

Entire Sanctification

by J. Sidlow Baxter

Sanctification is the complete devotion to Christ, set-apartness to Him, and a call to all believers.

Duration: 46:20

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 5:5, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 5:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Topics: "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the correspondences between the old Israelite tabernacle and our threefold human constitution. They emphasize the importance of sanctification and being filled with the Holy Spirit, which transforms our entire being. The speaker also highlights the distinction between the physical body and the spirit, noting that the body is of lesser value compared to the spirit. They criticize the modern focus on the body in advertisements and magazines, reminding listeners that man is more than just a glorified animal.

Transcript

My message is based upon two verses in the first epistle of Paul to Thessalonica, chapter 5, verses 23 and 24. The very God of peace, or perhaps the God of peace himself, sanctify you wholly, and your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless even to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calleth you to this is faithful, that is, God is not simply lifting up before us some exceedingly attractive ideal which, however, is quite impossible for us to experience it.

No, no. God is lifting up here before us something that is wonderfully possible through his grace. Faithful is he that calleth you, that is, to this sanctification, who also will do it by implication if you will let him.

If there is one thing more than another about which all of us Christian believers should be continually concerned, it is our inward and outward holiness of heart and life, our true and practical sanctification of character and conduct. Other things may have their due and related importance, but beyond any peradventure, this is priority number one concern for all the blood-bought members of the Ecclesia, the church of God's dear Son. Before all else, dear fellow Christians, God calls you and me to a life of sanctification.

Now this text which I have just read is a kind of standard-bearer text, representing many others of the same category. Therefore, it is of special meaningfulness to us all the way through the New Testament. One of the most ringing imperatives is this call to holiness, and therefore it devolves the more seriously

upon us to ascertain what holiness precisely is, and then seek to live in the experience of it.

Now this standard-bearer text can tell us much about it if we have a mind to listen and to learn. So let us prayerfully look into this verse a little, verse 23. And of course the first word that leaps from the printed page and captures our attention is that word sanctify.

What is the meaning of our word sanctification? Well now, this is one of the many instances where we can be helped by etymology. Our English word sanctification, as many of you will know, is made up of two Latin words. First, the Latin adjective sanctus, which means apart.

And second, the Latin verb facio, which means I make or I put or I set. So that sanctification, etymologically, is sanctus facio, I make or put or set apart. That is the literal connotation of the word.

It means set-apartness, set-apartness. When we use the word in a religious connection, then of course it means set-apartness to sacred use and service. When we use the term in an exclusively Christian orientation, then it means set-apartness to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Set-apartness to our Savior Christ himself. Or set-apartness to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. So that is the first and center-most meaning of the term itself, sanctification, set-apartness.

And Christian set-apartness is set-apartness to Christ. And how important it is at the outset to get that fact firmly fixed in our thinking. As soon as we clearly apprehend that in itself sanctification is neither more nor less, nor anything other than complete set-apartness to Christ, it begins to rescue our minds from easy misunderstandings.

For instance, sanctification is not to be confused with any kind of imagined sinless perfection. Now there are scattered through our churches some very nice but very naughty people, and whenever we preach on sanctification, they vociferously protest, Oh, you're preaching sinless perfection! Now those dear brethren have every reason to be thoroughly ashamed. They're not reading their New Testament carefully enough.

Nowhere does the New Testament promise us in this life sinless perfection. No. When we clearly understand that sanctification is neither more nor less, nor anything other than this set-apartness to Christ, it saves us from other misunderstandings.

Sanctification is not some supposed spiritual superiority complex, a kind of pharisaic, I'm holier than thou, attitude. Oh, no, no, no. One of the first genuine evidences of real sanctification is a Christ-like humility.

Nor again is sanctification to be thought of as some kind of peculiar prerogative of the spiritually elite, of mystics, or renowned Bible teachers, or special public servants of God. No, no. The New Testament calls the rank and file of believers to holiness.

And certainly when we understand that sanctification is neither less nor more, nor anything other than this set-apartness to Christ, it saves us from thinking as many people nowadays seem to think that sanctification is a kind of peculiar emphasis of little bodies who are outside the mainstream of evangelical Christianity. Oh, no, no, no. We must never let the doctrine of sanctification become the monopoly of peculiar little groups.

