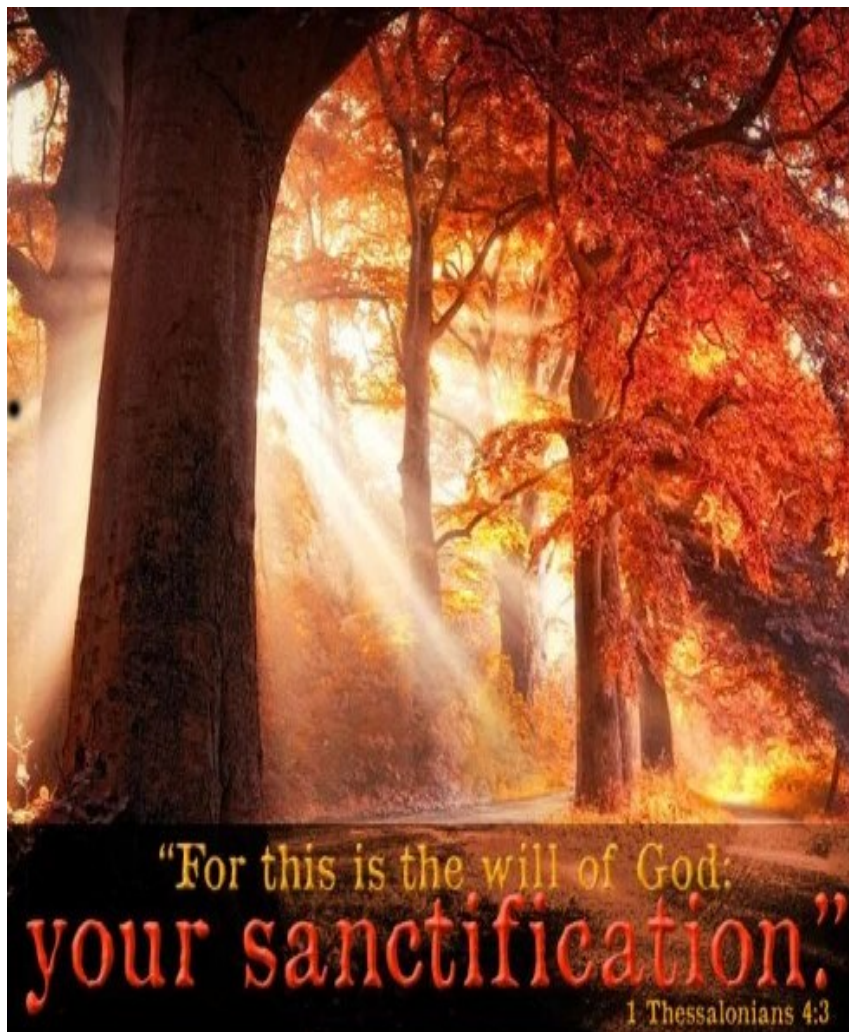


Sanctification Book 1

Putting Together the Pieces of Sanctification



Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Vistoso Community Church

Sermon Series

Putting Together the Pieces
of Sanctification

**For you know what instructions we gave you
by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's
will that you should be sanctified. . .**

I Thessalonians 4:2-3

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the
NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1992 edition).

First Edition
November 2018



Putting Together the Pieces of Sanctification

Why a series of sermons on sanctification? I had a number of motivations. First, if the external call on the Christian is to bear witness to the person and work of Christ, then the internal call is to become progressively more like Him—to be sanctified.

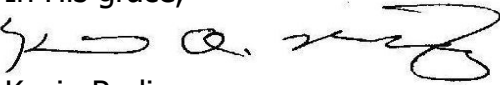
Second, it is important that we are absolutely clear on one aspect of grace. Those who understand that God's gift of salvation is a provision of His grace, apart from any other response than faith in the person and work of Christ, often find others contending that grace has become a license for a sloppy Christian Life. This series of booklets will address head-on such a false understanding of grace—for there is no higher calling in terms of personal holiness than the Christian Way of Life. Equally important, there is no possible way to live the Christian Life apart from the ongoing provision of God's grace.

Finally, we study sanctification to appreciate the wonderfully comprehensive nature of the plan and provision of God. For we have the tendency to study such things as

the call to abide in Christ, our position in Christ, the Spirit-filled life, and any number of other aspects of the Christian Life as if they were subjects to be dissected and learned independently of one another. I would like to suggest that the call of Jesus to His disciples to "*abide in Him,*" the guidance from Paul to "*redeem the time,*" and to "*walk worthy of the calling to which we have been called,*" and many, many other aspects of New Testament truth are really all part of the plan and provision of God for His children to become progressively more and more conformed to the image and likeness of Christ. Further, as we become more like Christ we are able to manifest His life to a lost and desperately needy world.

Truly, there is no limit to what God can do for His glory through a people who steadfastly appropriate what He has provided. To that end, I trust you might find this series of booklets helpful in *putting together the pieces* of God's call to sanctification.

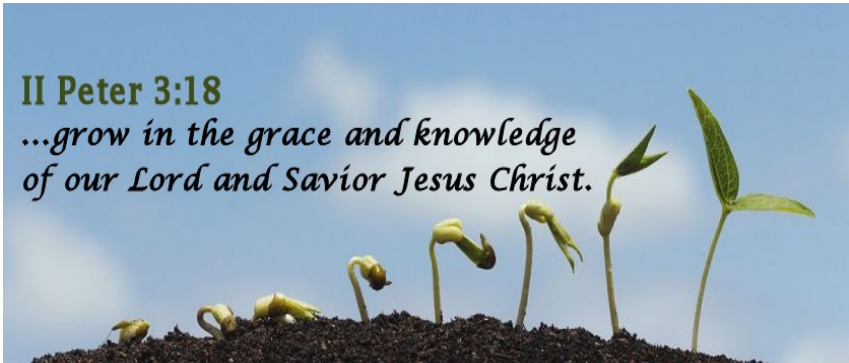
In His grace,



Kevin Redig

II Peter 3:18

*...grow in the grace and knowledge
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*



Volume 1: The What and Why of Sanctification

Introduction

The text from which we are going to launch our study is as simple and direct as any you will find in the Word of God:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification. . .

I Thessalonians 4:3

Let me begin by giving you a few things to pique your interest regarding our subject matter. First, hold up this verse of Scripture and examine it from every angle. Add to it the context in which it is found, and you will discover that there is not one bit of wiggle room! The word translated ***your*** is a plural pronoun and refers to the Church, the local body of Christ to whom it is addressed—every last single one of them. Furthermore, this very same idea of sanctification is mentioned in virtually every single letter to a church in the New Testament. It is not for a spiritual elite, it is not for those called to a particular ministry, it applies to all the varied members of the body of Christ. The brand new *babe in Christ* and the believer who has been walking with the Lord for decades both function under the same clearly-declared will of God—His desire for the sanctification of those who are His. No time outs, no vacations, no coasting! For this is the will of God for every child of God—sanctification!

