and wealthy, John Selden was dying he said to Archbishop Usher, “I have surveyed most of the learning that is among the sons of men, and my study is filled with books and manuscripts (he had 8000 volumes in his library) on various subjects. But at present I cannot recollect any passage out of all my books and papers whereon I can rest my soul, save this from the sacred Scriptures:

¹³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 78). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁴ R. Milligan, *New Testament Commentary*, Vol. IX, Epistle to the Hebrews, Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, 1961. P. 378.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.^{15 16}

Thus we should pursue sanctification.

God's fatherly attention

Hebrews 12:9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

The New Jersey Commissioner of Corrections provided the following comment on the “Scared Straight” program and the related television documentary: “Parents want it to be successful. They want to ...overcome sixteen years of neglect at home by letting their kids spend two hours with convicts.”¹⁷

The difference between parents who neglect the discipline of their children and God is that God never abandons the discipline of His sons and daughters nor is He negligent. The writer of Hebrews said,

Hebrews 13:5 Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,”

¹⁵ *New American Standard Bible*: 1995 update. (1995). (Tt 2:11–14). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

¹⁶ Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 529). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

¹⁷ Michael P. Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1990, p. 142.

6 so that we confidently say,

“THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID.

WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?”

Many Christians are brought at times by circumstances to doubt that God is really with them; nevertheless, despite what they might think He is present with them.

Hebrews 12:11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. 12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

There is the story of the woman who while visiting in Switzerland came to a sheepfold. She went in and saw the shepherd seated on the ground with his flock around him. Nearby, on a pile of straw lay a single sheep. The sheep was suffering. When she looked closely she saw that it had a broken leg. Immediately, she felt sympathy for the suffering sheep. She turned to the shepherd and asked what had happened.

He answered sadly, “I broke its leg myself.”

“But why?”

“Of all the sheep in my flock, this one was the most wayward. It would not obey my voice and would not follow when I was leading the flock. On more than one occasion it wandered to the edge of a cliff. And not only was it disobedient itself, but it was leading other sheep astray.”

He continued, “Based on my experience with this kind of sheep, I knew I had no other choice, so I broke its leg. The next day I took it food, but it tried to bite me. So I left it alone for a couple of days. After that I went back and it not only eagerly took the food, but it licked my hand and showed every sign of submission and affection.”

“And now let me add this. When this sheep is well, it will be the model sheep of my entire flock. None of the sheep will hear my voice more quickly nor follow as closely. Instead of leading the others away, it will be an example of devotion and obedience. This experience will bring

about a complete change into the life of this wayward sheep. It will have learned the lesson of obedience through its suffering.”

Frequently, it is the same with human experience.¹⁸

Now what did the Hebrew writer say, “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

Thus is God’s road to sanctification.

The word of God

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades,

But the word of our God stands forever.

Jesus said,

Matthew 7:24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 “The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

There is no better foundation upon which to build your life than upon the word of God. It has endured the test of time.

The true story of the Mutiny on the Bounty has often been retold. One part that deserves retelling was the transformation wrought by one book. Nine mutineers with six native men and twelve native (Tahitian) women put ashore on Pitcairn Island in 1790. One sailor soon began distilling alcohol, and the little colony was plunged into debauchery and vice.

¹⁸ Michael P. Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1990, p. 108.

Ten years later, only one white man survived, surrounded by native women and their children. In an old chest from the *Bounty*, this sailor one day found a Bible. He began to read it and then to teach it to the others. The result was that his own life and ultimately the lives of all those in the colony were changed. Discovered in 1808 by the *USS Topas*, Pitcairn had become a prosperous community with no jail, no whisky, no crime, and no laziness.¹⁹

The Apostle John wrote,

John 17:17 “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

Christ’s sacrifice sanctified, and cleansed the church by the washing of water with the word.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

The need for sanctification

An Englishman had his composure jolted while driving his new Rolls-Rouce through the Alps. As he was making a tight curve at high speed a front spring broke. After limping into the nearest Swiss town, he explained his problem by phone to Rolls-Royce, Ltd., in England. The next day a company representative appeared, replaced the spring, and the Englishman drove away wiser but contented.

When he returned to England, he realized that no bill had come through from Rolls-Royce, so he called to ask them to check their records for “Swiss repair of a broken spring.” A few minutes later, a most correct Rolls manager was on the phone. “There must be some

¹⁹ Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 275). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

mistake, sir. There is no such thing as a broken spring on a Rolls-Royce.”²⁰

Hosea 12:8 And Ephraim said, “Surely I have become rich,
I have found wealth for myself;
In all my labors they will find in me
No iniquity, which would be sin.”

Rolls-Royce could not admit a failure for that would not be good for customer relations. In reality, they had experienced a need to make the repairs. It is also true of the man who cannot admit his own failures that he must eventually make the repairs; otherwise he is embarked upon a road that will lead to a complete breakdown.

The sinfulness of mankind

The population of the Antediluvian world became great and with the increase in population the sin and violence of the people also increased. Their sin became so great that God decided to destroy the earth with all its population. In Genesis Chapter Six the Bible says,

Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 The LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.”

