

The Sanctified Life

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

—Colossians 3:1,2

THE WORD OF GOD, AS

contained in the Bible, is the source from which true believers derive their strength. It commends itself by providing direction, hope, peace and understanding to all who are spiritually enlightened and apply its precepts in their lives. The Apostle Paul, describing the power of the Bible, asserts:

“All Scripture, divinely inspired, is indeed profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for that discipline which is in righteousness; so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work.”—II Tim. 3:16,17, *The Emphatic Diaglott*

Although the Bible has a generally elevating influence upon all who carefully read its pages, it is primarily designed to benefit the “man of God.” It is especially for those who receive its teachings and implications to the intent that they yield their own will, and instead seek the Heavenly Father’s will in

all of their affairs. It is for this reason that we also read, “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.”—I Cor. 2:14

Those who fully appreciate the importance of studying God’s word are engaged in the process of being changed from earthly-mindedness to spiritual-mindedness, so that their lives can more nearly reflect the Christlike character. Such individuals have accepted the present invitation to become disciples of Christ through self-denial and sacrifice. Furthermore, they find their acceptance to God manifested by an increasing ability, as Paul instructed, to “be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Rom. 12:2

DEFINING SANCTIFICATION

The Apostle Paul makes these two very succinct statements concerning sanctification: “This is the will of God, even your sanctification,” and “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit.” (I Thess. 4:3; II Thess. 2:13) In these two verses, we are told that sanctification has to do with the “will of God,” our salvation, and is closely connected with the work of the Holy Spirit. The word translated “sanctification” in these and other New Testament texts is the Greek word *hagiasmos*. According to Greek lexicons, *hagiasmos* is variously defined as: “purification,” “consecration,” and “holiness.”—See *Holman Bible Dictionary* and *Thayer’s Greek Definitions*

SANCTIFICATION OF AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

From the Levites, the priestly family of Aaron and his sons was chosen for a holy service. Similarly, the consecration of the Levites who assisted the priests is noted, even though they were not permitted to enter the Tabernacle and view the holy vessels in the sanctuary. (Lev. 8:14-33; Num. 8:6-19; 18:1-3) In looking at Old Testament scriptures regarding Israel's under-priests, some of the ceremonies and functions were closely identified with the high priest. Israel's high priest pointed forward to Christ Jesus, whereas the under-priests represented spirit begotten New Creatures whose course is to be directed by the great "High Priest of our profession."—Heb. 3:1

The attire which was to be worn by the under-priests is described as follows. "For Aaron's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach: And they shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute for ever unto him and his seed after him."—Exod. 28:40-43

God was very specific in giving instructions to Moses concerning what the priests should wear as

they fulfilled their offices. Holiness, or sanctification, with regard to their services was not optional, and any failure to follow God's instructions exactly as given would result in their death. Thus, a sense of awe would be engendered for the great privilege of serving God as they ministered in holy affairs.

GOSPEL AGE SANCTIFICATION

Consecrated followers of Christ can glean important lessons from studying the manner in which natural Israel's under-priests fulfilled their various duties. The status of spirit-begotten believers is described as follows. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (I Pet. 2:9) Before attaining this new standing, however, the individual believer had a part in his own sanctification. He had to first recognize his undone condition. In being drawn by the word of God, he learned there was a way to have access to the Heavenly Father through Jesus. Upon hearing the terms of discipleship as self-denial and cross-bearing, if such a one makes a full consecration to do God's will and is spirit-begotten, he has indeed sanctified himself to that extent. (Matt. 16:24) God's sanctification of the believer then would be to direct his course and set him apart for service to the intent that if faithful, ultimately, he would be united in kingdom honors with Christ Jesus to bless the world of mankind.

As under-priests, the church is sanctified by the Truth. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," Jesus prayed. (John 17:17) The

sanctification given by God is a process that is directly related to the believer's study of and feeding upon scriptural principles contained in the Bible. There the standards of holy, righteous conduct are set before the Christian's mind. Obedience to its teachings will separate the believer more and more from the spirit of the world, will purify his mind, and will promote increased spirituality. The Holy Spirit is used by the Heavenly Father to accomplish the work of sanctification in each of his children. Not only does it enable the believer to comprehend the Truth, but it strengthens his desire to focus upon heavenly things, and to lead a life of righteousness and self-denial. This is essential towards overcoming the influence of the world, the flesh and the Adversary. The power of the Holy Spirit enables the Christian "both to will and to do" of God's good pleasure.—Phil. 2:13

ADMONITIONS FROM PAUL

In many of his epistles, the Apostle Paul gives specific exhortations to believers in terms of practical guideposts for sanctified living, both within the brotherhood as well as when interacting with others in the world at large. Let us consider the following godly counsel. "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." (Rom. 12:9-12) Practical lessons in spiritual character development may be attained by internalizing the comments

enumerated in the foregoing verses of Scripture, and then applying their principles in our daily walk as we strive to please God.