Second, in order to understand the call to sanctification, we are going to have to pay very close attention to words and their shades of meaning. For example, if we collect words within our English Bibles like sanctification, holiness,

consecrated, and saint, we are going to want to know the definition of each and how they differ from each other. However, if we go to the Greek text which stands behind our English New Testaments, we are going to learn that these words are translated from words like *hagiosmos*, *hagiadzo*, and *hagios*. If you tried to pronounce them you should have noted they sound similar and by observation you should be able to see that they all have the same root. I am sharing this with you so that you will be able to see for yourself that the very different English words *sanctification* and *holiness*, have basically the same root in Greek.

Let me show you this right from our text. In I Thessalonians 4:3 we are introduced to sanctification as the will of God, and then down in Verse 7 we see that:

God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

The word translated sanctification in Verse 3 and the one translated holiness in Verse 7 are exactly the same Greek word. Furthermore, the words translated *saint* and *consecrated* are also very closely-related words. The point is that, although quite different in form in English, these words are actually very closely related. So when we talk about sanctification, holiness, and consecration, we are talking about things that are all part of the same concept.

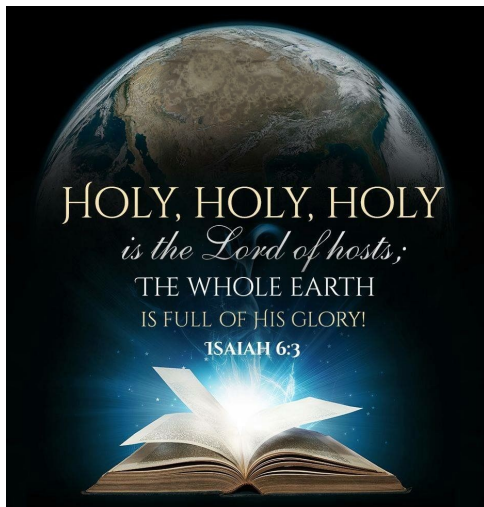
Thirdly, these words that are translated so differently in English share the idea of being *set apart, to separate from and dedicate for special use, to be pure*. And, of course, when God tells us that it is His will for us to be sanctified, He has in mind that we would be *set apart unto Him*—for His use, purposes, and glory!

Finally, consider for a moment the *set-apartness* of God. In Isaiah 6 we read:

I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him were seraphs. . . and they were calling to one another: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory."

Isaiah 6:1-3

Not only do we see the exalted nature of the Lord in His throne-room, but did you catch the word used by the seraphs to describe God? Holy! Now that we know what it means, we understand that they were crying out regarding the *set-apart from all else* nature of the Lord Almighty! He is the Creator, all else is the created. He stands alone and there is no one else like Him!



Let me ask you a question. Should we be the least bit surprised that this kind of set-apart God would desire to have a set-apart people? Of course He would! In fact, could it be any other way? I trust this has been enough of an introduction to the topic of sanctification to whet your appetite for more. As you can see, there is going to be a great deal of depth as well as breadth to this subject. So, let's begin to break it down into greater detail.

The Concept of Sanctification

Let's begin with a definition of sanctification:

*It is God's will that we be set apart unto Him—
in terms of purity, in terms of priority, and
in terms of exclusivity—and saints by virtue of
our position and condition!*

The underlying idea of sanctification is to be set apart. When it applies to God's people, we can find strong scriptural support for being set apart in terms of purity (the absence of sin and worldly influence), priority (the things of God take first place in our lives), and exclusivity (we are set apart unto Him and thus all that we do comes under His purview and lordship). Part, if not all, of this definition is contained within the English words sanctified, sanctification, saint, holy, and consecrated. Of course we have seen this in our theme passage (I Thessalonians 4:3-7), where it is used three times, but let me show you some other examples.

**"Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy,
for I am holy, for I am the Lord your God. And you
shall keep My statutes, and perform them:
I am the Lord who sanctifies you."** Leviticus 20:7-8

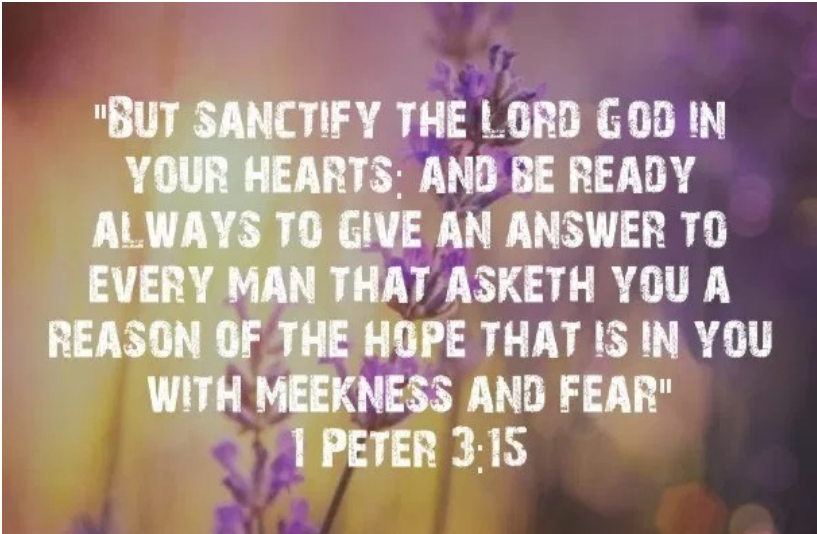
At this point you won't be surprised to learn that *consecrate* and *sanctify* in this passage are the same Hebrew word, and the word translated *holy* is very closely related in form. So two things to note: 1) God's call to be holy (sanctified) is not a New or Old Testament concept, it is a Biblical concept. 2) Furthermore, in both the Old and New Testaments, which means in both Hebrew and Greek, the words translated holy, sanctify, and consecrate are very closely related, or, in many cases, the very same word.

Here is another example:

**But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and
always be ready to give a defense to everyone
who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you,
with meekness and fear. . .**

I Peter 3:15

This verse is a good example for two reasons. First, the concept of *to set-apart* is very evident in the above use of the word sanctify. This is the most basic meaning of sanctification, to the point you could readily substitute *set apart* for sanctify in the verse and keep the meaning perfectly intact. A second reason is so that you can see the full scope associated with the concept of sanctification. You and I are not really ready to give a defense of our faith, until we have first *set apart* Christ in our thinking as the one and only answer for the need of lost mankind (priority and exclusivity). If He has not first been *set apart*, then we are not likely to give much of a reasoned or compelling explanation to those who ask!



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1 PETER 3:15**

Positional Versus Experiential Sanctification

We need to understand the issue of our positional versus our experiential sanctification. Those who are identified with Christ, as the result of having trusted in Him for eternal life, do by grace have a certain sanctified position. We can see this in both the opening and closing verses of I Corinthians Chapter 1.

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. . . . But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. . . . I Corinthians 1:2, 30

You see faith in the person and work of Christ causes God to place us *in Christ Jesus*. Thus, we achieve a position, or status, that is apart from personal achievement and, instead, is based solely upon our new and intimate association with Christ. This is the reason why those people in Corinth were said to be *sanctified in Christ Jesus* in both Verses 2 and 30. It follows that, if we are in Christ as the result of having trusted in Him for eternal life, then we too would hold this same sanctified position!

