

## Sanctification - John 17

Before I get started, I just need to ask your permission for something really quick. I need to change the oil on my motorcycle. Shouldn't be a problem, right? With my truck I just stick a pan underneath and loosen the oil plug and let it drain. But my motorcycle sits so low to the ground I can't get a regular pan under there. But I realized the Lord's Supper container for the juice will just fit. And I think it will work well. If I promised to clean it up, would it be okay with y'all if I used it to catch the oil from my bike?

Yes? No? Why not? Now, don't worry. I'm only kidding. I have no plans to use this container to catch the oil and the reason I don't is because it is not made for that. It might actually work but I won't do it because we have set aside those Lord's Supper containers for a reason. And the only reason they exist is to serve the Lord's Supper. They have been set aside, set apart, they are different than any other container. We don't use other containers for the Lord's Supper and we don't use these containers for anything else. They have literally been sanctified or made holy to this one use. That is the definition of sanctification or to be made holy. Set aside for God's use.

It is also what God has called us to be and what He expects us to be. We are to be holy or sanctified to His work. Sanctification is a dedication to the service of God and that alone. In the Hebrew the word is *qadosh*. In the Greek it is *hagiazō*. And whether in the Hebrew or whether in the Greek, the words mean an identical thing. *Qadosh*, *hagiazō* mean to be set aside for the use of God. Not for common every day uses but for the purposes of God. It is hallowed. It is consecrated. It is set apart for the purpose and use of God.

That is the common word that you will find in, say, the thirteenth chapter of Exodus; when the Lord says the firstborn of every man and beast is to be sanctified for the Lord [[Exodus 13:1-2](#)]; it is to be set aside for God. In the [twenty-eighth] chapter of the Book of Exodus and the twenty-ninth chapter, all through there you will find that they are sanctifying the sons of Aaron for the priesthood [[Exodus 28:1-29:44](#)]. You will find that they, in rituals, were sanctifying the altar [[Exodus 29:12, 16](#)]. They were sanctifying the tabernacle [[Numbers 7:1](#)]. They were sanctifying the vessels of the temple, of the tabernacle and later the temple [[1 Kings 8:62-63](#)]. That is, they were setting aside these vessels and instruments and accouterments of worship for the purpose of serving God. They belonged to God, not for common use but for God's use. ([True Sanctification – W. A. Criswell Sermon Library](#))

But this morning, I will ask you to turn to the New Testament book of John. It's one of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and then John). And turn to the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter. There is something very special about the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of John. When you turn there in your Bibles, I feel like it almost ought to glow or something. Pretty much all of it is in red, so that tells you something. But what you are reading is not just Jesus talking but Jesus is praying.

On November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1572, **John Knox** was lying on his deathbed and told his wife that the last thing he wanted to hear in this world was **John 17**. He said in a feeble voice to his wife, "*Go, read where I cast my first anchor!*" and she didn't need any more instruction. She knew what he was saying and read some of these most precious words to him as he died.

They are precious words because in this chapter we see Jesus praying to the Father for Himself, for His disciples and for us that would come later. It's a very intimate look into the heart of our Savior as He pours out precious words of truth and encouragement to everybody involved. And what is fascinating is that Jesus doesn't pray for the physical health of the disciples or us or even Himself, even though He knew He was about to be crucified. And He knew the disciples would almost all be tortured and martyred. And He knew the physical problems you struggle with today. But that's not what He prayed for. That was not His ultimate desire.

The one thing He prayed for them and for us was that we be sanctified, to be set apart for God's use. Let's read it starting in **verse 11** and we will go through **verse 19**. And as we read, I want you to notice every time Jesus mentions the word "world." When Jesus talks about the world, He's not talking about planet Earth, the globe. In **John 3:16** it says that God so loved the world...that doesn't mean He loved the planet. It means He loved the people. But in **John 17**, Jesus is using the world in a negative way. It is the man-made moral order that is opposed to God. It is a system of belief that leads to sin and rebellion. It is the worldly temptations that unbelievers live in but that we are called to not live in. We are called to be in the world but not of the world. We have to live in this world but we don't have to live worldly like people of the world. Let's read it in **John 17**.

