

Sanctification.

Sanctify means to set apart, make holy, purify or consecrate. Sanctification is a VERY important subject. True holiness is an inward cleansing brought about by the infilling of the Holy Ghost, which separates us and sets us apart from this world of sin. Under the Law, God sanctified the Sabbath day and made it holy, but under grace God has sanctified the believer to make them holy. Today, some folks are like I was when I was growing up. We, rough and tough redneck kids, used to always arm wrestle and tussle with one another and would "strut our stuff" in order to maintain our place in the "pecking order" among our peers. Likewise, many today "strut their stuff" by displaying their "spirituality" in an effort to maintain a very similar position in the "pecking order" among their peers. I am not doing this to feed an ego, make a name for myself, nor to receive recognition or the praises and adoration of men. There was a time when I was as spiritually arrogant as they come. I found myself living behind a facade and throwing rocks at those who I considered heathens because they did not live up to my "standards." As far as I was concerned, it was all of those things that really mattered. After I failed God miserably, but years later found grace and mercy and came back to Him as the prodigal son, I am a lot less eager to get in to all of the "comparing ourselves among ourselves." The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:12, that they who do such are "not wise" (or dumb by implication). Today, I try very hard not to let what others do, say or think have an adverse affect on me. What really matters to me is: "What saith the Word of the Lord?" This ole boy has been humbled. When I came back to God I realized that my calling was not that of a "fruit inspector" after all. And for this reason, I do my very best to avoid discussions and/or confrontations based solely upon any of the outward manifestations of one's spirituality, righteousness or holiness. I am doing what God has called me to do to the very best of my ability. When I meet one who feels that their calling is that of a "fruit inspector" I usually try to stay out of their way because I know fault is just like trouble, when you look for it, you are sure to find it. There is a lost and dying world out there that somebody has got to reach, and I am persuaded that the people out there where I have been are not hungry for a crash course in "standards." They need to know who Jesus REALLY is, and the reason He came to Earth. Then they need to repent, and be baptized by immersion in water in the NAME of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins and then then receive the infilling of the Holy Ghost, evidenced by speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them the utterance. Last, but not least, they need to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and go on to live a of true holiness that is free from sin, self and the entrapments and entanglements of the world ... by the power of the Holy Ghost abiding in them! We MUST walk before God with a PURE HEART, a PURE MIND and a PURE CONSCIENCE! This is my mission. I will leave all of the other stuff to a kind and loving pastor who has a genuine burden, and who is called of God, and pray that the he can help the ones that I may send to him, before the "fruit inspectors" arrive.

Because of false teachings today many settle for a watered down version of Truth which allows, overlooks and even excuses sin in their life. This will never lead to true happiness and peace of mind. It is a life of contradiction and hypocrisy, and that of having to hid behind a religious facade. Here is what I have found the word of God says concerning this important issue of sanctification or holiness:

Leviticus 11:45 "For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

1 Chronicles 16:29 "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before Him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."

Luke 1:74-75 "That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear. In holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life."

2 Corinthians 7:1 "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Ephesians 4:24 "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Hebrews 12:14 "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:"

1 Peter 1:16 "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

2 Peter 3:11 "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness."

In Matthew 5:48 Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The Greek word translated "perfect" means "COMPLETE." How can one be complete if they are not holy? They can't. Sanctification or HOLINESS is something every child of God is expected to attain. Not by our own means because we know that our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). How can one be holy when our righteousness is as filthy rags? We attain true holiness when our "old man" dies and we "put on Christ." Then, it is not a matter of jumping through the hoops and going through the motions with all the formalities, rituals and ceremonies. We become "perfect" (COMPLETE) only in Christ. In Colossians 2:8-10 Paul says, "Beware lest any man spoil (seduce) you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments (fundamental order or principles) of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him (Christ) dwelleth all the FULNESS of the Godhead BODILY. AND YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM..." Folks, we just can't attain true holiness without Jesus (which is the infilling of the Holy Ghost).

Romans 11:16 "For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches."

Romans 12:1 "I Beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

1 Corinthians 3:17 "In any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

Ephesians 1:4 "According as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love:"

Ephesians 5:25-27 "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present to HIMSELF a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Colossians 1:21-22 "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight:"

Colossians 3:12-14 "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

1 Peter 1:15-16 "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

2 Peter 3:11 "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,..."

Revelation 22:11 "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy let him be holy still."