Something to note: We refer to this as *positional* sanctification because it is the status of the believer simply by virtue of his or her identification in Christ. If you are familiar at all with the Book of Corinthians, you know that the Corinthians had a significant problem with carnality within the church. Nonetheless, even the carnal Christians of Corinth were set apart positionally because of their identification with Christ.

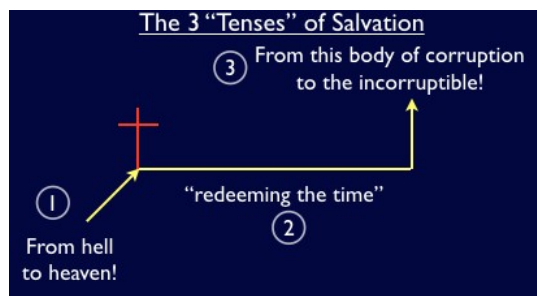
You can get a glimpse of another aspect of sanctification, experiential sanctification, in the I Corinthians passages as well. Notice how in Verse 1-2 those who were said to be *sanctified in Christ Jesus* were also *called to be saints*. In other words, they were called to live consistent with their position in Christ. I am calling this experiential sanctification, which is really a reference to the quality of our walk before the Lord. Our theme passage in I Thessalonians 4:3 is referring to this experiential sanctification, and this is the more typical usage in the New Testament. In short, we are sanctified by virtue of our position in Christ—now act like it! Consider Peter's quote from the Old Testament:

...as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

I Peter 1:15

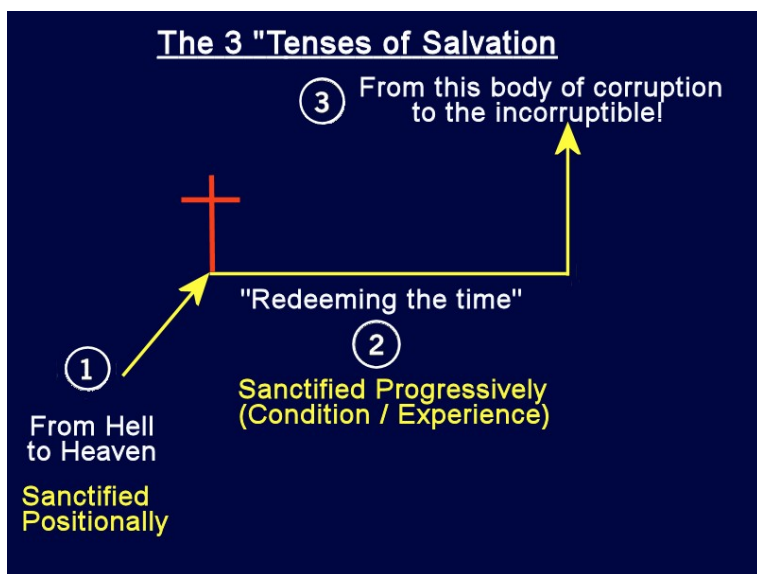
Peter is establishing a call upon the life of the believer to be set apart in every aspect of his or her life. The verb *to be* can also carry the connotation *to become*. Those who have been set apart unto God positionally, by virtue of their identification with Christ, are called to have lives that in experience *become* more and more conformed to Him! Are you starting to get a sense that the call to sanctification, which is God's desire for every person who receives His gift of eternal life, is a very high calling indeed?

It is important that we understand positional and experiential sanctification in terms of the three *tenses* of the Christian Life illustrated in this diagram.



The first tense of our salvation happened in the past at the point of time we placed our faith in the person and work of Christ. At that moment we were *saved* from an eternal destiny in the lake of fire to one in heaven. The third tense of our salvation will occur in the future when we are saved from our current corruptible body to one that is like our Lord's—incorruptible and imperishable.

Now, it is the second tense of our salvation that is the most pertinent to our study of sanctification. This refers to our lives in the present as we seek to *redeem the time* by making the most of the days the Lord has given us on this earth. For this component of our salvation refers to the interval between the time we come to faith in Christ and He calls us home to be with Him.



Let's add the concepts of both positional and experiential sanctification to our diagram above. We are sanctified positionally as part of the first tense of our salvation. For we are *set apart* in Christ for all eternity as part of our

change of destiny. The principle of experiential sanctification aligns perfectly with God's call to *redeem* the days that He has given us. For, as we grow in grace and knowledge, we are also to become progressively more *set apart* unto the Lord. Living lives increasingly pure in God's sight means that we strive to make sure He is the priority and that we see ourselves as exclusively His.

This tension between position and experience was very clear in our recent study of the Book of Ephesians, where Paul develops the believer's position *in Christ* in the first three chapters of the book and then focuses upon the call to *walk worthy* of one's position for the final three chapters. Walking worthy of our position, is very much related to the concept of becoming progressively *set apart* unto God.

To further understand the way in which position and experience co-exist within the life of the believer, we can turn to the family for an illustration. I grew up in a really great home. I had very loving and supportive parents who really pushed their children to develop in areas of character, effort, and attitude. If you would have asked me as a teenager, "Do you feel unconditionally loved?" I would have said, "Absolutely!" The reason was simply my *position* as a child in our family. On the other hand, if you would have asked me as that same teenager, "Do you see yourself as a finished product—developed as your parents intend?" I would have responded, "No—not even close." And, far from bothering me, I would have seen this dichotomy as natural because of the functional nature of the family in which I grew up. In terms of position, I was completely accepted and loved. In terms of experience, I knew I had a long way to go because of the extremely high standards set by my parents.

I see this very same dichotomy in Hebrews 10:14 and it relates directly to our subject of sanctification.

By one sacrifice He (Jesus Christ) has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Made perfect is a reference to our positional sanctification. *Those who are being made holy* refers to experiential sanctification, that is, the ongoing transformation that is to occur in the life of every believer as we become progressively closer to God's ideal—which is for us to become "*holy as He is holy!*"



Progressive Sanctification, Not a Given!

Sanctification is a matter about which you are going to have to turn to the Word, and not man-made systems of theology, in order to arrive at the truth. God's Word makes it clear that a born-again child of God is not automatically going to be fully engaged with God in the process of becoming more like Him. Now, despite what I consider the clear Biblical record, there are those who strongly disagree with this position. In fact, they will go so far as to say that if you are not *set apart* unto the Lord in your daily experience, according to some sort of standard they have developed, then you are not really saved. Hmm!

Let's see what the Scriptures have to say about this.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. . . For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

I Corinthians 3:1, 3

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

Ephesians 4:17

The first thing you will have to do is to decide, in context, the audience being addressed by each of the above passages. I would suggest it is virtually impossible from the text to conclude that Paul is speaking to anyone else but believers in the Church in Corinth and believers in the Church in Ephesus! From that starting point, Paul flat out calls the believers in the Church in Corinth carnal. In Chapter 3, we see the envy and strife that has led to a lack of unity in the fellowship. Scattered throughout the book of I Corinthians there is a great deal more carnality identified. And yet, despite this, Paul never for a moment suggests they aren't saved. Rather, he focuses upon how, as saved people, their behavior is completely at odds with the call to sanctification—to be engaged in the process of having their lives transformed such that they reflect who and what they are in Christ. He is not admonishing them to get saved. He is admonishing them to respond to God's call on their lives to experiential sanctification!

