

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Speaker: Paul Callicott

Who Am I? – The Sanctified Self

NKJV Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.

Introduction

My primary and secondary schools both required bright red jumpers as part of the uniform. Naturally they could be seen from miles away. It made it very easy to determine which school I attended. I remember that when some students had caused problems outside of school we were often summoned to a special assembly after it had been found out. In that assembly the students were informed of the problem, and we were very clearly reminded that when we had on our uniforms, we represented the school. It wasn't simply a case of people knowing which school we went to, but that we were showing what the school's values and expectations were. When we behaved well, people would think it was a good school. If we caused trouble, people would think the worst. As with every school, there was a preferred way for which people outside of the school should see their students.

I was reminded of this when I was considering the subject of the Sanctified Self. It is one of those features of Christianity that has two aspects to it. We are sanctified and we are to work towards sanctified lives. Both are expected and given that we are to be sanctified for God, failure to live up to this has the potential to have a negative effect on those who may be looking at our lives here. But more than this, we will disappoint and sadden the One we are set apart for.

My aim over the next few minutes is to outline this subject and to consider our responses and responsibilities to this important feature of a Christian's walk.

Sanctification – A Definition

Our subject is the Sanctified Self, and a brief look at what the meaning of sanctified is, and how it is covered in the bible, seems a good place to start.

Vine's Bible dictionary states that sanctification is simply 'separation to God.' Another widely used definition is 'to be set apart.' Generally, the Biblical setting-apart of something is most commonly to be set apart for God. There are also links to 'holy' and 'holiness', and it is also tied in with the term 'saint.' These terms are all recognisable and commonly taken up in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, the topic of sanctification was taken up with reference to people and objects. We could think of a number of things to do with the nation of Israel which were set apart for God's purposes. In the New Testament however, it is primarily to do with individuals and more specifically is linked to the believer who has accepted Christ. So, the topic of sanctification is a key teaching of the salvation offered by God. When an individual makes that decision to trust in the saving work of Christ – His death on the cross at Calvary, and subsequent victory of death in being raised from the dead the third day – they undergo numerous changes and transformations in newness of life. This transformation includes being set apart for God's glory, will, and purposes. This is what the Bible tells us. First Corinthians chapter 1, verse 2 states that we are sanctified in

Christ Jesus. First Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 3 tells us that our sanctification is God's will. Second Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 13 tells us that we are sanctified through the Spirit. The whole Godhead is involved in sanctification, and it is the state for every believer.

What does this mean for us? I can declare that I am set apart for God. But how does that translate to me or to you on a day-to-day basis? This question is further complicated by the fact that there is a primary and secondary meaning for us to consider.

Sanctified – God's Primary View

The primary meaning of Sanctification concerns God's view. Following the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, salvation was made available to all. This salvation was such that it provided a holy and righteous God with the necessary sacrifice for all sins ever committed. It means that our sinful nature was condemned and that the price for that had been paid. Jesus fully took upon himself the penalty of sin for us and enabled God to forgive all offences. For any who repent and believe in this wonderful work, all of this is imputed to us. The work is complete, and God requires nothing from the believer for salvation other than the belief in the work of the Son of God. We therefore gain many things from God once we have put our trust in Him. We are made sons of God, we are made righteous, and we are given new life, amongst other things. And one of these things is being sanctified as the following verses show us. Firstly, we have Acts chapter 26 verses 17 and 18:

“I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”

We turn next to First Corinthians chapter 6 and the latter part of verse 11:

‘And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.’

Lastly, we turn to Hebrews chapter 10, considering verses 10 and 14:

‘By [God's] will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ...For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.’

This means that this is a status we are given when we trust in the saving work of the Lord Jesus. We are sanctified for God. Notice in the verses we have just read that they all talk about a result of either the work of the Lord or through our faith. There is no suggestion of a continuing work on our part with these verses. They are statements of fact for the believer because of the work of the Lord Jesus. When God considers that we are sanctified it is not through our own efforts that this is determined, it is because of our trust in the work of the cross of Calvary. Because God views our sanctification in this way it is therefore never changing. The work of the Lord Jesus was complete, finished and perfect. Therefore, our sanctification, being based upon that, can never change.

What a wonderful situation this is for us, and it is something that we should really hold fast. We are never more sanctified than we are today because our status cannot be changed. This is the case as long as the Lord Jesus lives. As He has risen from the dead and now resides at the right hand of the Father in heaven in the power of an endless life, we know that this will also never change.