This is one of the most important words in our Christian vocabulary. And I want to remind you again that all of us who are washed in the precious blood of God's dear Lamb and who are born again by the

regenerating heavenly Spirit, we are all called to a life of inwrought and outwrought sanctification. But now let me go a step further.

When we clearly grasp that sanctification is neither less nor more, nor anything other than this set-apartness to Christ, it begins to rescue us from another kind of easy misapprehensions. Shall I surprise some of you when I now say, sanctification in itself is not the infilling of the Holy Spirit or the endowment of power from on high or the joy unspeakable and full of glory or the peace that passeth understanding or the life that is more abundant or the higher life or the deeper life or the victorious life. No, no, no.

In itself, sanctification is neither any one nor all together of those wonderful spiritual blessings which we have just mentioned. Look, I presume that most of you came in by that front door yonder. Is that front door the whole building? Not at all.

One of the first lessons we learned in the logic class was none of the parts is equal to the whole and that door must not be equated with the whole sanctuary. But is that door the way into the whole building? Yes, indeed it is. Now, by simple parallel, is sanctification any one or all together of those blessings we have just enumerated? No, it isn't.

But is sanctification the door into the building? Is sanctification this set-apartness to Christ? Is it the crisis point that lets us into all these blessings? Yes, it is. This set-apartness is the golden gateway to all these deeper, richer, fuller blessings of the spiritual life. But now that leads to a still further consideration.

When we get it clearly established in our minds that sanctification according to its simplest, truest, etymological meaning is neither more nor less nor anything other than this set-apartness to Christ, it saves us from another very common misunderstanding. I hope you're listening very carefully at this point. I want to add sanctification is not some wonderful spiritual goal or ideal after which we must be continually striving but which, the more we strive after it, removes further from us so that again and again, just when we think we are going to grasp it, it has eluded us and slipped further from us.

No, no. The New Testament doctrine of sanctification is nothing so tantalizing as that. Look, friends, I am thinking cautiously and speaking with measured syllables when I say this to you.

Sanctification, in the sense of becoming completely set-apart to Christ, sanctification may be the crisis point of a moment. Let me amplify that. However long it takes me to reach the point of utter self-yielding to Christ, however long may be the road there, however circuitous may be the pathway, however many haltings and retreatings and fresh startings and hesitating there may be, when at last I reach the place where I say, O Son of God, Jesus my Savior, I love Thee now so deeply and so dearly I cannot tolerate the thought of anything coming between Thee and me.

In the totality of my humanhood, I give myself to Thee for time and for eternity. The minute I get there, I am sanctified. And the minute I get there, my Heavenly Master is able to bring me into all these other wonderful, deeper experiences of His indwelling of my heart.

Sanctification, according to its root meaning, is neither more nor less nor anything other than this set-apartness to Christ. But now going more deeply into our subject, the second word that grips our attention is that word holy. And as a matter of fact, it is that word which gives our verse here its startling meaning.

The very God of peace sanctify you wholly. And the Apostle Paul, who besides being a supernaturally inspired theologian, was a wonderfully penetrative psychologist, in order that you and I shall fully understand what he means by this entire sanctification, specifies the whole of the triune territory which is to be set apart. He says, your whole spirit and soul and body.

Now, we human beings are not just bipartite, body and mind or soul. We are tripartite, body, mind or soul, and pneuma or spirit. And in these three domains of our triune humanhood, we are to be completely sanctified.

Let me transport your thoughts for a few minutes away back to the books of Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers to the old Israelite tabernacle in the wilderness. There have been many more expensive buildings in history, but never from the dawn of time until now. A more wonderfully symbolical and typical structure than that old Israelite tabernacle in the wilderness.

May I remind you, dear fellow students of the word, that Israelite tabernacle of long ago was a tripartite structure and its three parts were, one, the outer court, two, the holy place, and three, the holy of holies. As to number one, the outer court, it was a considerably spacious, quite uncovered, rectangular, oblong, 100 cubits in length by 50 cubits in width. And as the old Hebrew cubit was approximately one foot six and a half inches, that means that in length, that uncovered outer court was about 150 feet and the width about 75 feet.