Ephesians 4:17 reinforces this thought. At a minimum, the Church in Ephesus is being warned not to live as the lost—not to imitate their thinking. However, the Greek grammar associated with this verse actually hints that Paul is telling them to stop doing something they are currently doing. In other words, he wants them to stop imitating the lives of the lost and stop thinking like they do!

Do you see the point? Progressive sanctification is not a given. In fact, it is unfortunate, but true, that the Church has a long history of failing to pursue God's will—and by that I mean the process of sanctification.

Now with the above understanding in mind, any number of Scriptures fall right into place for us:

- In I John 2, we are told not to love the world. . . to avoid the cravings of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. To begin with, we are being told not to do these things because it is possible for a believer to do so! And then, with an understanding of God's call to experiential sanctification clearly in mind, our response should be, "Well of course!" For to love the world would be to make it a priority rather than God above. To get caught up in such cravings, lust, and pride would completely compromise the *set apart* nature of the life to which we have been called.
- In James 4 we are told that the love of the world is hatred toward God. Well, of course, one simply cannot be set apart unto God and love the world at the same time. If you are caught up with the world, the call to sanctification has gone by the wayside. As Jesus pointed out, they cannot co-exist:

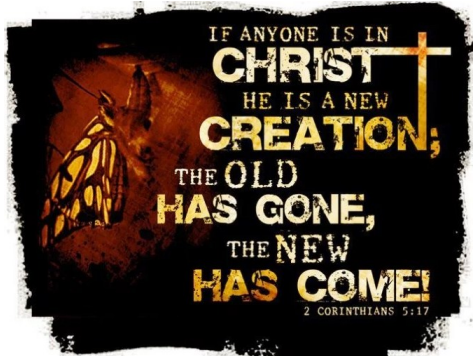
"You cannot serve both God and mammon."

Matthew 6:24

The New Testament, in particular, is filled with cautionary guidance for the Church. The writers of the epistles to the churches of the New Testament are either trying to warn the churches to whom they ministered about avoiding a potential pitfall or calling them to repent of a pit into which they have already fallen. That's because there is nothing automatic about the Christian Life, including

fulfilling God's call to live set-apart lives. The message is that, unless we are fully engaged, we are going backwards. And please note, I am not for a moment suggesting this set apart life depends upon us, or that God has not adequately provided the means for us to accomplish all to which we are called. I am simply stating the reality of the situation is this:

- Although we are new creations in Christ, we have this new life in a dead man's body and our flesh is constantly seeking to regain control.
- We live in a fallen world over which Satan holds sway, which, although it cannot reclaim a born-again child of God as its own, it can certainly nullify the purpose for which God has allowed us to remain on this earth by compromising our growth and witness.

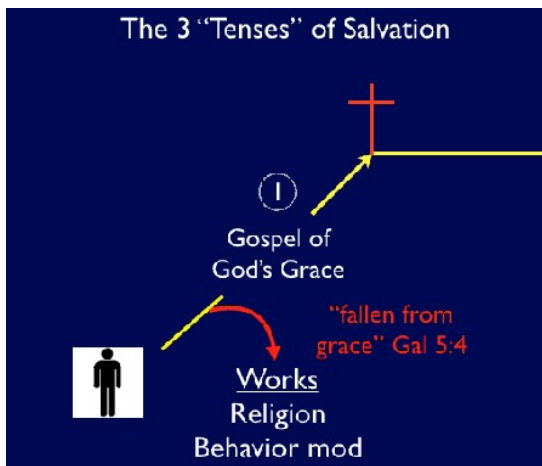


The potential for failure is real! We must be on our guard, fully informed, and looking to the Lord for His provision that our walk would become ever more worthy in His sight.

Bring Grace Forward

As a practical consideration, it is essential to bring the Grace of God forward into the Christian Life. Let me make a surprising statement: you will find everything from resistance to outright antagonism to the grace of God at every point of the Christian Life. This is very evident in the life of the early Church as recorded in the book of Acts, and it is equally evident in our day.

You will find resistance as early as the entry point into the plan of God through faith in the person and work of Christ. Under grace, God does the work of salvation and we receive the benefit of His work by faith—by believing in who Christ is and what He accomplished on the cross for us. As suggested by Galatians 5:4, it is possible to fall



from this grace, where *fall* carries the connotation of *swerving off course*. We have lost our way whenever we add works to the means by which a lost person is saved. These works can take the form of religion, legalism, or some kind of behavioral

modification (usually forsaking some sin or *shaping up* one's behavior in one way or another). Let me show you how completely discordant it is to add the works of man to the plan of God.

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.

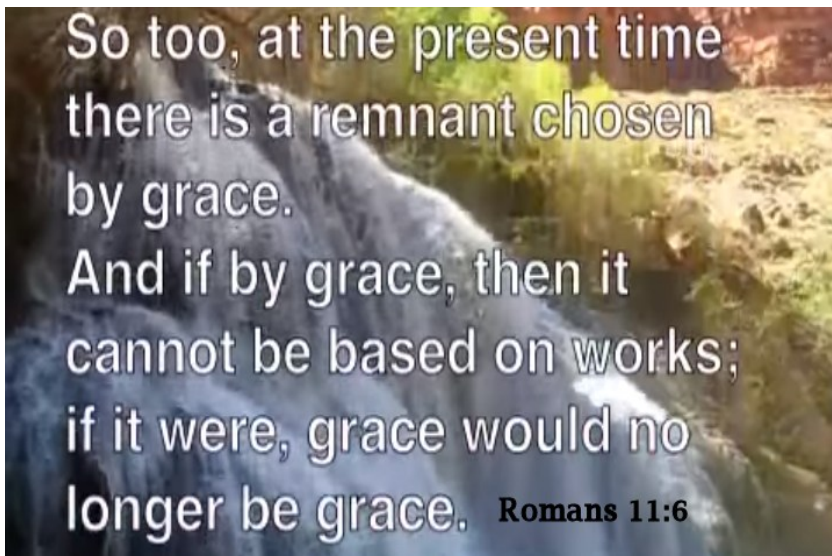
Romans 9:30-32

Israel has the Mosaic Law, the Temple, and the Word of God. Yet, it is the Gentiles who have attained a righteousness that is acceptable to God. How could that be?

Because the Jews sought to do it by works, while the Gentiles (some of them) were willing to receive it by faith.

We can add to our understanding of salvation by realizing that grace and works are antithetical to each other, in fact, they are not compatible! If you have one, you cannot simultaneously have another.

So too at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.
Romans 11:5-6



So when the Scriptures say, in Ephesians 2: "*By grace are you saved, through faith,*" it should be absolutely no surprise to us to read a few words later, "*not by works. . .*" In fact, this is the Biblically-consistent position!