This is a subject that gets kicked around like a soccer ball among some. It seems some never get a handle on it, while others are totally at peace and happy, and still others are miserable because of what they have allowed

themselves to get saddled up with, instead of it coming from their heart. I have been unable to find anywhere in the Bible where it indicates that living for God is a drudgery or a chore. As a matter of fact, I found it to be quite the contrary. The Bible tells us that with joy we shall draw water from the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3). Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (St. John 10:10). The way of the transgressor (not the child or God) is hard (Proverbs 13:15). We are free (St. John 8:36 and 1 Peter 2:16 -- although we are not to use our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness). Why is it then, that many go around looking like they've just lost their best friend? If attitudes are contagious (which they are), is mine worth catching? Now it is a very pitiful situation when someone, who is presenting himself as an ambassador for Christ, has a sour and negative attitude. I'll just tell you, from what I learned in sales, if some of the same people, who claim to be representing Christ, worked for me, I would either fire them or pay them to stay at home, because they would do more damage in the area of "good will" and cost me more in the long run by being out "going through the motions" and calling themselves representing me. You want to know why some churches are virtually "dead in the water"? It is NOT because no one out there is interested in being saved. It is because their presentation of the greatest product in the world (if you will allow me to make that analogy) is so sloppy and poorly done that they wouldn't be able to give it away. Folks, God's gift (the Holy Ghost) is a "treasure in earthen vessels." It is not the plague! Who would want to catch the plague from someone. I sure wouldn't. I would do everything I could to stay away from them. Sometimes when this very thing happens the poor little soul who is responsible takes solace in believing that they were rejected just like Christ was, because the other person was just an evil heathen. Hog wash! Who, in their right mind, wants to go to hell? It is true you can lead the horse to water, but you can't make him drink. However, if you'll just put a little salt in his feed, he will beat you to the watering hole! Too many people are trying to clean the fish before they get him in the boat! That's why they aren't getting the results they should. They're going about it completely backwards, and self appointing themselves as a "fruit inspector" instead of one who helps gather in the harvest. I am totally convinced that when we allow God (through the power of the Holy Ghost) to "do a work in ours or someone else's life," the results will certainly not be superficial. But it is possible to be like a drill sergeant with a bunch of new recruits, and whip folks into shape. A new recruit, even though he doesn't come pre-trained, knows that what he learns may save his life and what he doesn't learn may cost him his life. However, it is the opinion of this ole boy that there is a tremendous difference in being a drill sergeant in the military and a shepherd over the flock of God. The roles and responsibilities are similar in that each is to be a leader and should have the best interest of those under them at heart. As sure as the world is round, there are some drill sergeants who shouldn't be drill sergeants and there are some shepherds who shouldn't be shepherds. Maybe in a few cases they should could even change places and they might be more satisfied.

I want to share just a couple of the many stories that I have lived: Years ago I worked on an oil rig out in the Gulf of Mexico, two weeks out and two weeks in. One hitch out on the rig I gave a Bible study to a man who was a "rough customer"! Actually, all we did was read two chapters every day for two weeks from the Book of Acts (Acts has 28 chapters). This guy was involved in some pretty bad stuff. He had a full beard, long shaggy hair. Before we got finished with the book of Acts he had shaved his beard off, got his hair cut and asked me to throw away about 12 cans of Copenhagen tobacco (without me saying a word at all about any of it)! His dad, a deacon in a big church back home, was evidently a big fish in a small pond and had a lot of influence on this guy. Although he, like myself, was raised up Trinitarian, he told me that he could very plainly "see" the APOSTLES' ONE GOD MONOTHEISTIC DOCTRINE and water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, instead of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and marveled, as I myself did when I "saw" it, that he had never "seen" it before. He was so excited, and couldn't wait to get home. I am sad to report that while he did get great joy from what he learned and "cleaned up his house," he did not receive the Holy Ghost (although he came EXTREMELY close one day as we were praying at the conclusion of one of our sessions). We have already learned in this study that it is possible for people to get excited and have lots of joy, and not be filled with the Holy Ghost. Anyway, I made a special effort to encourage him to stay in the Word of God and on his knees his two weeks in. I was so in hopes he would return the next hitch truly "born again." However, he came back just the opposite. He no

longer wanted to have Bible studies and went back to his wallowing hole. Not only that, he avoided any contact with me. That hurt me so badly that I just don't have the words here to express it. To this day, I do not know what happened to him when he went home that hitch. My "gut" feeling is that he went home with lots of zeal but not the Spirit, and someone was able to "poison his well." There is one thing I know for certain. One does not receive the Holy Ghost (or the revelation of the "ONENESS" of the Godhead in this case) without it having a lasting impact on the rest of their life. I don't know what ever happened to him when our paths parted. If he is alive today, he is either living with the nagging knowledge of knowing the Truth and not acting on it, or serving the Lord in the beauty of holiness. I pray that it is the latter.

