

**Sanctification: Transformed into
The Image of Christ
Lesson 12a**

I. Experiential sanctification is a conscious activity on the part of the believer

- a. While it is certainly true that in many cases we have very little to do with the events and circumstances that come into our lives, however, we have everything to do with our **responses** to those events and circumstances.
- b. The basis of our responsibility is rooted in the fact that we consciously choose how we will respond to those events and circumstances. This choosing activity is a function of the **will**.
- c. Thus personal responsibility is bound up in the philosophical notion of the **free will** of man and is a fundamental necessity if man is to be judged as being morally responsible for his own acts. Ezek 18:20 *The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. KJV*
- d. Further, it may be stated that free moral agents only do what they choose to do. Other than those behaviors which are controlled by the autonomic nervous system, or demonic activity, **no one** acts apart from his choosing. Mark 9:20-22 *And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. 21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. 22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: KJV*
- e. For this reason, in the absence of free will there can be no moral responsibility for ones' choices and actions. Further, without free will there would be **no basis** for the awarding of rewards or the judgment of any attitudinal or behavioral deficiency. Rom 14:12 *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. KJV*
- f. That said however, man's free will is not without **limits**. Man may only exercise free will within certain parameters and within certain constraints. For example:
 1. Man may not exercise his free will in such a way as to limit or negate the decrees and purposes of **God**.
 2. Man may not exercise his free will to overcome **higher laws** which govern the created universe.

II. Consciously choosing to submit the will to God constitutes serving God

- a. Israel was in bondage in Egypt for nearly 400 years. When God determined to free them from their bondage it was for the purpose of freeing them to **serve him**. Ex 4:22-23 *And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: 23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: KJV*
- b. Joshua too makes this point of **consciously** choosing to serve God as Israel crosses over Jordan. Josh 24:14-15 *Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. 15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. KJV*
- c. In the first eleven chapters of Romans the doctrine of salvation is laid out, but the practical **application** of this doctrine (ch 12) calls believers to make a conscious choice to serve God. Paul says in effect that if you believe the first 11 chapters then do chapter 12. Rom 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. KJV*
- d. The mere **intention** of the mind / spirit by itself is not sufficient to constitute service to God. The whole person (spirit, soul and body) must act in conformity to the express will of God. This alone is acceptable to Him. 1 Sam 15:13-14 *And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. 14 And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? KJV*
- e. To understand the significance of "**presenting**" our bodies a living sacrifice, we must review certain aspects of the sacrifices of the OT. These sacrifices were presented or set before God at the altar, ready to be offered to him.
 1. This represents our **whole selves** as being offered because under the law the entire bodies of beasts were offered in sacrifice. 1 Cor 6:20 *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. KJV*
 2. The offering was sacrificed by the priest, but presented by the **offerer**, who transferred to God all his right, title, and interest in the sacrifice, by laying his hand on the head of it. We likewise transfer all right, title and interest to Him.
 3. As the sacrifices were **dedicated** to God, so, our bodies are as well. Like Christ, we are at once, temple, priest, and sacrifice. 1 Peter 2:5 *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. KJV*
 4. In the OT there were sacrifices of atonement and sacrifices of **acknowledgment**. Christ, who was once offered to bear our sins, is the only sufficient sacrifice of atonement.
 5. Our persons and **performances**, presented to God through Christ our priest, are as sacrifices of acknowledgment to the honor of God. In view of what He has given to us, the yielding of our lives to Him is merely our reasonable service.
 6. Presenting our bodies denotes a **voluntary act**, done by virtue of the will. It must be a free-will offering. It is a conscious choice that we make.
 7. The presenting of the body to God implies not only the avoiding of the sins that are committed with or against the body, but the using of the body as a **servant** of the soul in the service of God. This suggests a hierarchy within. 1 Cor 9:27 *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. KJV*

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III. Hierarchy and Order

- a. The idea of presenting our whole beings (body, soul and spirit) as a sacrifice suggests that there may be a proper **hierarchy** and order of operation within our person. This theory follows from the philosophical notions of the nature of persons.
- b. According to the three part composition of man **theory**, each part occupies a particular place in the hierarchy of the person.
 1. Our spirit when yielded to the Lord is the **conduit** through which spiritual truth and insight are perceived and known by the person. 1 Cor 2:14-16 *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*
 2. Our soul (immaterial mind) is designed to be yielded to our spirit. The soul comprises the thinking and reasoning functions of the person and is primarily interested in the **preservation** of the self. Rom 8:5-7 *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. KJV*
 3. The soul is subject to the influences of **psychology** but does not receive the things of the spirit. Rom 8:4-8 *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. KJV*
 4. Our body (including the brain) is lowest in the hierarchy. The body is physiological and temporal; therefore possesses significant **limitations**. For example, it may be diseased, fatigued, hungry, weak, or in pain, etc. James 2:26 *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. NIV*
 5. When the body is afflicted by any one of its limitations it may exert significant **physiological** pressure upon the soul and or spirit for relief from its affliction. Ps 107:4-5 *They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. 5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. KJV*
 6. When properly functioning, the spirit always **trumps** the influences of the soul and body. However, since the primary mission of the soul is the preservation of the self, it will usually yield to the physiological information received from the body.
- c. In moment by moment experience, if the whole being is operating according to its proper hierarchical order, the first task for the believer is to consciously **perceive** that a moral/biblical choice needs to be made.
- d. Once recognized as a choice point, the problem remains for the believer to then **distinguish** between that which is flesh and that which is spirit in order to behave in a Christ-like manner.

IV. Distinguishing between flesh and Spirit

- a. This conscious moral choice is dependent upon our recognition of the **distinction** between that which God proscribes and that which is natural to the old nature. Rom 6:19 *I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness NIV*
- b. In order to distinguish between a carnal response and a Christ-like one the believer must have **sensitivity** to the leading of the Holy Spirit through his spirit, as well as enough understanding of Christ-likeness to enable emulation of Him. John 14:26 *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. KJV*
- c. Very often ones conscious awareness of ones own momentary condition as to the dominance of flesh or spirit will be recognizable by the **emotions** and or behavioral inclinations being evoked by the experience. Gal 5:19-21 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, KJV*
- d. Failure to consciously recognize ones own condition in the moment will almost invariably lead one to **default** to a carnal response to any provocation. Gal 5:17 *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. KJV*
- e. Therefore, victorious, mature, Christ-like living can only be achieved by moment by moment vigilance over one's **thoughts** and or ruminations. 2 Cor 10:5 *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; KJV*

V. Application

- a. Experiential sanctifying is not mechanical or magical. It is worked out by God's Spirit in a daily fellowship to which we give ourselves in trust and obedience, receiving His grace with open heart and then living out an obedient life.
- b. It is not negative, I.E. the mere separation from sin; but it is the progressive hallowing of a life that grows constantly in capacity, and in character, into the stature of full manhood as it is in Christ.
- c. From its very nature it is not momentary, but the deed, the privilege and the purpose of a whole life.
- d. To what extent are you conscious of God's sanctifying purpose moment by moment and day by day?
- e. To what extent do you observe your own maturation into the stature of full manhood as it is in Christ?