Since the Gospel that saves lost mankind comes to us via the grace of God, it is essential that we stand firm in resisting the adding of any works on the part of man, lest

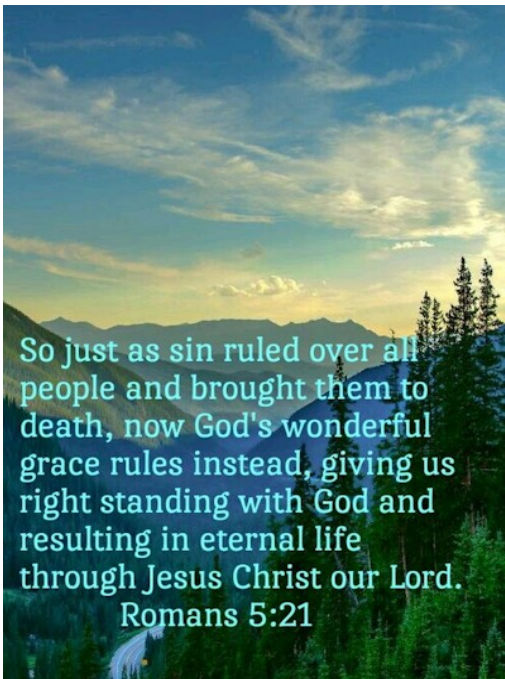
grace cease to be grace. For if, by our additions, we remove grace, we are no longer holding out the offer of salvation.

If, however, you hold firmly to a grace Gospel, this is the kind of thing you are going to hear in the world: "Grace is too easy, its cheap, we need to be more responsible and do our share!" To begin with, grace is most certainly not

cheap, it cost Christ dearly! Further, in the plan of God it is grace that brings eternal life:

**. . .grace might
reign through
righteousness
to bring eternal life
through Jesus
Christ our Lord.**

Romans 5:21



So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:21

And this very same Scripture makes clear that the alternative is law, which is sin and death. Having tasted the righteousness that is from God by faith in Christ, I have

absolutely no desire to return to the *law of sin and death*, and would like to see as many others as possible liberated from their enslavement to a works-based false salvation. Now, it is equally important for us to bring *forward* the concept of grace to our understanding of progressive sanctification. Bringing it forward is coming to the realization that the grace of God is every

bit as essential to bringing about transformation in our lives as it was to saving us from hell to heaven. In short, progressive sanctification will not happen in our lives unless the Lord accomplishes it! And, once again, this position will come under attack. There are many voices that will say such things as: "Salvation is by grace, but sanctification is your responsibility. Too much grace leads to laziness. You need to pull your weight in the Christian Life."

I tell you plainly, to succumb to such voices is to make a colossal mistake and, once again, to detract from grace!

There might be a certain sense to this from a purely human perspective, but God's ways are not man's ways! Let's start with the short version:

May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.

I Thessalonians 4:23-24

Did you notice who is going to sanctify us through and through? Who is the faithful One who is going to accomplish a blameless life? This is the work of the Lord, while ours is to appropriate what He provides.

Now let's dissect this a bit more carefully. God's will for every one of us is to be sanctified *in time*. He wants each of us to set apart our lives unto Him in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity. How does this happen? I am suggesting that God, in grace, must supply the means. Take the example of the Apostle Paul. His life is dedicated to the Lord, he is completely caught up in evangelism, church planting, preaching, and writing Scripture. And then He comes up against a physical infirmity that is

keeping him from doing all that he would like to for the Lord. He prays for healing—and what kind of answer does he get from the Lord?

"My grace is sufficient for you. . ."

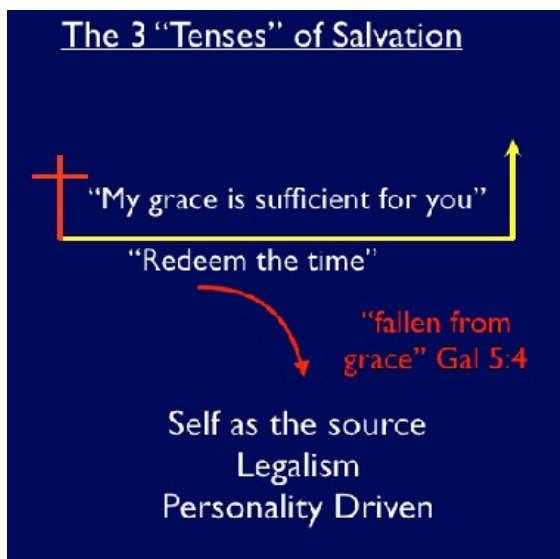
Then he is told why it must be this way:

". . .for My power is made perfect in weakness."

II Corinthians 12:9

Paul didn't need a return of his strength in order to accomplish what God wanted of him. All he needed was the grace of God. And, when the grace of God accomplishes the work of sanctification in our lives, He gets the glory—and that's the way He works.

Now, what are the alternatives to bringing the grace of God *forward* into our walk as Christians? How can we *swerve off course* from grace? Let me suggest a couple of ways. First, by listening to the voices of those who say that sanctification is our responsibility. This is to turn from the provision of God and attempt to improve ourselves by our own strength. You and I will find that strength far too weak and far too inconsistent to accomplish the set-apart life that God desires. Then, there is the option of legalism—some system of do's and don'ts that you think you can accomplish salvation.



Legalism may be able to conform the outward man, but it can make absolutely no change to the inner man.

Finally, watch out for the highly motivated and disciplined individual who in essence says, "You need to be just like me—bending your life to your will by force of personality." These people can be very hard on those around them. But there is a great deal of difference between sanctification accomplished by a hard-charging personality, and the super-natural set-apartness that is accomplished by the *still small voice* of the Holy Spirit! (I Kings 19:11-12)

In concluding this introduction to sanctification, let me leave you with one final thought to ponder. There is a world of difference between an ordinary person and a saved person: one has a destiny in hell, the other in heaven; one is a new creation in Christ and the other is dead in trespasses and sin; one has eternal life and the other remains an object of God's wrath. So too, there is a world of difference between an ordinary Christian and a sanctified Christian. By a sanctified Christian I mean one who is not only positionally set apart in Christ but one who is day-by-day and even moment-by-moment appropriating what God has provided to live a life set-apart unto the Lord. The set apartness would be characterized by a pure life, one in which God occupies the first position, and one in which the life lived has been put at God's disposal for His use.

This is indeed a most unusual life, but as we have seen, it is God's will for each and every one of us. And, when you think about it this way, it should become crystal clear that it is something that only God can accomplish as we day-by-day depend upon Him.

And all God's people said, "Amen!"

Volume II: Sanctification

Cause and Effect

In this section, we are going to take what we learned about sanctification and combine it with a seemingly unrelated portion of Old Testament history. However, God has His reasons for what He has chosen to preserve in the text of Scripture, and I believe what we are going to discover is something that can be very helpful to us in our pursuit of understanding God's call to both personal and corporate sanctification. In fact, as is often the case with the Old Testament, I believe we will find an illustration of what we have been learning that is so powerful that it will bear witness to God's call to sanctification in a way we will never forget. With that introduction, open your Bibles to the Book of Judges.