Not too long after my mile marker 7 experience I was alone at home one day (my wife and children had gone across town to our restaurant). She still smoked at the time (but has since quit) and a piece of a pack of her cigarettes was sitting on the coffee table. When I saw them, a thought popped into my mind that I could smoke a cigarette and no one would probably ever know it, but as soon as that thought had popped in, it was countered by a thought which said, "Look before you do that, why don't you just go on down to the store and buy the brand you smoked and be done with it because no one MADE you quit." With God as my witness I didn't smoke one then, and by His help, mercy and grace I haven't smoked one since mile marker 7. I don't desire one if I am around someone smoking, and it doesn't make me sick either. It has no effect on me whatsoever, none, notto, zip. God truly delivered me! Now if I was secretly just green with envy every time I was around someone who was smoking, or got to where I could get in the draft so I could get a good whiff, and just hated it because I could not smoke one, would I still qualify to be called "sanctified," I hardly think so. Well, I've just described many (far too many) "so called" born again Christians who are going through the motions of serving God by living up to someone else's convictions, requirements and/or expectations, and not from their heart. That's why their faces are long and their attitude is like sour grapes. They are not serving God in the "true" beauty of holiness and because they love Him, they're just wanting to fit in and be accepted. Our Lord said that where a person's heart is, there would be their treasure also. I am going to just tell you, where a person's treasure is, it is anything but drudgery, bitterness and indifference! Folks, we don't get to heaven by observing carnal laws. Why is it then that many are trying to do just that by being subject to ordinances, (touch not; taste not; handle not; Which are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of man (Colossians 2:20-22)? Does this give us a license to be lawless? God forbid! One thing is certain, the vast majority of people out there where I have been are not looking to fall in behind (and follow) someone who conducts themselves like someone who has just had hemorrhoid surgery (and I'm not making light of people who have had hemorrhoid surgery, but I hope you get my point). Is it possible to be so heavenly minded that we are not any earthly good? I think so, although it would seem that that statement should be an oxymoron, doesn't it?

Sanctification or holiness, is a separation from sin. However, due to the lack of knowledge and understanding and not being sanctified, set apart, living holy and/or possibly because of one's enjoyment in the pleasures of sin for a season, many try to "whitewash" the issue of sin. They toss around scriptures like:

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Romans 3:10 "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."

1 John 1:9 "If we say we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us."

1 John 2:1 (They always skip the first part of this verse, and use the last part) "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" (The first part says, "My little children, these things write it unto you, that ye sin not".....then says "if any man sin, we have an advocate").

It seems that people who quote these real often spend more time trying to justify sin than trying to avoid it.

These are all very true scriptures, and I believe them every one. However, I also know that while God loves the sinner, HE HATES SIN:

Matthew 1:21 "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for he shall save His people FROM THEIR SINS.

St. John 5:14 "Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

St. John 8:11 "She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more,;

St. John 8:34 "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."

Romans 6:1-23 "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. No if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? but God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your member servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

1 Corinthians 15:34 "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame."

Ephesians 4:26-29 "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

James 2:9-10 "But if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

James 4:17 "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him is sin."

1 John 3:4-10 "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin, Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children, let no man deceive you:

he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even and He is righteous. He that commiteth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

1 John 5:1-18 "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His son. He that hath the son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And 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. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

As we can see from the scriptures above it would seem unwise for anyone to try and justify a lifestyle of sin and ungodliness. We just cannot get good enough and we just are not strong enough to live a pure and holy life without the power of the Holy Ghost abiding within. The Holy Ghost working on the inside will produce positive results on the outside, but just because someone looks good outwardly does NOT necessarily mean that they are undefiled on the inside. Jesus made that point clear when He rebuked the Pharisees in Matthew 23:27-28 and said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

When a person receives the Holy Ghost (the Bible way) they will think different, look different, act different, talk different, live different and feel different that they ever did before! It is VERY real and it is for "whosoever will" and "them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord OUR God shall call."

Bobby G. Richardson.