

Bryan Station Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT

ESTABLISHED 1786

MISSIONARY

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

Teaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State

Vol. 2

Lexington, Kentucky

June 1971

No. 9

THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

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Demonstheses has well said that knowledge begins with definition. The proper presentation of any Bible doctrine lies largely, and begins with, a correct definition of terms. Much of the false teaching of our day is the result of false definitions of Bible words. This is particularly true of sanctification. If you start with a wrong definition of the word, then the whole discussion will be wrong.

In this connection we need to remember that human dictionaries do not determine, but merely register the meaning of words according to their usage. This explains why Webster says to baptize is to dip or pour or sprinkle water upon a person as a religious rite. He observed different religious groups doing different things and calling it bap-

tism, and so he registered the meaning according to what people were doing. But when he defines the Greek word "baptizo", he limited the definition to dipping or immersing. This was because he saw that the Greeks immersed in baptizing. Webster did not claim to be a Bible scholar; he defined words according to usage.

We are fortunate to have a Bible definition for the word "sanctification". In Exodus 13:2, God told Moses to have Israel sanctify the first-born, both of men and animals; and then in repeating the command in Exodus 13:12, instead of saying "sanctify unto me all the first-born," he is told to "set apart all the first-born." This means that the first-born had become the peculiar and special property of God because the first-born had been spared when the angel of death



Location: 3.3 miles out Bryan Station Road. Right on Briar Hill Road.

- Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
- Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
- Evening Service 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting 7:30 p.m.

Air-Conditioned

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visited the land of Egypt and slew all the first-born of the Egyptians. The first-born among the Israelites was spared because he was sheltered behind the blood of the passover lamb. And for this reason all the first-born ones were "caused to pass over" to God as His own. Wherever you have the word "sanctify" in the Bible, the idea is that of separation and setting apart.

I. INADEQUATE AND ERRONEOUS VIEWS:

1. The idea that sanctification is a merely progressive work of grace in the human soul. This is correct as far as it goes, but it is inadequate as a full definition. It ignores the objective side of sanctification. Sanctification is both subjective and objective. It is something done for us as well as something done in us. I hope to make this plainer later on in the message.

2. The idea that sanctification is a blessing for a select company of believers-- a blessing for a few sample saints. According to this view it is the best Christians-- the most pious and godly who are sanctified.

3. The view that makes sanctification a second work of grace in which sin is eradicated. This makes sanctification come after regeneration and justification-- blessings that may be lost unless one goes on and gets sanctified. This view is refuted by Romans 8:30: "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."

4. The Romanist view that nobody is sanctified or made a saint until after he dies, when the church by a long and tedious process, canonizes a person on the ground of personal merit.

In reply to this error, it is enough to say that in the Bible most of the churches were written to as a body of saints--saints while living in this present world.

II. THE BIBLE TEACHING:

Bear in mind that the words "saint," "sanctuary," "sanctification," "holy," and "holiness" all come from the same root word which means to "set apart," or "to cause to pass over."

The word "sanctify" itself has no moral connotation. The word is used in the Bible of things that have no moral value. The Bible speaks about sanctification of vessels, of the temple, of animals and of a mountain. In Exodus 19:23 we find that Mount Sinai was sanctified. The mount was separated from all other places and set apart as the place where God gave the law to Moses. No thought of any internal change in soil or minerals of the mountain.

In Jeremiah 1:5 we read that Jeremiah was sanctified before he was born. This could not refer to eradication of any sinful nature, for it was before Jeremiah actually existed. In the purpose of God, before he was born, Jeremiah was chosen to be a prophet and set apart for that work.

In John 10:36 we find that God the Father sanctified Jesus Christ. If sanctification means the eradication of a sinful nature then Christ was sinful until he was sanctified. Perish such a thought! The Father separated Christ from all others and set Him apart to be the Saviour.

In John 17:19 we find that Christ sanctified Himself, that is He set Himself apart to redeem sinners. No thought of any inward change in His nature.

III. SANCTIFICATION BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12).

1. This is objective and positional sanctification. It expresses what the believer is by virtue of the blood of Christ. This is imputed holiness, for Christ is our holiness. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. 1:30-31).

2. This aspect of sanctification is eternal. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). In Christ the believer is eternally perfect or holy. God looks at the believer through the blood of Christ.

3. This aspect of sanctification is absolute, which means, that it cannot be improved upon. If Christ is our holiness we are as holy as He is. This is not personal but proxy holiness.

IV. SANCTIFICATION BY THE HOLY 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: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied" (I Peter 1:2). "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (II Thess. 2:13).

1. This is internal in which the believer is separated from the world by the new birth.

2. It is experiential--a subjective experience. It is the beginning of the work of grace in the human heart. It is not a second blessing, but the very first blessing. A Methodist Bishop was asked if he had ever received the second blessing. He replied, "No, I have had the first and the third and many since, but I skipped the second because it has made such fools of many of our people. Who would think of our religion being limited to two blessings?"

V. SANCTIFICATION BY THE WORD: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

1. This is practical and personal sanctification. The word of God has a sanctifying or separating influence in the lives of the saved. "The word will keep us from sin,

or sin will keep us from the word." As one feeds on the word of God he will be more and more weaned from the world. One cannot be in love with the Word and with the world at the same time. Said one woman to another: "I would give all the world to know the Bible like you do." Said the other in reply: "That is exactly what it cost me. I could not love the world and the Bible too."

2. Sanctification by the word is progressive. One makes progress in personal holiness by feeding on the word of God. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another; in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). Viewing sin as a disease, regeneration is the crisis of the disease, and practical sanctification is the period of convalescence.

VI. CONCLUSION: Every person who is saved is also sanctified. One is sanctified when he trusts Christ. All saved people are saints--they are holy in Christ. And by feeding on the word, they make progress in personal and practical holiness.