

Sanctification of the Spirit

***“Elect according to
the foreknowledge
of God the Father,
through
sanctification of
the Spirit, unto
obedience and
sprinkling of the
blood of Jesus
Christ.”
—I Peter 1:2***

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, THE

Apostle Peter speaks of those who have been called out of the world during the present Gospel Age by our loving Heavenly Father. This special class of Christians are being developed as New Creatures in Christ Jesus by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit of Truth.

They are now prospective members of the body of Christ, and the apostle addresses them as the ‘elect according to the foreknowledge of God.’ “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you [for us, *Marginal Translation*], Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”—vss. 3-5

THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD

In his letter to the church at Rome, the Apostle Paul wrote of the wonderful wisdom and foreknowledge of our loving Heavenly Father. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."—Rom. 8:29,30

If we desire to be among those who have been elected and are in harmony with the arrangements of God's foreknowledge, we will need to become copies of God's dear Son. It has been divinely predestinated, or foreknown, that only those who have been called and justified may be counted among the brethren of the firstborn class. The number of individuals that have been called to this special class has been established by God in advance, and they were given the opportunity to meet his foreknown conditions and be faithful to him in their calling.

We are encouraged to be conformed to the image of God's Son. Paul, who was a chosen and special servant of the Father, acknowledged the importance of growing in the likeness of our Lord. When writing to the brethren at Corinth, he said, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 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."—I Cor. 9:26,27

SETTING APART

Sanctification means to be set apart for God and to the work of his service in the Truth. Our part is the consecration of ourselves to do his will and points to a life of total dedication to our loving Heavenly Father. It is a commitment of all our time, strength, and means to his purpose, and the giving up of our own will and accepting his will. The act of consecration indicates the true expression and desire of our heart to be sanctified and set apart.

From the time this first important step toward sanctification is taken, God begins to work in us. Paul speaks of our consecration as the working out of God's will in our lives. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."—Phil. 2:12,13

In our featured scripture, Peter spoke of God's part of our consecration vow as a 'sanctification of the Spirit.' This means that our Heavenly Father works in us to bring about our sanctification through the influence of his Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: . . . for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:15-17) The Master also prayed to his Heavenly Father on behalf of his faithful body of followers, saying, "Sanctify them through thy

truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”—John 17:17-19

POWER OF THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the power or influence of God’s mind and thoughts over our consecrated lives, and he does this through his written Word of Truth. The entire Word of God is a work of the Holy Spirit, and its influence in our lives is the sanctifying work. It is the power of his Word of Truth that is working in us, and by which we are sanctified.

Jesus never was a sinner, and therefore sanctification cannot mean a turning from sin to righteousness. It is rather a setting apart to God and to the doing of his will. In the Master’s earthly ministry, we are provided with a wonderful example, and we should study, meditate upon, and copy his life’s ministry in our own lives of sanctification.

IT IS WRITTEN OF ME

We have noted that Jesus said, “For their sakes I sanctify myself.” (John 17:19) He was sanctified through the Spirit and by the Word of Truth as we are. Also, his sanctification began at the time of his consecration even as ours does. The Apostle Paul recorded the fact that when Jesus made his consecration he expressed his desire to do all that was written of him. “Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book [Ps. 40:7,8] it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”—Heb. 10:7

It was in carrying out this consecration that our Lord's sanctification was accomplished. It was 'in the volume of the book' that he found the complete expression of God's will for him. The Father's will was that he should lay down his life in sacrifice for his church and for the whole world. Thus his sanctification was for the sake of his church, because it led him to sacrifice his life for them. The making of our calling and election sure depends upon our being conformed to his image. We are guided by the same Word of Truth that revealed the Heavenly Father's will to him, and it has the same meaning for us.

UNTO OBEDIENCE

In our featured scripture, the Apostle Peter wrote, 'through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience.' He thus indicates that obedience to the Divine will is a basic principle through which our sanctification is accomplished. It was because of Jesus' obedience to his Heavenly Father that he said, "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30) He had the same purpose as the Father, and a desire to do his will.

Fullness of sanctification was what the Master wanted to see developed in his followers. To this end, he prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (chap. 17:21) It is absolute obedience to the Divine will that makes us 'one' with the Heavenly Father even as Jesus was at one with him. This is the exacting condition upon which we may hope to be among the elect of God.

THE PERFECT EXAMPLE

The only perfect example of a sanctified life that we have to guide us is that of Jesus. Even the great Apostle Paul admonished us to follow him only to the extent that he followed the Master. The will of God that is expressed through his Word is the same for us as it was for Jesus, and we are to be conformed to his image. It is important that we look to him and be guided by the perfect example of his wholly sanctified life.

Jesus possessed a perfectly balanced character. He was patient, longsuffering, gentle and kind. At the same time, he was resolute and firm in his stand for truth and righteousness. These are all godlike characteristics and will abound in every sanctified life. In themselves, they are not necessarily evidences of sanctification, because sanctification is much more than righteous elements of character. When God created our first parents, he implanted in them his image, and despite six thousand years of a downward trend from original holiness there are some in whom traces of the original likeness of God may still be found.

In Jesus' life, there was not a single trace of imperfection or sin to mar the beauty. In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Hebrew brethren, he wrote concerning Jesus, "Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. 7:26) Because of this, Jesus answered Philip when he asked to see the Father, saying, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

(John 14:9) The Father's character was fully displayed in the life of his beloved Son.