The sinful thoughts and intents of man extended to virtually every person. Only Noah found favor in God’s sight. The Flood unfortunately did not remedy the sinfulness of mankind. Even today man is universally sinful. Paul wrote,

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

²⁰ Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 1266). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

And,

Romans 3:10 as it is written,

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY
HAVE BECOME USELESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

13 “THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,

WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING;”

“THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”;

14 “WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND
BITTERNESS”;

15 “THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,

17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT
KNOWN.”

18 “THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”

And Isaiah wrote,

Isaiah 64:6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all
of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take
us away.

Such sinfulness requires God’s grace in atoning sacrifice and
sanctification.

Slaves to sin

Romans 6:6...our old self was crucified with Him, in order that
our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would

no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

Spartacus was a slave owned by a Roman named Lentulus Batiatus. During the years 73 BC to about 71 BC Spartacus led a revolt of the Roman slaves beginning at the gladiatorial school at Capua and extending to many parts of Italy. Spartacus was a Thracian, and as Plutarch said, "...a man of not only high spirit and bravery, but also in understanding and gentleness superior to his condition." Spartacus issued a call to the slaves of Italy to rise in revolt; soon he had an army of 70,000 men hungering for liberty—and revenge. He taught them to make weapons, and to fight with order and discipline. And fight they did. For years they defeated every Roman army sent against them. Spartacus' army eventually increased to 120,000 at which point he stopped accepting recruits because he could not feed them all.

Finally, the Roman General Crassus came against him with 40,000 legionnaires, and many of the nobility. Spartacus held them off for a year. When Pompey returned to Italy with his legions the Senate ordered him to assist Crassus, but Crassus rejected Pompey's help and proceeded to defeat Spartacus and the slaves in a decisive battle. It is said that Spartacus killed two centurions, and then he was struck down. Unable to rise he continued to fight on his knees until he was killed. Most of his army of slaves perished. Six thousand were crucified along the Appian Way from Capua to Rome. The Romans left them hanging there as Durant says, "...so that all masters might take comfort, and all slaves take heed."

The story of Spartacus illustrates the hopeless condition of the slave. He cannot free himself.

The Bible says in the gospel of Matthew,

Matthew 26:52 "...all those who take up the sword will perish by the sword."

The record of Israel in the Old Testament teaches us that man does not win his freedom by his own strength and abilities. Wars of liberation cannot, and will not end slavery.

John wrote in his gospel,

John 8:31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly

disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” 33 They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free?’” 34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”

The mind of flesh

Romans 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

A mind set on pleasing the flesh is a mind set on the road to ruin and not on the road to sanctification.

The sons of Eli were wicked men who defiled the tabernacle of God. The Bible says of them,

1 Samuel 2:12 Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD 13 and the custom of the priests with the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest’s servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. 14 Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Also, before they burned the fat, the priest’s servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, “Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw.” 16 If the man said to him, “They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire,” then he would say, “No, but you shall give it to me now; and if not, I will take it by force.” 17 Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men despised the offering of the LORD.

To compound their sin they also lay with the women who served at the door of the tent of meeting: i.e., the tabernacle where the Israelites conducted the worship of Jehovah. So great was the sin of the sons of Eli that the Bible says that the Lord desired to put them to death. Moreover, because of the sins of the house of Eli the Lord said,

1 Samuel 3:14 “Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.”

The sons of Eli did not know the Lord, and because of their wicked behavior God said that they shall never receive forgiveness. Thus is the destiny of the mind set on the flesh.

Paul the Apostle advises quite another attitude. He wanted to know the Lord both intellectually and experientially.

Philippians 3:7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

K. S. Wuest wrote,

Paul has forfeited the loss of all things not only that he might appropriate Christ as Saviour and have others see by his life that that was the case, but in order that he may know Him. The words “to know,” are again, “to know by experience.” The tense causes us to translate, “to come to know by experience.” Paul wants to come to know the Lord Jesus in that fulness of experimental knowledge which is only wrought by being like Him.²¹

Release only through Christ

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. 35 “The slave

²¹ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 5, p. 93). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 36 “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

John Newton was born in a district of London, England in 1725. While on a sea voyage the crew of a British naval ship captured him and pressed him into service in the Royal Navy. At one point Newton tried to desert and was punished in front of the crew of 350. Stripped to the waist and tied to the grating, he received a flogging of eight dozen lashes and was reduced to the rank of a common seaman. Later, while his ship was en route to India, he transferred to the Pegasus, a slave ship bound for West Africa. The ship carried goods to Africa and traded them for slaves to be shipped to the colonies in the Caribbean and North America. Newton did not get along with the crew of Pegasus. In 1745 they left him in West Africa with Amos Clowe, a slave dealer. Clowe took Newton to the coast and gave him to his wife, Princess Peye of the Sherbro people. She abused and mistreated Newton just as much as she did her other slaves. Newton later recounted this period as the time he was "once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in West Africa.