Setting and Background

First, let's make sure we have the setting and background for the book of Judges firmly in mind. Jacob's family, consisting of 70 men along with women and children, went down to Egypt. Four hundred years later they are a people numbering two million or more—just as God had promised Abraham. God brought the descendants of Jacob out of Egypt by means of His direct intervention—by what the Bible calls:

"...an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment."

Exodus 6:6

But the people were slow to learn to trust in the capability of their God. The journey from Egypt to the land God has promised for the people was relatively short. But, because of their hardness of heart, they spent 40 years

wandering in the wilderness. They needed to learn to trust Him for everything from daily food and water to military victory. Now, 40 years later they have established a firm *toe-hold* in the Land. Joshua, as God's chosen leader, has brought them into the Land. As he steps aside, he has encouraged the people to continue to serve the Lord and to take hold of the Promised Land that God has given them. Now, I want us to pay very close attention to the specific instructions that God has given to all the Israelites.

As to the Kind of Victory

When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess, and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. . .
Deuteronomy 7:1-2

But of the cities of these peoples which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, but you shall utterly destroy them. . . lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the Lord your God.
Deuteronomy 20:16-18

The Timeframe for Victory

Notice that God has given the Israelites a promise that is to be believed.

"But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the Land will become desolate. . . Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the Land."
Exodus 23: 29-30

Cause and Effect

God is very clear on the matter of cause and effect.

"But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your side. They will give you trouble in the Land where you will live. And then I will do to you what I plan to do to them."

Numbers 33:55-56

Understanding Intent

Before connecting this situation of the Israelites to our study of sanctification, let me comment upon a topic on which the Bible, Israel, and Christianity have come under intense attack. Many skeptics in our day have boldly claimed that the God of the Old Testament is both racist and genocidal. Furthermore, the claim is made that the hatred and discord in the Middle East is the fault of the Jews and Christians. This is not our subject, but let me shed some light on the lack of validity of this claim.

First and foremost, who is the source of the above commands? It is clearly God speaking to man. It is certainly reasonable to ask why would He do such a thing, a question which the Bible clearly answers. As far back as Genesis 15 the sins of the Amorites are mentioned. By the time Israel arrives at the borders of the Promised Land, the seven nations mentioned in Deuteronomy Chapter 7, which occupy a fairly narrow and well-defined strip of land, have become grossly evil. They practice child sacrifice on an immense scale along with sexual deviancy that surpasses even our day. God speaks clearly on this:

It is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God is driving them out before you. . .

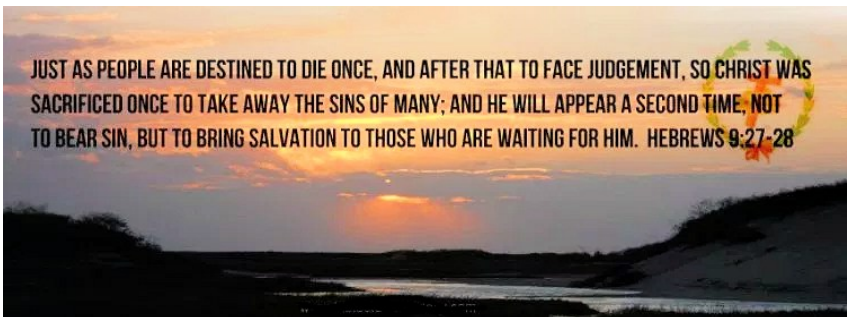
Deuteronomy 9:5

Some have tried to soften God's instructions by stating it is the hyperbole of military victory. On the contrary, I think it more likely that God has chosen to exercise capital punishment on a national scale because of a pattern of sin that has been brewing for 400 years. This isn't a matter of ethnic cleansing or genocide, as the conversion of Rahab and her family make clear. It is a matter of sin! Man may not like God's judgment of sin. He may talk back to Him and condemn Him for His holiness. But that is not going to stop the judgment of God from falling at His appointed time. For:

. . .man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. . .

Hebrews 9:27

We do well to take heed before it is too late.



Recognizing the Result

Now back to our consideration of the situation at the opening of the Book of Judges. We have what I would consider to be a *physical* situation with *spiritual overtones*. By physical, I mean that God has made it clear that Israel is to progressively expand their geographic territory (land holdings), and completely—to the last man and woman—drive out the inhabitants of the land, lest these sinful inhabitants turn them from their God.

Furthermore, consequences for disobedience have been clearly established:

If you do not drive them out, they will be barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. Numbers 33:55

However, there certainly are spiritual overtones as well. First of all, because this is a matter of obedience between God's people and their God. And secondly, we do not yet know what "*barbs in your eyes and thorns in your side*" actually means, but moral and spiritual consequences are very easy to imagine. In other words, it is very common for disobedience in the day-to-day activities to have spiritual consequences!

So how did the Israelites do? First, let me reinforce the good start they had as the result of God's direct and supernatural intervention. Their entry into the Land, starting with the crossing of the Jordan and the fall of Jericho, has given them proof of God's ability to reach out and fulfill His promises. The Israelites experienced a period of great success in conquering a large portion of the Land. Now, as Joshua draws to the end of his life, he carefully leaves Israel with words of promise and warning:

The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as He promised. . ." (So far so good.) **"But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, then you may be sure that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you."**

Joshua 23:9-13

With success comes the need for caution. For God's original plan to cleanse the Land of evil influences has not changed. And then, there is this final word from Joshua to trust in the Lord for He is able to do all that He has promised.

Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.

Joshua 23:14

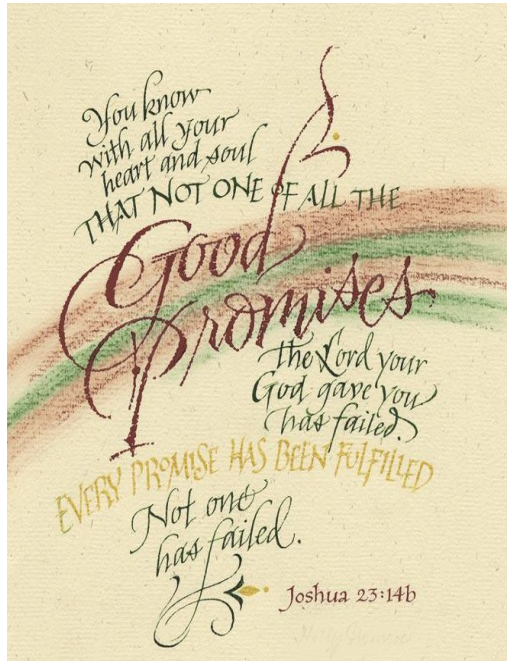
Now, as we enter the Book of Judges, the mantle of leadership has passed, for Joshua has died. (Judges 1:1) Then, as the tribe of Judah responds to the Lord's direction and continues the process of enlarging the territory held by Israel, this is what happened:

When Judah attacked, the Lord gave the Canaanites and Perizzites into their hands and they struck down ten thousand men at Bezek.