Every believer can rejoice in this wonderful truth. This is the primary thought of sanctification. We are set apart for God for His glory and can look forward one day to being with Him for all eternity.

Sanctified – Our Secondary View

It is so important that we grasp the primary view of the Sanctified Self because as we come to the secondary view, we can easily fail in our efforts to live as sanctified people in this world. This is not a contradiction to the primary view of sanctification, but a recognition of the reality of our lives here. The expectation is that we grow in our lives to live in full alignment with our status of those sanctified by God. Second Timothy chapter 2 verses 21 to 25 provides us with the practical workings out of this idea:

‘Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from [vessels of dishonour], he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition [to the truth].’

There is therefore an expectation that we are to work towards our status of being sanctified. We cannot just rest and rely upon our status, but we must strive to be recognisable. The term Christian means Christ-like. He is therefore our example. He walked in this world as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Nobody could deny that His life lived up to this. He didn't need to work at it like we do because it is who He is. But His example is there for us, nevertheless. We are to look at removing and shunning those things which are not fitting for someone who is set apart for God. In addition to this we are to use the word of God to help us to be more sanctified in our lives as is spoken of in John 17 verse 17:

‘Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.’

And then in Ephesians chapter 5 verse 26:

‘That He might sanctify and cleanse [the church] with the washing of water by the word.’

The word of God, the Bible, is to be our guide to living a sanctified life. This may seem obvious, but in a world that encourages us to be happy, get what we want, and live our own way, it is important to reiterate this. It is too easy for us to be influenced by the world around us and base our standards on the world's expectations. But we must remember that we are to be set apart for God, therefore it is His standards and expectations which are first and foremost.

The First Epistle of John, chapter 3 verse 2 tells us that we will be made like the Lord Jesus when He is revealed. That is when we will be fully set apart for God. Our aim should always be to minimise that change as much as we can whilst we live our lives here below as those seeking to be sanctified for God now.

Sanctified – Objections and Responsibilities

Having looked at the primary and secondary views of sanctification, we can turn to consider some of the common misconceptions and misunderstandings of the idea of sanctification as well as some responsibilities that such a position brings to us.

Firstly, I will look to a common issue that people may have with this topic. This is the view that because we are sanctified by God, we don't have to worry about what we do and how we live. We don't need to worry about a sanctified life because we already have it guaranteed by God. There is a similar question raised in Romans chapter 6 verse 1 and like verse 2's answer I say, "Certainly not!" Many of the scriptures we have already looked at would point well away from such a view.

Perhaps that is the extreme view of a life lived with disregard to the ways of God. But this extreme view can be applied on a smaller scale. Is there something in our lives that we have aligned ourselves to but is actually against God's expectations for those He has made holy, those He has set apart for Himself?

It is important to look into this because this is a line of thinking that is not in keeping with the teaching of sanctification in the Bible. Living a sanctified life is brought out in scripture and we are expected to do so. There are two scriptures that came to mind to support this. The first is First Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 3:

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

The second is found in First Peter chapter 1 verses 15 and 16.

'But 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."'

As we look in more detail at our lives, we should look firstly at the typical aspects expected in Christian living – how much time do we spend in prayer and reading the Bible? These are things that people who belong to God should be doing every day, as well as regularly meeting with other Christians. But we are apt to talk ourselves into not doing so. We all have busy lives, and this naturally leads to excuses, and they can be genuine issues. But no matter what our situation may be, these things should not be put to the back of our lives to make way for other things. We are set apart for God, and that should be the primary thought when it comes to deciding on our priorities in life.

This leads to another common issue, and that is where our priorities lie in life. What is it that drives us? We live in a world that is telling us to look after number one, but at the same time we should sign up to support the latest causes and issues our planet faces as well as ensuring that our children can be the best they can be, to name but a few.

Now, although first pointing out that these things do not actually complement each other, each one should actually be looked at in light of the knowledge of being a Sanctified Self. If we take the first one of looking after number one, we have to be honest and ask if this is actually in keeping with being sanctified. We go back to its meaning. We are set apart for God. It is for God's glory. We are not set apart for our own leisure or self-help. Our purpose as believers is to bring glory to God. Now it may be that the argument comes in that sometimes we need a bit of 'me time', especially in these days when mental health is at the forefront of conversations. But let us be reminded of those words of the Lord in Matthew chapter 11 verse 28:

'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

And then in verse 30 –

'For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'

It is in giving ourselves over to Him that allows us to gain the strength we need to be at peace, at rest, or at ease. This is because we rely on Him when we do this and look to Him for the strength we need. If we concentrate too much on looking after ourselves there is a danger in relying on our own strength to give us the rest which so many of us crave in life.

