

All Rights Reserved By HDM For This Digital Publication
Copyright 1993--2002 Holiness Data Ministry

Duplication of this CD by any means is forbidden, and
copies of individual files must be made in accordance with
the restrictions stated in the B4UCopy.txt file on this CD.

SANCTIFICATION -- THE WILL OF GOD

By William Martin Smith

Editor of "The Gospel Minister"

Published by
Union Bible Seminary
Westfield, Indiana

* * * * *

Digital Edition 06/14/2002
By Holiness Data Ministry

* * * * *

Text -- "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." -- I Thess. 4:3

It is evident from these inspired words of the Apostle Paul that there is a class of people in the world concerning whom it is the will of God that they should be sanctified, and that there is an experience for a certain class of people that is called sanctification. It will therefore be a matter of interest to inquire:

I. Who these persons are who have the privilege of being sanctified. For it must be evident to any thoughtful person that anything expressed as the will of God must be not only an imperative duty, but also an exalted privilege. In order to the discovering of the class of people intended we do well to look at the first few verses of the First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians and thereby see to whom this instruction is directed.

We find the Epistle addressed to "the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ." We may therefore assume that there were among the members of the church in Thessalonica some who were not sanctified, but who were candidates for the reception of this grace. They were "in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ," but they were not sanctified, but could be and should be.

These people are further described as being remembered because of "your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ," and that we may not be mistaken as to the genuineness of these things, the Apostle adds: "in the sight of God and our Father."

The Apostle further says of these people: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." The members of this church at Thessalonica were elected of God, but at least some of them were not yet sanctified, hence the Apostle's exhortation that it was the will of God that they should be sanctified.

Furthermore you will observe from reading the first chapter of this Epistle that Paul says of them, as a result of his preaching of the Gospel among them: "Ye became followers of us" -- of himself, Silas and Timothy, all three of them exemplary Christians we believe. But that we may make no mistake as to their conformity to Christian conduct, he further adds, "and of the Lord." This manifestation of proper Christian conduct was so good that Paul commends them as "ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."

Other marks of their character are stated when we are told of them: "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His son from heaven."

To recapitulate: Here is a church which is "in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ," that has a "work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father," the members of which are elected of God, who became followers of their godly teachers and of the Lord's example, and themselves examples to the Christians throughout two great provinces Of the Roman Empire, who have "turned to God from idols," and are serving the living God and looking for Christ's return. It is to the members of this church that the Apostle directs his admonition: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

While we may assume that some of the members of the church in Thessalonica were sanctified and that this statement is made to them to encourage them in the grace of sanctification, we may even more correctly assume that some of the members of this church were not sanctified and that the exhortation is a call for these persons to be sanctified.

From the foregoing we may conclude that persons, in order to be candidates for the reception of the grace of sanctification, must be members of the church that is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; hence must be born again. They must be persons who are elected of God, to whom the Gospel has come not only in word but also in power. They must furthermore be persons who are followers of godly men and of the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore living lives of exemplary outward conduct. They must be persons who have had their sins of the past forgiven, and who are not now committing any known sins. So much for the present regarding who the persons are whose duty and privilege it is to be sanctified. The next thing in order for as to inquire is:

II. What this sanctification is that it is the will of God these persons should experience. From the fact that no extended explanation is made in this place by the Apostle we readily assume that the meaning of the word was well understood by those to whom the Epistle was originally directed. In the context (vs. 7) we read that God has called us unto holiness. Reference to the Revised Version shows that the word here is also sanctification, so that we conclude that "sanctification" and "holiness" are synonymous terms, a conclusion substantiated by the fact that the original word is the same in both instances, only that the case in the grammatical sense is different. This original word in other places in the Authorized Version is interchangeably

translated "sanctification" and "holiness." Careful comparison of these texts indicates that "sanctification" as used in verse 3 refers to a work done in the heart of a believer, and the word used in verse 7 is the name of the character resulting. In other words: sanctification is a work done in the hearts of believers that makes them holy.