Joshua 1:4

As Chapter 1 continues, so do the successes—until we arrive at Verse 19:

The Lord was with the men of Judah. They took possession of the hill country, but they were unable to drive the people from the plains. . .



As the narrative continues, things decline rapidly:

The Benjamites, however, failed to dislodge the Jebusites. . .But Manasseh did not drive out the people of Beth San or Taanack. . .Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites. . .Neither did Zebulun drive out the Canaanites. . .The Amorites confined the Danites to the hill country, not allowing them to come down into the plain.

Judges 1:21-34

We are still in Chapter 1 and already we have gone from an initial setback to failure—tribe by tribe!

What is God's response to these failures? He wastes no time declaring His displeasure and the consequences for their disobedience in the opening verses of Chapter 2.

The Angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your fore-fathers. I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars.' Yet you have disobeyed Me. . . Now therefore I tell you that I will not drive them out before you; they will be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you."

Judges 2:1-3

What an example of the Law of cause and effect. Did God correctly predict what was going to happen?

Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers. . .they followed and worshipped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the Lord to anger. . .In His anger against Israel the Lord handed them over to raiders who plundered them. . .Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them, just as He had sworn to them.

Joshua 2:11-15

Israel has had a lengthy time of success, with ample proof of the Lord's ability to fulfill His promises. With the death of Joshua, the people start well. However, in a very short period of time, just a chapter and a half into the book of Judges, they have gone from partial obedience, to complete disobedience, to experiencing the full force of the Lord's discipline. There is a lesson for us in all of this!

Extracting Lessons

The Book of Judges is part of the canon of Scripture in keeping with the counsels of God, but I must acknowledge that, at times I have wondered why. It has a few moments of obedience in Chapter 1 which are then followed by chapter after chapter depicting the downward physical and spiritual spiral of Israel. The heroes are mostly flawed and, by the end of the book, the situation is so sordid it is difficult to read it. The book closes with:

**In those days Israel
had no king;
everyone did as
he saw fit.**

Judges 21:25

Of all the things God could have chosen to include in His Word, why did He devote the space and depict all the sordid detail in this most discouraging portion of our Scripture?



Let me suggest one reason why the Book of Judges has been preserved as part of God's revelation to us:

The Book of Judges provides a physical analog that thoroughly illustrates the spiritual principle of God's call to sanctification, and the consequences for failing to heed that call!

The Physical Situation

Here is the physical situation:

- Israel had established a position in the Land, and now they were to, tribe by tribe, expand their geographic control of the Land.
- This expansion started with the manifestation of the supernatural, and then, after God had established His faithfulness, moved to what might be called the *daily grind*. The Jews were going to have to fight to expand their territory, one foot at a time. But they had the firm promise from God that He would be with them and they could be victorious.
- The inhabitants of the Land were to be driven out—completely and with no exceptions. God never mentioned try once and then, if you find it difficult going, you can give up and find a way to co-exist.
- Cause and effect has been clearly delineated. The consequences for failure to follow God's instructions had been clearly established beforehand. Unfortunately, by the second chapter of Judges, these consequences are already unfolding. The rest of the book describes continuing cycles of God helping Israel in her distress and then, once the pressure is relieved, Israel reverting to ever-worsening sin.

The Spiritual Analog

Now here is the point we don't want to miss: The physical situation at the time of Judges provides a powerful backdrop for a spiritual analog developed in the New Testament. Here is the *Spiritual Analog* for our day:

We too are to conquer—spiritually speaking—our territory. This enlargement of our spiritual territory is associated with words like sanctification, transformation, being conformed, and being consecrated.

In other words, these passages are a depiction of God's call upon the Christian to enlarge his or her territory—spiritually speaking!

. . .predestined to be conformed to the image and likeness of His Son. . .

Romans 8:29

Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

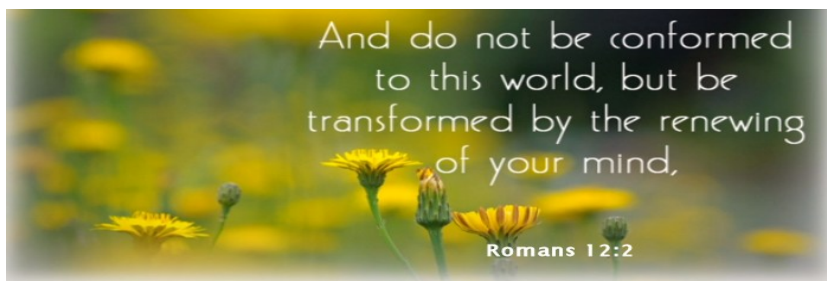
Romans 12:2

You were taught. . .to put off your old self. . .put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:22-24

. . .and have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Colossians 3:10



Compare the Spiritual Dynamic

Now consider carefully the parallels between the Old Testament physical picture and the New Testament spiritual dynamic:

- We too have a supernatural start that leads to a day-to-day walk. For our Christian lives began with a supernatural event—a spiritual birth whereby we became *new creations in Christ*. We may have had a period of initial spiritual success and rapid spiritual growth, which then leads to the daily spiritual grind. But, of course, we always have the promises and presence of the Lord!
- The inhabitants of the Land are still to be completely driven out—no quarter, no accommodation, and no cohabitation! In other words, we are to be in the world, but not of the world.
- The consequences for failure on the part of the Christian are as well known in our day as they were at the time Joshua warned Israel—loss of reward in eternity, the breaking of fellowship with the Lord in time, and discipline in time.

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

Matthew 16:27



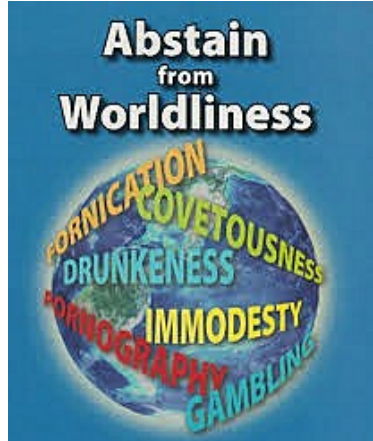
Recognize the Inhabitants

The inhabitants of Canaan were the Amalekites, Ger-gashites, Jebusites, and so on, but, who are the *inhabitants of our land* that must be driven out? Let me suggest three that should readily come to mind:

1. Worldliness!

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father, but from the world.

