

**Sanctification:
Transformed Into the Image of Christ
Lesson 3**

I. Ritual Sense Used In the New Testament

- a. In a few New Testament passages the Old Testament ritual sense of sanctification reappears. For example we see it in **four** notable passages:
1. The **temple** sanctifying the gold, Matt 23:17-19 *Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?*
 2. The **alter** sanctifies the gift. Matt 23:19 *Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?KJV*
 3. The **blood** of bulls and goats sanctifies the ceremonially unclean Heb 9:13-14 *The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. NIV*
 4. **Food** is sanctified by prayer 1 Tim 4:3-5 *foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. 4 For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, 5 because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. NIV*
- b. So in these passages and others like them, the prevailing meaning is that which we found in the Old Testament. To sanctify is to **consecrate** or set apart.
- c. In John's Gospel, as applied to Jesus, sanctify **cannot** mean to make holy in the ethical sense. As the whole context shows, it means to consecrate for His mission in the world. John 10:36-37 *what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?* NIV
- d. Again in John, we see the **intercessory** prayer of Christ sanctifying Himself in the consecration sense of the word for the benefit of His disciples. John 17:18-19 *As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself,*
- e. The reference to the disciples in His prayer in this passage, has **both** meanings (ritual and ethical): that they may be set apart, (for Jesus sends them, as the Father sends Him); and that they may be made holy in truth. John 17:19 *that they also might be sanctified through the truth. KJV*
- f. Jesus prays for the disciples as ministers, that the Father would set the disciples apart for Himself and to His service; let their call to the apostleship be **ratified** in heaven, so to speak.
- g. Therefore, the effect of sanctification would **qualify** them for the office, imbue them with Christian graces and ministerial gifts, and make them able ministers of the New Testament.
- h. His prayer includes the specific request of the Father to separate them to the **office** and says in effect: "I have called them, they have consented; Father, say Amen to it."
- i. The formal meaning appears again in the writing of Paul in relation to the unbelieving husband who is said to be sanctified **by the wife**, and vice versa. 1 Cor 7:14 *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. KJV*
- j. This sanctification is not moral in character, but a certain separation from the profane and unclean and in a certain sense, a **limited** belonging to God.
- k. The idea of consecration and limited belonging is made plain by the reference to the children. This idea of consecration is the primary reason that today in the church we **dedicate** infants to the Lord. 1 Cor 7:14 *"Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."*
- l. There are other verses in which the formal sense is **less certain** and it is unclear whether the sanctification being referred to is formal or ethical or both. For example:
1. Sanctification by the **Holy Spirit** Rom 15:16, "being sanctified by the Holy Spirit";
 2. Sanctification in **Christ Jesus** 1 Cor 1:2, to "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus";
- m. Another aspect of sanctification is introduced under the doctrine of the Spirit as the **new life** in us. Here we see both a setting apart or consecration, as well as an ethical holiness imbued to us by the work of the Spirit. 1 Peter 1:2, *"in sanctification of the Spirit."*

II. Called to be Saints

- a. This same meaning of consecration, or separation, appears when we study the word **saint**, which is identical to "sanctified one."
- b. By "saint" is not meant the morally **perfect**, but the one who belongs to Christ, just as the sanctified priest and the sanctified offering belonged to Yahweh.
- c. Thus, Paul can salute the disciples at **Corinth** as saints (consecrated ones) and a little later rebuke them as carnal and babes, as those among whom are jealousy and strife, who walk after the manner of men 1 Cor 3:1-3 *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? KJV*
- d. Aside from its use in the Psalms, the word saint is found mainly in the New Testament. Outside the Gospels, where the term "disciples" is used, saint is the common word to designate the followers of Jesus, occurring some **60 times**.
- e. It is clear in the writings of Paul that the phrase "the sanctified" or "those that are sanctified" is used to designate **all believers** without exception. 1Cor 1:2 *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, KJV*
- f. Sanctification is also seen in the expression "the inheritance among all them that are sanctified". Here, what is meant is the status acquired by a person through **spiritual birth**. Therefore, sainthood is a birthright, of the Christian believer. Col 1:12 *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: KJV*

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III. The Ethical Sense. –

- a. So far, we have been considering the formal meaning of the word; but the chief interest of Christian thought lies in the ethical idea in which sanctification is considered to be the active deed or **process** by which the life is made holy.
- b. Our first question is: How does the idea of belonging to God become the idea of **transformation** of life and character?
- c. While the ethical sense of the word is not missing from the formal usage, it is clear that the development of the word tends toward the supremacy of the moral and **spiritual** versus the formal, the ritual, the ceremonial, and the national idea of cleansing.
- d. This change in the meaning and use of the word in the NT flows from the **deepening** conception of God. As the thought of God grows more ethical and more spiritual, it molds and changes all other concepts relating to those who belong to Him.
- e. Thus, how we understand what it means to belong to God depends upon the **nature** of the God to whom we belong.
- f. The prophets caught a vision of Yahweh, not merely jealous for His prerogative, not craving the honor of precise and proper ceremonial worship, but exhibiting a gracious love for His people and a **passion** for righteousness. Isa 1:11,16-17 *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. 16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. KJV*
- g. The message of the prophets was: "This now is Yahweh; hear what it means to belong to such a God and to **serve** Him with knowledge". Hos 6:6 *For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. KJV*
- h. This great vision of the prophets revealing God as being primarily interested in the **internal** and spiritual was utterly missed by the Jews of Jesus' day. Matt 23:25-28 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. 26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. 27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. 28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. KJV*

IV. Sonship: The Essence of Belonging to God

- a. Thus, the key dynamic of what it means to belong to God becomes charged with moral meaning. To belong to God, to be His servant, His son, is no mere external matter. It is inward, a matter of heart and spirit, truth and **reality**. John 4:23-24 *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. KJV*
- b. Jesus' teaching as to **sonship** is in point here. The word "sanctification" does not occur in the Synoptic Gospels at all, but the idea of "sonship" with the Jews expressed this same relation of belonging. John 1:12-13 *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. KJV*
- c. For the Jews of that day, **sonship** meant certain obedience on the one hand and a privilege on the other. Jesus declares that belonging to God means **likeness** to Him. Sonship, in other words, is sharing His spirit of loving good will. Matt 5:44-45 *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. KJV*
- d. Sonship with the Father and kinship with Jesus is reserved for those who do God's **will** Mark 3:35 *For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother. KJV*
- e. **Paul** takes up the same thought of sonship in many places, for example: Rom 8:14-16 *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: KJV*
- f. Paul's consistent focus is on the ethical meaning of **belonging** to God as followers of Christ. In this light we read Eph 4:1, "Walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called."
- g. This is Paul's constant and compelling moral appeal: You belong to Christ; live with Him, live unto Him, live **like Him** Col 3:1-4 *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. KJV*

V. Application

- a. Belonging to God is no formal belonging, no external surrender. It is not a legalistic exercise of self-control. It is the yielding of the life in its passions and purposes, in its deepest affections and highest powers, to be ruled by a new spirit.
- b. To what extent are you able to discern between legalistic self-control and the yielding of your inner life to Christ?
- c. To what extent are your passions, purposes, affections and powers yielded to Christ?