LOVE WITHOUT DISSIMULATION

We should have this quality welling up in our hearts so there is no falsehood in our love towards one another. We are not to show love superficially, but rather there should be a heartfelt desire to serve each of the Lord's dear ones as we come in contact with them, whether in our home ecclesias, or elsewhere. This quality reflects Godlikeness in our beings because "God is love." (I John 4:8) His genuine manifestation which comes to us through his Holy Spirit should lead us to appreciate the privilege we have of bestowing that same quality on one another.

Peter wrote, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." (I Pet. 1:22) In the words of Jesus, the spirit of this requirement is expressed as follows: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you. ... By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."—John 13:34,35

ABHOR EVIL

"The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (II Tim. 2:19) This matter of abhorring that which is evil implies that we will not seek merely to avoid doing things that are wrong. Rather, we must additionally have such a hatred for unrighteousness that we will not bring ourselves,

as far as we are able, into contact with any form of sin or impurity.

The more we see and learn of God's plan of righteousness and visualize the high standard which is required for life on any plane, the greater should be our endeavor to distance ourselves from any repugnant kind of activity or circumstance where the spirit of the world is manifested. As we focus upon blessings which we receive and the instructions from fellowship with our brethren, we should be stimulated to exercise greater vigilance in our lives, so that we will continue to further cultivate in our heart those graces which are pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

CLEAVE TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD

This implies becoming affixed to whatever represents divine principles and righteousness. We recall that a Moabite woman, Ruth, was so impressed with the God and the religion and influence of her mother-in-law, Naomi, that she desired to cleave to her and cling to her. "Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."—Ruth 1:16,17

We also note this New Testament exhortation: "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." (Phil. 4:9) Let us always cleave to the principles of righteousness we glean from studying God's word.

BE KINDLY AFFECTIONED

We should have those attitudes and thoughts for our brethren which would be helpful towards their spiritual advancement. Without the development of selfless and compassionate love, none of us can be acceptable to God. “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”—I Pet. 3:8

In his epistle to the church at Corinth, Paul makes several references to the love which we are to manifest. In some instances, he speaks about certain negatives, or traits which we should avoid such as evil surmising, envy, or becoming easily provoked. On the positive side he commends such things we would expect in terms of love welling in our hearts—bearing all things, hoping all things, and believing all things. Although there is some overlapping, the sum of all graces is love, and we must develop this attribute to the fullest possible extent.—I Cor. 13:4-7

PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER

If we have not yet attained this important quality, it might take us some period of time to develop such a spirit, because it goes against the fallen human nature, which tends to put self-interests first. Individually, we are seeking to make our calling and election sure. Nevertheless, because we recognize that the body is made up of many members, it should be our desire that the spirit of unselfishness and humility is fostered within us, so that we can genuinely take pleasure in seeing the spiritual growth, advancement and prosperity of others even if we ourselves may falter along one line or another.—Phil. 2:3; I Pet. 5:5

NOT SLOTHFUL

This thought should address all the affairs of life in which we are engaged, both from a temporal and more importantly from a spiritual standpoint. We should do all things as unto the Lord. (Col. 3:23) There will be responsibilities which involve family obligations, those of the ecclesia, and also individual opportunities for service to the Lord's cause in one way or another. The glorified Lord warns us against slothfulness: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."—Rev. 3:15,16

Each one of us who has received God's Holy Spirit must demonstrate that we are not taking our privilege of discipleship for granted. We should conduct ourselves in a manner that manifests diligent effort in making our calling and election sure. Especially with regard to spiritual concerns, we must be sure that there is no lukewarmness about us, but rather that we direct our energy and efforts as fully as possible in the service of our Heavenly Father.