I John 2:15-17



This is why we are not to co-exist with the *inhabitants of the land*—because you cannot love both God and the world. It is one or the other. Our sanctification requires us to be *set-apart unto God in terms of priority!*

2. Sin!

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Ephesians 5:3

3. Errors in our thinking!

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

II Corinthians 10:5

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. Colossians 2:8

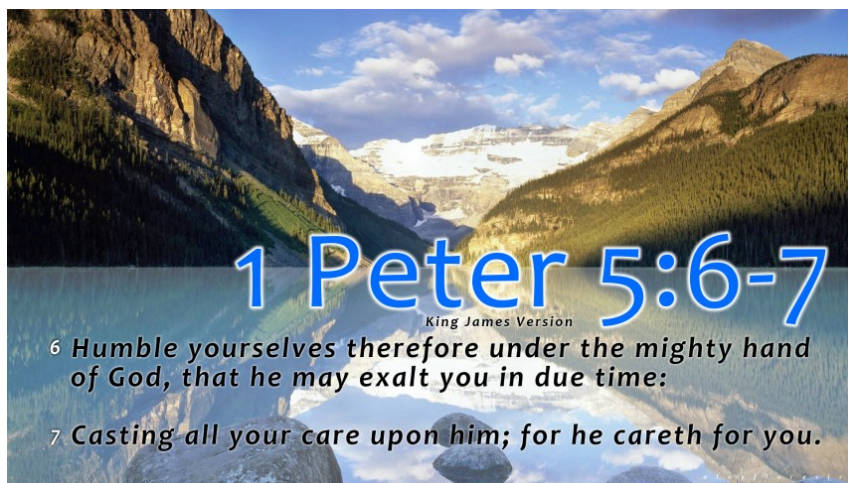
Other Considerations

Let me give you a few additional subtleties to consider:

- The transition from times of great spiritual progress to what I have referred to as the *daily grind* is not the problem. For in the time of Judges, God said He would use the surviving peoples:

". . .to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the Lord. . ." Judges 2:22

In our day, we too will be tested by a variety of trials. They are meant to refine our faith (I Peter 1:5-7) and develop our character (James 1:2-4). You see, it isn't the daily routine of depending upon the faithfulness of the Lord that is the problem, instead the problem is disobedience to the revealed will of God.



- Do not let this illustration we have developed—one of enlarging your territory (spiritually speaking), and driving out the inhabitants of the Land (worldliness, sin and error)—become too grandiose in your thinking. For this isn't talking about the big things in life, but



the little things. This lesson for us involves the day in and day out effort to grow in grace and knowledge by taking in the Word, allowing the Word we come to understand to purify our lives of sin, and to constantly align our thinking with God's thinking as it is revealed to us in His Word and through his Spirit.

- Again, when we talk about *enlarging our spiritual territory and driving out the inhabitants of the Land*, we are not talking about trying harder, making a to-do list, or covering up our shortcomings. The response that God is looking for is much closer to:

God, I see what you are after, I know I cannot do it on my own, teach me to appropriate what you have provided in order to accomplish that to which You have called me!

Summary

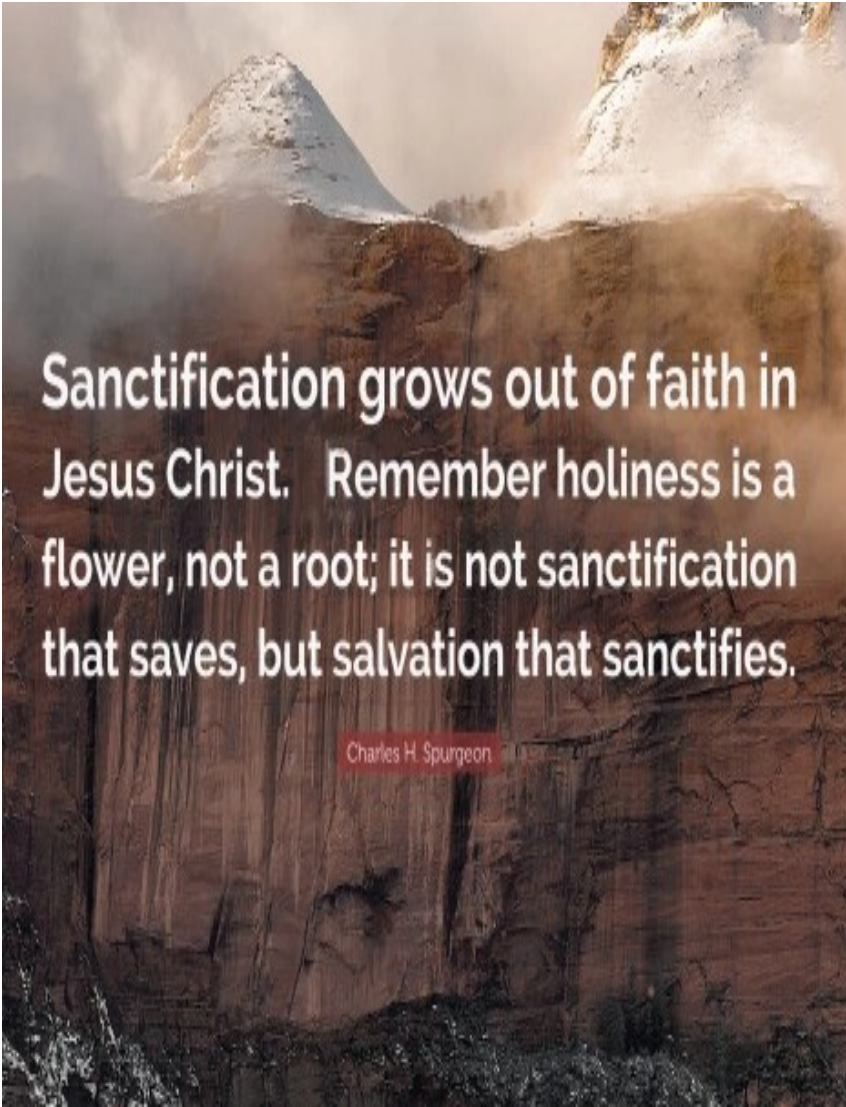
In closing this second section of Book 1 of our study of Sanctification, and our challenging consideration of the context of Judges, I trust you realize what is at stake. For thus far we have learned it is God's will that our lives be set-apart unto Him in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity. God calls us to more and more conform our daily experience as Christians to the image and likeness of Christ.

This calling requires our daily attention to enlarging our territory, spiritually speaking, and constant driving out the inhabitants of our land—which includes anything that would tend to corrupt God's call to sanctification.

Two final very practical considerations:

1. You cannot begin to *enlarge your territory* until you first have an inheritance in the Land—by that I mean unless you are one of God's people. In the language of our study, sanctification is for the saints. You are not a saint—a set-apart one positionally—until you have placed your faith in the person and work of Christ.
2. For those who have trusted in Christ, sanctification is serious business. In the life of every Christian, it is either happening or it is not. There is no auto-pilot, no neutral, in the sanctification process. As Jeremiah pointed out, if you are not going forward, you are going backward! (Jeremiah 7:24)

There is no doubt that the Spirit of God is calling us forward, our responsibility and our calling is to respond!

A dramatic landscape photograph featuring two prominent, snow-capped mountain peaks in the background. The foreground is dominated by a dark, rugged, and rocky cliff face. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and a warm, golden light suggests a sunrise or sunset. The overall mood is majestic and serene.

Sanctification grows out of faith in
Jesus Christ. Remember holiness is a
flower, not a root; it is not sanctification
that saves, but salvation that sanctifies.

Charles H. Spurgeon



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