Newton says that he sank so low that he lived only on crumbs from her table and on wild yams dug at night. His clothing was reduced to a single shirt which he washed in the ocean.

When he finally escaped, he went to the natives, accepting their base life. It does not seem possible for a civilized man to have sunk so low, but the power of God laid hold on him through a missionary. He became a sea captain; later became a minister. He wrote many hymns sung the world around: “Safely through Another Week,” “Come, My Soul,” “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken,” “How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds,” “One There Is Above All Others.”

In the church of London of which he was the minister, there is still an epitaph which John Newton wrote for himself. It reads: “Sacred to the memory of John Newton, once a libertine and blasphemer and slave of slaves in Africa, but renewed, purified, pardoned, and appointed to preach that Gospel which he had labored to destroy!”^{22 23}

²² Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 896). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Newton.

There is freedom only in Christ.

Growth required

1 Thess. 4:7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

In his defense before the Jewish authorities Stephen spoke of the captivity of the Hebrews in Egypt. He said,

Acts 7:6 "... God spoke to this effect, that his descendants would be aliens in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. 7 " 'and whatever nation to which they will be in bondage I myself will judge,' said God, 'and after that they will come out and serve me in this place.'"

God called the sons of Israel out of Egyptian bondage so that they could serve Him in the land of Canaan. He had called them in sanctification, but they desired impurity. Stephen also said,

Acts 7:39 "Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, 40 saying to Aaron, 'make for us gods who will go before us; for this Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what happened to him.' 41 At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands."

On one occasion the followers of Jesus mentioned to him the fate that had overtaken some who had been killed by Pilate. He told them a parable,

Luke 13:6 And He began telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. 7 "And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?' 8 "And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; 9 and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.'"

God has made it plain that he requires his servants to grow to maturity and to produce fruit.

Matthew 7:17 “So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 “A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

The fitting walk of life

There is the story of two brothers who were once convicted of stealing sheep and, in accordance with the brutal punishment of that day, were branded on their foreheads with the letters S T, which stood for “sheep thief.”

One of the brothers, unable to bear the stigma, fled to a foreign land where he tried to conceal his guilt, but even there people would ask him what the letters on his brow meant. That only aroused his conscience and increased his agony. Thus he wandered from land to land, and at length full of bitterness, he died and was buried in a foreign grave.

But the other brother, who repented of his misdeed, did not leave his home. He said to himself, “I cannot run away from the fact that I stole sheep, and I will remain here until I can win back the respect of my neighbors and myself.”

As the years passed by he established a reputation for respectability and integrity. One day a stranger came to the town and saw the old man with the letters S T branded on his forehead and he asked a native what they signified. After thinking for a time the villager said, “It all happened a long time ago, and I have forgotten the particulars: but I think the letters are an abbreviation for saint.”²⁴

You may think that you can never live as you should, nor could you win back respect for the wrong you may have done, but the Lord can lead you in the way you should walk, regardless of how you may feel.

In the laboratory of the great chemist Faraday a workman accidentally dropped a valuable silver cup into a tank of strong acid. He

²⁴ Clarence E. Macartney, *Macartney's Illustrations*, Abingdon Press New York, Nashville, 1946, p. 304, 305.

and the other workmen stood over the tank mournfully watching as the cup disintegrated. But Faraday, seeing what had happened, poured a chemical into the tank. The reaction then precipitated the silver to the bottom of the tank and they recovered it. They then took the shapeless mass and sent it off to the silversmith to be refashioned into its former likeness.²⁵

As Faraday was the master of recovering lost silver, so is the Lord the Master of recovering lost human souls. He can recover where all appears to be lost. Paul wrote,

Romans 6:19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

²⁵ Ibid., Clarence E. Macartney, p. 304.

Appendix

The Holy Spirit is the Helper, the Paraclete, the Comforter, and the Spirit of Truth. The following is the work of the Holy Spirit as told to the Apostles by the Lord. Some of these apply specifically to the Apostles, but many apply to the disciples in general.

The Holy Spirit,

1. Is given by the Father -
2. Abides with you – and
3. Is in you –

Jesus said to His apostles,

John 14:16 “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.

4. The Father sends the Holy Spirit in the name of the Son –

John 14:26 “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

5. The Holy Spirit teaches all things - Jno. 14:26

6. He brings to remembrance - Jno. 14:26

7. He bears witness of the Son - Jno. 15:26. He glorifies the Son - Jno. 16:14

John 14:26 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me,

8. He convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment - Jno. 16:8

16:8 “And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment;

9. He guides into all truth - Jno. 16:13

10. He speaks not on his own initiative - Jno. 16:13

11. He speaks what He hears - Jno. 16:13

12. He discloses what is to come -

John 16:13 “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

Sanctification is the process of renewal and consecration by which believers are made holy through the work of the Holy Spirit.

In its broad meaning it is the process by which a person is brought into relationship with or attains the likeness of the holy.

It is important to realize that the work of the Holy Spirit is not the same for every Christian but all are expected to work in harmony. See 1 Corinthians 12:28-30. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit does come to dwell with the Christian. Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.