FERVENT IN SPIRIT

The Apostle Paul was eminently qualified to write about the kind of fervor and zeal of which the Lord would approve. We might concede that conditions today are somewhat different than they were when he was interacting with the Early Church. Nevertheless, the spirit which made him labor to such an extraordinary degree is worthy of reflection. "Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more;

in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.”—II Cor. 11:22-30

If we believe we are doing the very best that we possibly can, and after considering the foregoing passage, we might reevaluate ourselves to determine whether we can do something even further to demonstrate to the Lord our appreciation for the privilege of discipleship.

REJOICING IN HOPE

As we engage in conversation with others not of our fellowship, a frequent inquiry posed is, “What is this world coming to?” From the news media and the tales of trouble on every hand, how is it possible really to rejoice without the hope that a better time is not merely a visionary wish, but a reality promised in the word of God? More than this, we have the assurance that if we are faithful

in carrying out our covenant of sacrifice, we soon will have the privilege of sharing with our beloved Head and Redeemer, as well as with all the faithful saints in the body of Christ, the ministry of reconciliation and of eradicating the evil which has endured during this long night of sin and sorrow.—Ps. 30:5

If we could not take this hope with us as we walk from day to day, then we, too, would be filled with discouragement. Where, other than the Bible and in God's wonderful plan of the ages, is there any expression of positive, eternal change that will be wrought as a result of Christ's kingdom? May we be inspired by the following passage of Scripture. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." —Phil. 4:4

PATIENT IN TRIBULATION

The Apostle Paul has a remarkable way of organizing his thoughts. It is as though he shows us opposite kinds of experiences that come to us as Christians, and how to attain the kind of balance that is necessary for us to live holy, sanctified lives. One of the great lessons that we have learned is that according to the flesh we are not exempt from some of the experiences that afflict the world of mankind, whether they be physical, mental or otherwise. (John 16:33; II Cor. 12:9,10) We too, taste the effects of sin even though we have a new standing by having been buried through baptism into the death of Christ, and have arisen with newness of life. (Rom. 6:3,4) It is because we realize that patience is one of the fruits and graces of the spirit, that we are enabled, by the Lord's grace and help,

to endure some of the adversities and afflictions that are permitted to come upon us.

This word “tribulation” is derived from the Latin word *tribulum*, which refers to a machine that was used for cleaning wheat, and for removing the husks, or chaff, away from it. We can thus see that it is for our good to have tribulation because it enables us to remove the dross of impurities that thus the gold might be refined. When we have this kind of perspective, therefore, we can put the proper focus on these testings that are permitted to come upon us. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [Greek: trial or proof]: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”—James 1:12

INSTANT IN PRAYER

Who that draws near to the Lord in prayer with a contrite heart, in sorrow, has not been strengthened and had his spirits lifted? Our Heavenly Father wishes us to be instant in prayer, to come to him frequently, to be persistent in prayer, because he wants to give us of his good pleasure, according to his will. May we never lose the desire to approach our Heavenly Father, no matter what failings or shortcomings we may have experienced along our pilgrim way. Let us remember, too, that our prayers should always express thankfulness.—Ps. 91:1-4; James 1:17; I Thess. 5:18

Our Heavenly Father is gracious, merciful, kind, loving and benevolent. “This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he

hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” (I John 5:14,15) The interesting thing about our petitions is that the Lord expects us to work at them, to seek answers to our prayers, so that if we are desirous of obtaining wisdom and direction under his guidance in our endeavors, we will receive it. We cannot express thankfulness too often, as well as appreciation for what has been done for us, including the privilege of communion with him, and fellowship with our brethren. Indeed, we have much cause for prayer and meditation with our Heavenly Father.

THE GLORIOUS OUTCOME

God’s will for us involves a complete separation from the world and its spirit. We must not be conformed to this world and its transitory aims or ambitions. Rather, in obedience to divine instructions we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, with the objective of becoming fully prepared to assist our Head, Christ Jesus, in restoring the human family to sonship with our Heavenly Father. Thus, we will prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God, which is the means of our sanctification.

To be fully sanctified means that all things become new. These new things are not new solely in the sense that they are different but rather because they are the things of God. Having heard and accepted the call to enter his service, our present mission is to prepare ourselves to carry out the Heavenly Father’s ultimate design for blessing the human family. Let us, therefore, daily seek to live the sanctified life, and as our opening text states, continue to set our “affection on things above.” ■