The entrance was at the eastern end and the two longer sides faced respectively northwards and southwards. Now inside that uncovered outer court and toward the westerly end of it were the other two parts of the tabernacle. They were comprised in a covered-in structure called the sanctuary.

Now the sanctuary was 30 cubits in length by a consistent 10 cubits in width. The first 20 cubits comprised the holy place. The remaining 10 cubits, the holy of holies.

Well now dear friends, that was the old Israelite tabernacle in its three component parts, the outer court, the holy place, the holy of holies. The outer court was for the people. The holy place was for the priests.

The holy of holies was exclusively for the high priest. In each case, the entrance was at the eastern end. The entrance to the outer court was called the gate.

The entrance to the holy place was called the door. The entrance to the holiest of all was called the veil. Do you know Mr. Chairman and friends, whenever I can secure a little of that illusive commodity, leisure, of which we seem to have less and less in these busy days, I want to prosecute a thorough going inquiry into the correspondences between that old Israelite tabernacle and our threefold human constitution.

It seems to me to be a remarkable and fascinating study. I can only just very slightly dip into it just now. You see, in the case of that old Israelite tabernacle, the outer court gave the tabernacle its contact with this visible physical world of flesh and blood.

The holy place was the center of everything where the principal daily ministries of the priests were continually perpetrated. The holy of holies, just beyond the sacred veil, gave that tabernacle its capacity for and communion with Jehovah, covenant God of Israel. Now, similarly, in our threefold tabernacle, the body is the outer court, and it gives us our contact with this visible physical world of flesh and blood.

The holy place is the soul. The soul is the intrinsic human ego in which there continually operates intellect or reason and volition or free will and emotion or feeling. The soul is the holy place, the center of everything, where all these wonderful parts of us are continually functioning.

The pneuma, or spirit, is that which distinguishes man from the lower animals. It is that which makes us human beings capax dei, capable of God. It is that which makes possible communion with God.

And in the case of those who are born again of the Holy Spirit, makes union and communion with God a living, thrilling reality. You get the parallel at once, don't you? But look at it just a little further. I won't go into it too deeply.

But one thing I can't help noticing about that old Israelite tabernacle is this. When God gave to Moses the very carefully detailed specifications for it, I can't help noticing that the materials and adornments which were prescribed for the outer court were very much inferior to those prescribed for the holy place and the holy of holies. And so it is with this threefold constitution of ours.

The fabric of these mortal bodies is not to be compared in value with that undefinable but measurelessly wonderful substance that we call the spirit. The body is by far the least important. You wouldn't think it, of course, from the average newspaper advertisement.

You wouldn't think it from the usual run of modern magazines. No, no. There's everything for the body.

The body, the body. From the hairs of your head to the toes of your feet. It's all the body, the body, the body.

Until if you were not careful, you might think that man was little more than a glorified animal. Mind you, don't misunderstand. I wouldn't give a wrong impression at this point.

I am the last man who would ever stand in a Christian pulpit and say one derogatory word about the human body. It is Christianity which has rescued the body from the awful disgrace and opprobrium that were flung upon it by ancient and pagan philosophies and religions. Why, 2,000 years ago when Christianity came into the world, the Gnostic idea was everywhere prevalent that matter is the source of evil and that the body, being gross matter, is the cause of all the trouble in human nature.

And all the Gnostic philosophies and many other pagan ideologies or religions, they taught men to hate the body, to flog it, to maim it, to disfigure it. Now, Christianity came and altered all that. Christianity came to the race and said, The Logos, the Word, the Creator of the Universe, the Word became flesh.

You know, we've got use of the words, but it was like a thunderclap 2,000 years ago. The Word became flesh. But Christianity didn't stop even there.

The teaching of our Christian Scriptures is that in the case of the regenerated, the very body itself becomes a living temple of the Holy Spirit. No, I would be the last man ever to say one derogating word about the human body. I'll go further than that.

I believe that we Christians should be very careful how we use the body. Don't you? I believe we should be careful what we eat and what we drink. Now, I'm neither a gluttonous gourmet nor a cranky food fad.