If we look at causes and issues concerning our planet, we need to be especially careful in our society today. Many of these causes are actually, at their root, against God and have no consideration of the Gospel. They can also mask the ultimate problem that mankind has, in that they are not right with God and heading for judgement and destruction. Again, with all of these things they should be considered in light of the fact that we are to be sanctified for God. That is what should occupy all of our efforts and time in this life.

The final one in my list of three is that of helping our children be all they can be. I thought it was worth speaking about this because it represents anything where our efforts are put into helping someone else succeed in this life, and our children are the easiest way this can occur. I only bring this up because it is a pertinent point for myself as I have five children. We always want the best for our children, but it is important to consider what the best is. So often we can put all our effort into helping them to succeed in this world and make a way for themselves. But is that the best for them? This world is actually an awful place which will cut and run whenever it can to get ahead. It offers much but delivers little and is full of lies and deceit. The best that we can offer our children is, like us, to be sanctified for God. Can we do that effectively if we are actually putting all our efforts into helping them to succeed in this world?

Having looked at these things I would like to go a little further and perhaps a bit more personal to consider our sanctified lives with regard to the land we live in. What is our view of the law of the land? Often when the issue is about how far we must obey the law of the land we are very quick to point out that we are not to do anything that causes us to go against God's expectations for us. This would suggest then that we are willing to do all of the laws that don't have this problem. But sometimes it seems that the fact that we don't have to do things that God wouldn't want us to do means we don't have to worry about anything at all? But is this actually in keeping with a Sanctified Self? Is God pleased when we scam the system, avoid paying our dues, and break the laws that we find a bit silly or inconvenient?

Let us look at two examples. Firstly, we have the Lord Jesus himself who when on trial it was said that they found no fault in Him. How the accusers would have loved to have some little rules that He might have broken, but they didn't, and they resorted to lies and false witnesses. Jesus is our aim when it comes to being a Sanctified Self and that is the example He has provided for us. But perhaps you may feel that this target is too high when we consider that the Lord Jesus was perfect. So we can look at the next example which is Daniel the prophet. With Daniel they wanted to find fault in him, but they soon realised they could find nothing to charge him with. They therefore made up a new rule that they knew would catch him out, which concerned how he worshipped God.

These are our examples and stand as guides regarding how we should behave. It is not that people will be saved by seeing we never break the law. It is to ensure that our witness about the Lord Jesus is not hindered by our own failure. We are here in this world as those who are sanctified to God and part of that responsibility is that people can find no fault in us when it comes to our being law-abiding citizens.

We have looked at quite a few things that I would suggest are our responsibilities as the Sanctified Self. But a final objection that I will consider is that people sometimes feel that the sanctified life is somehow not compatible with the real world around us. We can feel that responsibilities such as the need to work or deal with our families are more important. Perhaps the idea that we are not all called to full time missionary work or to be a full-time worker for the Lord may suggest to us that

we are exempt from a sanctified life. Even the fact that the world is very immoral can be used as a concern that living in line with the Bible can appear odd, naïve, and even wrong.

But these are assumptions that being sanctified is some special pathway that is earmarked only for a chosen few. This is where the primary meaning for sanctification is important to remember. It is the status for every believer, and therefore we are to live up to it! However, it is important to see that this does not mean that we must aim for some special life. Our everyday ordinary lives can be in line with a Sanctified Self. Think about the Lord Jesus. We know a lot about the last three years of His life. But before then He was the carpenter's son. He lived as an ordinary member of that family. But we know that it was one that was sanctified because the Father declared it to be so at His baptism.

First Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 31 also helps with this in that we are told that whatever we do, we are to do for the glory of God, which is exactly what He wants for those whom He has sanctified. And do not let us be put off by the world's morals or expectations. They are not sanctified for God, and they ultimately will be judged. Our only aim as the Sanctified Self should be to live up to our status as best we can, and to look at how we can please the One who has brought us into this position.

Conclusion – A Final Victory

As I draw to a close, I bring forward one more wonderful thought about sanctification and that is the final victory that we will be part of. Our whole life is a battle to try and live in line with our status of being sanctified. We have good times and bad times in this effort. But there is coming a day when that battle will be over and there will be no difference between our status and our actual performance against it. We will no longer have these sinful bodies and we will not have to strive to be pleasing and set apart for God. The wonderful future that we look forward to is something we should hold on to in our daily battles.

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on Who Am I? – The Sanctified Self, talk number T1341.

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