When we consider what human nature is -- how deeply sin has entrenched itself in the race, and how it hides itself under the most fair forms of self-righteousness -- it seems beyond belief that there can be such a thing as a holy man or woman. Yet, when we read God's own will as expressed in this text we must conclude that it is in the power of God to make men holy. The records that He has inspired in the pages of the Bible tell of "holy prophets" (II Pet. 3:2), "holy apostles" (Rev. 18:20), "holy men" (II Pet. 1:21), and "holy women" (I Pet. 3:5). God has at least had His holy people in the past according to His own infallible judgment, and it is His will that He have them now. If you have never seen a holy person, if you do not believe anyone in this room is holy, and if your opinion should prove to be right, it still remains that it is the purpose of God to have a holy people and that it is possible by His grace that people can be holy. If the Friends church is mistaken as to any of its members being holy, if the great Methodist church never had a holy member, if the Holiness churches of today do not have a holy member, still the will of God is that men should be holy, and it behooves us to discover the means by which this result can be obtained.

Centuries and thousands of years rolled by in which not a man ever saw a piece of machinery run by electricity, generations have been buried, not one person of which ever saw an airplane, ninety-nine per cent of all the people who ever walked the earth never listened by radio and heard voices brought to them by that mysterious force over several states. But all the time the possibility of these things was hidden in the secret chambers of nature waiting for the men who could find them out. So if you have never seen a holy man or heard his voice, and if there have been none since Bible times, it still remains that in the secrets of God will are hidden the glorious possibilities of being made holy, and it is imperative upon us to search and find the process by which God has willed that we should be a holy people.

Having now determined that there is a class of people whom it is the will of God should be sanctified, and having seen the great desirability of being sanctified, it is next in order to inquire:

III. What are the means by which one is sanctified? We do not need to search our Bibles far to discover that the ground of our sanctification is: -- The Blood of Christ -- "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." -- Heb. 13:12. While this statement is doubtless inclusive of the whole work of salvation, yet it is significant that the Spirit has used, not the trespass offering which was for the atonement for committed sins, but the sin offering which atoned for inbred sin. The blood of the trespass offering was used at the brazen altar of burnt offering and the flesh burned or eaten in the tabernacle. (Lev. 7:1-7). But some of the blood of the sin offering was taken into the holy place and put on the horns of the golden altar. (Lev. 4:7-12).

IV. What are the steps one desiring to be sanctified must take. We have already shown that one must, in order to be an acceptable seeker for sanctification, be born again, all the sins of the

past forgiven, and no known sins clinging to one's person or habits. This being settled, we read two promises in the Scripture that point the way:

1. We must ask:-- "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." (Luke 11:13.). One must be a child of God in order to be eligible to make this request, the text and context show, but an obedient child has the right to ask and receive from his Father the gift of the Holy Ghost and thereby be sanctified.

2. We must obey:-- "the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him." (Acts 5:32.) Here is where we see consecration, which is rightly made so prominent by preachers of the doctrine of Holiness. One must not only obey the Lord this present minute, but must enter on a course of life that is perpetually obedient. In order to do this all our powers must be placed at His disposal. We do not know what the Spirit will prompt us to do in the days ahead of us. So we must here and now lay our all on the altar: what we know, and do not know; what we now possess, and what we may in the future possess: those who are our friends now, and those who may become our friends; our present abiding place, and the places where we may in the future abide; our health, the length of our days, our plans and prospects. For the Holy Ghost is looking for people to use, and He must have at His disposal all they have and are, to use as He wishes.

The average seeker after the grace of sanctification has a long struggle at the altar, and frequently repeated trips to the altar, some being weeks in the quest, and some seemingly never getting satisfaction. But it seems, from what has been said above, that if one is as eligible a candidate for sanctification as those Thessalonians were, is obedient to all the light, will now ask and promise to obey in all things, he may right now in his seat receive the Holy Ghost and be sanctified.

The fact that the one hundred and twenty received the baptism with the Holy Ghost when they were sitting, that the group in Cornelius' house received the baptism when Peter was preaching, and the twelve at Ephesus were so baptized after being instructed by Paul, would indicate that the normal way of receiving the baptism is by simply taking the gift of the Lord.

The struggle is generally accounted for as "dying out," but this may imply sins and habits discovered that must be confessed and given up. Here the struggle comes, while one is getting into condition to receive the blessing. There is a [presumed] "taking by faith" that does not bring the blessing; but there is a real taking God at His word that does bring it, and it does not come until it is taken by faith.

If you are unsanctified today, I beg you "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

* * * * *

THE END