I have a good all-round appetite. My precious wife has never had much trouble in our house in feeding the brute. And I never have a good hearty meal without thanking God that He made eating a pleasure.

We would have had to eat whether it was a pleasure or not, but God has very kindly made eating a pleasure. And I like a full-orbed cuisine, and I'm not a bit ashamed to say so, but I'm careful what I eat. And I think in these days of the highly commercialized food products, when more and more of the foods that we have to consume are packaged or canned, and in days when much of the living energy of what nature supplies is taken away and all sorts of chemical additives are put in as preservatives, I think it isn't being foolish in any way, but simply wise to be careful what we eat and what we drink.

I believe that we Christians should be careful how we clothe the body, don't you? I think that we Christians should be clean in our habits. Clean in our clothes. I believe that so long as we avoid any kind of extravagance, we should be normally up to date and in fashion.

I'm quite certain of this, that our Christian women folk should be careful how they dress the body. Again and again, at our seaside resorts, especially, I've wished our women folk had a few more hangings for the outer cords. Haven't you felt the same? Oh, I think that all of us Christians should be careful what we eat and drink and what we wear.

I think we should be careful in our habits. I'm quite sure that in these days when medical science is settling it conclusively, that nicotine is exceedingly harmful for the physical anatomy, I'm just as certain as can be. No Christian should be a cigarette or a pipe smoker.

I'm not just being headstrong when I say that. And if there are smokers here, deep down you know it. We Christians should take care, never coddle, but we should take care of the mortal body and seek to have the body set apart for the sacred use of the Holy Spirit.

Now, don't you agree with me? In the whole of the tabernacle we are meant to be completely handed over to Christ. I'll tell you something else I can't help noticing about that old Israelite tabernacle. You could take down the outer court without in any way affecting the standing of the sanctuary with its holy place and holy of holies.

And so it is in our human tabernacle. You can take down the body, the outer court, without affecting the continuity of human consciousness. And of course, in that mysterious dissolution which we call death, the body is disintegrated.

But that does not cause any abruption of the human personality. No, no. The bodyless ego now goes on in the invisible realm without any curtailment of consciousness.

There are many places in the Bible that settle that. There came a time when that tabernacle in all its three parts was completed and erected. And there it stood.

But it was not yet in operation. Before it could be used of Jehovah, something had to happen. We read about it towards the end of the book of Exodus.

That threefold Israelite tabernacle had to become entirely set apart or sanctified to the use of Jehovah. And there came a day of solemn convocation when with August ceremony that tabernacle in all its three parts became sanctified. The proceedings were in the hands of the venerable Moses, assisted by Aaron, Israel's first high priest in his glorious high priestly robes.

And along with him were the members of the Aaronic household of the priesthood. And along with them the different groups of the Levites were at their various stations and gathered round that very meaningful

tabernacle were all the hundreds of thousands of Israelites in their families and tribes. And on that memorable day, that threefold tabernacle became entirely set apart, holy of holies, holy place and outer court.

And as soon as that tabernacle became entirely sanctified, suddenly something happened inside it that the people outside couldn't see. But as soon as that something inside happened, then something began to happen outside which all the assembled thousands couldn't help seeing. This is what happened inside.

Suddenly beyond the sacred veil, above the ark of the covenant, and above the mercy seat, and between the wings of the two golden cherubim, suddenly there appeared a light, a glow, a flame, a flashing fire, a supernal, opalescent, flashing glory light. The Hebrew name for it was the Shekinah, which means God is in it. And as soon as that Shekinah blaze began to burn in the holy of holies, outside the tabernacle, there began to arise from the holy of holies and then to spread over the sanctuary and then slowly to cover the whole of the outer court a shining, shimmering cloud of heavenly glory.

And the people saw it and they fell upon their faces and worshipped the God of Israel. When you and I really, really reach the place of an unqualified, utter yielding to Christ, then when we become thus sanctified wholly, something happens within that has not happened before. The apostle Paul expresses it in the well-known words of Romans chapter 5, verse 5. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.

We come to know an experience of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, yes, even of His infilling, which we have never known hitherto. And with that there comes a new and luminous awareness of Christ. There comes a new experience of the love of God.