Jesus prayed, *"I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."*

When I first bought my little house over there the yard was horrible. There was hardly any real grass, just weeds and rocks and junky trees...and lots of fences. Lots of fences! It had four different kinds of fencing and in some sections it had all four in the same place. Four fences...in one small yard. So, the first thing I did was get rid of most all the fencing. I left the chain link but got rid of the roofing panels and barbed wire and electric fence that made up a lot of it.

But then I chopped down some junk trees and had a guy bring in his dozer and level everything off and bring in some fill dirt. Now, I'm at square one. I can start doing what I wanted with the yard. That was the first part. The second part was to plant some grass. I really thought it would take years for the grass to come in but all this rain we have had really helped and now there's a pretty good bunch of grass. That's the second part. And now the third part is just keeping it mowed and weeded. Yea, I'd like to do a few more things but I'm pretty happy with how it looks now. Not fancy but grassy.

That's not a perfect illustration of sanctification but it will help me get my points across. With sanctification there are three stages. Stage one is when we get saved. When we believe in Jesus and become a Christian, **Acts 13** says, *"Through him (Jesus) everyone who believes is set free from every sin."* We are set free from sin. Do you feel like you are set free from sin? Do you still sin sometimes? Yea, me too. Well, we will talk about that in a minute but this first stage of sanctification is what happens when, as Paul said in **1 Corinthians 1**, Jesus has become our holiness. Let me tell you about the other two stages and I'll come back and explain.

The next stage, stage 2, of our sanctification is the process we all go through from the time of our salvation moment until we die that we gradually become more and more like Jesus. It is the process of sanctification and making ourselves more and more holy every day. **Philippians 1** says, *"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* **2 Peter 3** tells us to *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* **Hebrews 12** tells us to make every effort to be holy (or sanctified). And we do that all our lives.

The third stage of sanctification is a complete or ultimate sanctification that happens when we die or when Jesus comes to get us. **1 Thessalonians 5:23** says, *"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.” 1 John 3:2* says, “*what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him.*” That is our ultimate separation from sin, a total sanctification in every way.

So, to summarize these three stages of sanctification, let me read to you what one commentator wrote that I think words it well. Stage one of our sanctification is when we are saved. That sanctification saves us from the **penalty** of sin. The second stage is our lifelong maturing process that saves us from the **power** of sin. And the last stage is when we go to Heaven and we are saved from the **presence** of sin. (GotQuestions.com)

Let’s think about the thief on the cross. He had to have had one of the shortest sanctification stages ever. He was saved by his faith in Jesus as they were both dying on their crosses. So, he was positionally sanctified. He was saved from the **penalty** of sin, which is Hell. He had almost no time to mature as a believer so he never got to witness the process of being saved from the **power** of sin. And he went straight to Heaven where he did get to witness being saved from the **presence** of sin and he is enjoying that to this day. Does that make sense?

Of the three stages of sanctification, the first and third are pretty easy. The first stage comes when we accept the Gospel that Jesus, who is God, came to Earth and lived a sinless life to pay the price for our sins that the Father said was due. All we have to do is accept that and we are positionally sanctified. Our names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life and there is no eraser. We are headed to Heaven from then on.

The problem is we still sin, don’t we? We still do things that displease God. I told a young Christian a while back that I still sometimes sin and they were shocked! “*You still sin? But you’re a preacher!*” Yes, but I’m still in this world and sometimes I give in to temptation. The thing is, because I am not of this world I am in the second stage of sanctification and I am maturing more and more every day and so I sin less and less every day as well. That’s how it should be for all of us.

