

# God's Work through the Truth

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study

John 17:17-19

We continue this week to dig into God's work through the truth of His Word in our lives. It was the prayer of Jesus to the Father that the Father would sanctify true believers in the truth. Sharpening the application of Jesus' prayer, Jesus connects justification with sanctification, and they are inextricably linked. Sanctification without justification is hypocrisy and moralism. Justification with sanctification is not possible, in other words, a person is self-deceived.

The sanctification our Lord references here is the same sanctification He speaks of in relationship to Himself. It is that of being set apart for the Father's purposes (**John 17:19**). It is our holy service to God.

Last we covered:

## I. The Question Sanctification Raises -What does it mean to become more like Christ?

- A. Jesus consecrated Himself to the Father's plan so that we could be set apart for God. (*John 17:19*)
- B. Becoming truly devoted to God is not automatic — it raises a real question: *How does it actually happen?*
- C. Two old answers the church has tried:
  - 1. **The Monastery Answer** — Leave the world behind; holiness requires isolation. But Jesus said we have been *sent into* the world, and He did not ask the Father to take us out of it. (*John 17:15, 18*)
  - 2. **The Embedded Answer** — Stay in the world and live differently from it. This is where Jesus places us.
- D. The real question remains: *What is the actual way to become like Christ?*

## II. Three Principles of Sanctification

- A. **Sanctification is God's Work in the Believer-He does not ask us to produce it.**
  - 1. Jesus did not pray, "*Father, help them try harder.*" He prayed, "*Sanctify them.*" (**John 17:17**)
  - 2. You cannot separate justification from sanctification.
    - a) Justification = God declares you righteous before Him.
    - b) Sanctification = God makes you more like Christ day by day.
    - c) Both are His work, from start to finish. (**Philippians 1:6; 2:12–13**)
  - 3. How God draws and transforms us may look coincidental from where we stand — but it is never random. It is God working His purposes. (**John 6**)
  - 4. God uses more than one instrument in His sanctifying work: His discipline (**Hebrews 12:6**) and the whole arc of your salvation story. (**Romans 8:30, 38–39**)
- B. **Sanctification Comes Through the Truth of His Word-God's Instrument is His Word. Our role is not passive.**
  - 1. God brings us into a real relationship with truth — and that truth, working in us over time, produces holiness. (**John 17:17**)
  - 2. The Bible never teaches that our role is simply to sit still and wait.
    - a) We are the branch; He is the vine. We must remain in Him. (**John 15:1–5**)
    - b) The life we now live, we live by faith in the Son of God. (**Galatians 2:20**)
  - 3. This is not surrender-and-drift. Sanctification is hard, cooperative, daily work that God empowers. The Bible uses four action words for our part:
    - a) Mortify — Put sin to death. Starve it out. Do not feed it. (**Romans 6:11; Colossians 3:5**)
    - b) Stand — Hold your ground in faith when pressure comes. (**1 Corinthians 16:13**)
    - c) Flee — Some things are not to be fought. They are to be run from. (**1 Timothy 6:11**)
    - d) Cleanse — Confess sin. Do not let it accumulate. (**2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 John 1:8–9**)
  - 4. God works in us over time and through means — not all at once.
    - a) He says, "You have been forgiven now walk like it." (**Ephesians 4:25–32; 1 Peter 1:14–15**)
    - b) He says, "Know who you are and stop doing what you used to do." (**1 Peter 4:1–4**)
    - c) He says, "If you have this hope, purify yourself." (**1 John 3:3**)

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C. **Sanctification is Fruit that Grows from What you Believe – *What you believe about God shapes how you life for God.***

1. Right doctrine is not optional equipment for holy living — it is the root of it.
2. Paul makes this plain in 1 Corinthians 15: get the resurrection wrong, and your life will eventually follow. Theology always leaks into behavior.
3. The truth Jesus prays over us in **John 17:17** is not just information — it is the very soil in which a holy life grows.
  - a) Guard what you believe. Bad theology eventually is lived out.

**III. EXCURSIS: A Practical Rather than Doctrinal Look at 1 Corinthians 15 and the Resurrection**

- A. The necessity of truth for sanctification (being saved, verse 2)
  1. The Gospel of Christ declared. (**1 Cor 15:3-4**)
- B. If there is no resurrection of the dead (**1 Cor 15:13-19**)
  1. Christ is not raised (**1 Cor 15:13, 16**)
  2. Ministry is in vain (**1 Cor 15:14**)
  3. Faith is in vain (**1 Cor 15:14**)
  4. We misrepresent God Himself (**1 Cor 15:15**)
  5. We are still in sin (**1 Cor 15:17**)
  6. Those who have died are perished (no hope) (**1 Cor 15:18**)
- C. (But) There is a resurrection and there is a triumphant end (**1 Cor 15:20-28, esp. vs. 28**)
- D. Now Paul presents the practical and ethical consequences to the doctrine (**1 Cor 15:29-34**)
  1. Paul asserts that the Corinthians' practice asserts a resurrection (**1 Cor 15:29**)
  2. Paul's suffering and sacrifice make no sense apart from the resurrection (**1 Cor 15:30**)
  3. Paul questions all ministry if the resurrection is false (**1 Cor 15:31-32**)
    - a) Why sacrifice, suffer, be holy at all?
    - b) He bridges to verse 33
- E. What does Paul mean in verse 33?
  1. In context, "**Bad Company**" represents those who say there is no resurrection. The logic:
    - a) **No resurrection leads to...**
    - b) **No final judgment...**
    - c) **No ultimate accountability...**
    - d) **So then, Live for pleasure...**
    - e) **Will lead to moral ruin.**
  2. The denial of the resurrection isn't merely an intellectual error—it is ethically corrosive. If we spend enough time with people whose worldview quietly or openly excludes bodily resurrection and final judgment, moral seriousness will erode. **Notice verse 34.**
  3. Thomas Watson put it well when he argued that the resurrection is one of the great pillars of Christian ethics — the hope of glory produces purity: "***He that hath this hope purifieth himself***" (**1 John 3:3**). Lose the resurrection, and you have knocked that pillar down.

**IV. The Light for our Path:**

- A. The reason any of this is possible is not our effort — it is Christ's. He consecrated Himself (**John 17:19**) so that we could be sanctified. Every act of mortifying, standing, fleeing, and cleansing is only possible because He first did what we could not do for ourselves.
- B. The truth Jesus prays over His people in **John 17:17** includes this — a right understanding of the resurrection — *because it is resurrection hope that gives sanctification its moral weight*, its staying power, and its ultimate destination."
- C. ***The God who raised Jesus from the dead is the same God who, right now, through the truth of His Word, is raising you — making you into someone fit to stand in the presence of Christ on that final day.***
- D. Closing thoughts
  1. **One truth to carry home:** God has not left your growth to chance or willpower. He has given you His Word, Spirit, and Son, and He is committed to finishing what He started in you. (**Phl 1:6**)
  2. **One question to sit with:** Where in your life right now is God calling you to actively cooperate with His sanctifying work — not to earn it, but because He has already begun it in you?
  3. **One action to take:** Pick one of the four words this week — *mortify, stand, flee, or cleanse* — and ask God to show you where it applies. Then do it.