And when that really happens deep down in the soul, then something begins to happen in the character. And that begins to exhibit itself unconsciously but unmistakably in our behavior. And people begin to recognize even externally that something has happened inside.

There's a new light in the eye, a new radiance in the face, a new lightness in the step, a new sympathy in our touch upon other lives, a new patience, a new modesty, a new gladness, a new serenity, a new quietness, a new ease in testifying for Christ. It isn't just a nine days wonder or a three weeks marvel. It isn't something that suddenly shows at once, not usually, but there's no mistaking it when once we are truly sanctified, unobstructedly possessed by our dear Master, really filled with the Holy Spirit, then the whole tabernacle of our personality becomes transfigured.

Dear Christian brother, sister, are you sanctified? Do you know this experience of the Shekinah burning within and shining without? Do you? Let me close by relating something which my dear wife and I learned when we went years ago now to begin our ministry at Bethesda Free Church in the town of Sunderland in the county of Durham on the northeast coast of England. I believe I was 29 at the time. Well, we hadn't been at Bethesda more than a few months before we began to hear the most wonderful reports of a deacon who used to be in that church, but who years before we settled in Sunderland had been called to the heavenly home.

I was always sorry to have missed him. He must have been a lovely character. Some of the older members told us it was almost a luxury to be ill in order to have a visit from this deacon.

And others told us that if a group of them would be standing chatting together as soon as this dear brother joined the company somehow almost at once and quite perceptively, the conversation would be lifted to a higher level. They said that in his presence it was well nigh impossible to think or say a mean thing about some other Christian. And last, but by no means least, we were told that his influence in the monthly office bearers' meetings was wonderful.

Now, when I went to that church, there were twelve elders and twenty-six deacons, quite a handful. I used to call them... I used to call the room, anyway, where we met, the lion's den. And I used to call them the lions.

And by implication I was Daniel. But I often had to confess that the Lord, in my case, didn't shut the lion's mouth. I was told by more than one member of the deacon's court that on occasion when difficult subjects were being discussed and when the patience of the holy brethren was being stretched like elastic, pulled beyond its intended extent, and when tempers seemed to be frayed and anything might happen, this dear brother used to get up and say, Mr. Chairman, do you think at this point we might have a little word of prayer? And before the chairman could say yes or no, he would wander off in prayer and he would take the holy brethren with him and he'd wander in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

He would take them to the green pastures and beside the still waters and into the quiet, sequestered valleys of communion. And while he was praying, of course, the brethren were coming under conviction. And you'd hear them... And then at last he would come down again and say his amen.

And the brethren would look up and they were all head over heels in love with each other again. And the deacon's meeting would become like a convention for the deepening of the spiritual life. He must have been a lovely character.

I wonder if you ever heard of him. His name was W.D. Longstaff. You sing his hymn again and again here in Australia.

Take time to be holy. Speak oft with thy Lord. Abide in Him always and feed on His Word.

Friends, he not only wrote the hymn, he lived the life. And what we are preaching tonight is not just wishful theory. We are preaching magnificent reality.

And I believe if supernatural revival is to come to this great land of Australia, it's going to come when Christian believers learn the separated life again and come into the experience of sanctification and know what it is to have the love of God shed abroad copiously within them. Don't you think so? Well, I'm asking again, dear friend, do you know in experience the reality of inwrought sanctification? Tell him you love him. If you do, and I think you do, tell him you love him.

Don't be afraid to say that. And don't try and work up a religious love. He doesn't want that.

He wants you, the natural you. He wants your love. Let it be just your love.

And then ask him that you may love him so deeply that you will give him everything. And do it. Even though you can't see him, do it.

And crown that act of faith and love by believing that what you give, he takes. And don't be cheated of that. Don't start running around to the back of yourself and saying, now do I mean it? Am I sincere? You

must have faith in yourself too in that sense.

Don't be emotional. I find that the more I disregard my emotions, the better I get on. Let it be an act of the will, expressing the love of your heart.

Do it. Mean it. Count it done.

And trust him to take what you give. And then you'll find it's true. You needn't beg and plead and pray and wrestle for the blessing.

The Lord never leaves a surrendered vessel empty. When once he really, really gets us, he begins to fill us.

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