I heard the story of a young girl who got saved and wanted to join the church so she went to her pastor and told him what happened. He tested her by asking her, “*Were you a sinner before you received the Lord Jesus into your life?*” “*Yes, sir,*” she replied. “*Well, are you still a sinner?*” “*To tell you the truth, I feel I’m a greater sinner than ever.*” “*Then what real change have you experienced?*” “*I don’t quite know how to explain it,*” she said, “*except I used to be a sinner running after sin, but now that I am saved. I’m a sinner running from sin!*” That’s a pretty good explanation, I think. And the longer we do this, the faster we are able to run away from it. And the more it pains us when we do sin. The time between our sin and when we go to God to ask forgiveness ought to be getting shorter as well. We don’t hang out there in unforgiveness like we used to. Those are all marks of being progressively more and more sanctified.

I was reading what one of my favorite old-time pastors said about sanctification and he didn’t believe in a progressive sanctification at all. He said that in this passage, **verse 19** actually, that Jesus sanctified Himself and He never sinned at all. So, how could He be progressively sanctified? Well, yes, but that was Jesus. He never sinned but I think that overlooks the obvious that scripture tells us that we are to mature and that God is continuing His work in us every day. Hebrews 10:14 talks about those who are **being made** holy. It’s a process. And it’s a hard process. But we can do it because Jesus prayed for us to be able to do it.

So, what is the secret to being sanctified? Jesus tells us in **verse 17**. Look at it again. “*Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*” Your word is truth. What is the word? The word is the book you have in your lap. It’s the Bible. The Bible is literally God’s word to us and it is absolutely truth and without error. And it has the power like nothing else to sanctify us, to make us holy and make us more like Jesus just like He prayed.

I watched a video the other day of four older preachers who were sitting on a stage and the people in the audience were asking them questions. And they were difficult questions too. And every question that was asked I thought about how I would answer it. Some of the time I didn't know the answer at all and for others I would think, "Well, *my opinion is...*"

But these old guys knew the right answer to every question thrown at them. And every answer they had started with, not "*my opinion...*" but "*scripture says...*" and then they would quote off the top of their heads the answer to the question as it is written in the Bible. It was amazing to me how much scripture they had memorized and how they were able to use it to answer difficult questions and to solve problems.

It's just what Jesus did when He was tempted by Satan. You remember how in **Matthew chapter 4** that Satan tempted Jesus three times and three times Jesus responded, not with His opinion, but by saying, "*It is written...*" "*It is written...*" "*It is written...*" and then He quoted scripture to Satan. And Satan can't argue with that. He didn't with Jesus and He won't with you.

So, if you want to be sanctified like God has called us to be and as Jesus Himself prayed for us to be, it's going to require spending time in the word. It's going to require a quiet time in the morning but also more than that. It may be that if you want the right answers to your questions and if you want the solutions to your problems that you \*gasp\* have to turn the TV off in the evenings and just spend some time with your Bible.

But I know what you're thinking in the back of your mind. You would never admit it sitting here in church but somewhere in the dark recesses of your mind you are thinking, "*Yea, that's not really gonna work for me. That's just too much. I mean, I can't be expected to give up my Gunsmoke in the evenings, right? Besides, I know I'm going to Heaven and that's enough for me. I'm not going to be a super Christian or a pastor answering questions on stage. I'll be fine just going to church every now and then.*"

I hear ya. Makes sense...at least to the world it makes sense. But when we read that our sanctification is the one thing Jesus prayed for in His last hours and He tells us to be sanctified and expects us to be sanctified, for us to NOT be sanctified sounds like sin to me. And you know what that means. I like to call it BOOCOD. There are Benefits of Obedience and Consequences of Disobedience. And that, my dear family, is biblical truth!

What is God telling you to do with this passage? Is He telling you to give something up, to quit doing something? Or maybe He wants you to add something to your life. Maybe you need to be a little more disciplined and do something less. Maybe you need to let something go completely. What is it in your life that is hindering you from being sanctified, set apart, holy to God's use? Let's pray about that right now.

As we do, I will invite you to come forward and Timmy or I will be glad to pray with you right now. Maybe you need to start your relationship with God through His Son Jesus. All you have to do is believe. And then let that belief change your life. It will change you in three stages but it will definitely change you. Do it right now as the music plays.