In addition to our Lord's righteous character, his sanctification was a setting apart to carry out the Divine will with respect to his Father's plan of salvation for the sin-sick and dying human family. This phase of his sanctification required much more than living a righteous life. The Father's will for Jesus was that he must die as man's Redeemer but, in the laying down of his life, he was to be a servant, and share with God in respect to various details of his ultimate plan and purpose of salvation. Jesus was to lay the foundation for the Gospel church by the selection and training of the apostles. He was to bear witness to the Truth amidst the crooked and perverse generation of his day. It was by his faithful preaching of unpopular truths and exposing popular errors that he incurred the enmity of the religious rulers of his day, an enmity that finally resulted in his death.

PLANTED IN HIS LIKENESS

Our sanctification calls for the same kind of service that was rendered by our Lord Jesus. Like the Master, we too are called upon to lay down our lives in sacrifice. God's will for us in this respect is identical to what it was for the Master. Paul speaks to this, saying, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom. 6:5) In thus laying down our lives in sacrifice, we too may serve the brethren. Jesus served the brethren of his day, and we may serve one another by building one another up in our most holy faith.

We are also commissioned by the Holy Spirit of God to bear witness to the Truth, as a necessary part of our sanctified life. This is not a matter which our Heavenly Father has left optional with us, nor is it relatively unimportant. If our consecration to do God's will is from the heart, then every expression of his will should be considered as a command which leaves us no alternative but to obey. If we are truly emptied of self, and the influence of his Holy Spirit is not obstructed in our lives, we will delight in every phase of the Divine will even as Jesus did.

FORETOLD SUFFERINGS

In our featured scripture, Peter's reference to sanctification of the Spirit is the main theme of his epistle. In the opening chapter, he wrote to the scattered brethren, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (I Pet. 1:11) He makes it clear that the church participates in those foretold sufferings, as well as in the promised glory. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."—chap. 4:12,13

In this manner, sanctification of the Spirit means the same for us as it did for Jesus. For him it meant suffering and death, and then the promised glory to follow. These two objectives of sanctification are addressed in our text, 'Unto obedience and the

sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.’ We are first sanctified unto obedience, and that sanctification through the Word of Truth leads to the death of the flesh.

BLOOD OF SPRINKLING

In connection with our subject “Sanctification of the Spirit” the Apostle Peter includes the important point that it is unto a ‘sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.’ Our standing with the Heavenly Father during the present Gospel Age of acceptable sacrifice, is only by virtue of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. There is also to be a future work of sprinkling the blood, and we are now being sanctified or set apart for that service. Paul addressed this in his letter to the Hebrew brethren, when he said, “To Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”—Heb. 12:24

All of the body members of the Christ—those who suffer and die with him—will share in that grand work of Christ’s future kingdom. “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” (II Cor. 5:18) The apostle spoke earlier of these, saying, “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”—chap. 3:6

MEDIATORSHIP

Part of the ministry of the covenant was one of sacrifice, and it is this phase of the ministry in which the truly sanctified followers of the Master participate while they lay down their lives in

sacrifice to God. However, there is a future ministry of glory that follows the work of sacrifice. That will be at the inauguration of the New Covenant for the blessing of all the families of the earth. This glorious work was typified by the mediating of the Law Covenant by Moses and, in connection with that mediatorial work, there was a sprinkling of blood. Paul explained, "When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people."—Heb. 9:19

EARTHEN VESSELS

In this type, there is an illustration of the manner in which those followers of Christ who are being sanctified during this Gospel Age will participate in the future work of sprinkling the blood of Jesus Christ. Part of the blood which Moses obtained from slaying the oxen was poured upon the sacrificial altar. This shows the manner in which our sacrifice is made acceptable to God. The other half of the same blood was sprinkled on the book, and all the people, which served to seal the Law Covenant.

The basins in which Moses poured the blood were typical of the faithful members of Christ's sacrificial body, those who are now being sanctified unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. The typical vessels had no blood of their own, but had to be filled with the blood of the oxen which Moses slew. This represents the life that we now have by faith in Christ and his blood. It is only in his blood that we can attain life. We add nothing to the merit of his sacrifice.

MANKIND'S SALVATION

When our sanctification work has been completed, it will lead to full harmony with God and to absolute oneness with him and with Jesus. We will become the agency by which the merit of Christ's blood will flow out to the people under the administration of Christ's future kingdom. Concerning the Christ class the Prophet Isaiah foretold, "Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages."—Isa. 49:8

God will use his sanctified people who are being called during this Gospel Age—Jesus and his faithful church—as the instruments for establishing the New Covenant for the blessing of the human family. The ultimate objective of our being sanctified and our being set apart is not merely for the service of God now, but more particularly for the glorious service of the kingdom of Christ.

God's purpose through the Christ class is the blessing of all, and we strive to meet the foreordained qualification of the elect to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son.

There is but one way in which this can be done, and that is by being emptied of self and being filled with the Holy Spirit of God. This cannot be accomplished in a moment, but is the work of a lifetime. If we are yielding to the influences of the Spirit, we should daily find ourselves rejoicing more and more in the will of God, even though this may mean our loss of earthly friendships and desires. As earthly interests are set aside, our heavenly joys increase,

and that is the joy that has been set before us. It furnishes inspiration to continue faithfully in the narrow way of sacrifice, and we are assured that if we endure to the end we will share Christ's glory in his kingdom. Together with him we will have the grand privilege of imparting the blessings of life to all the willing and obedient of mankind. ■