

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

What Jesus Prays For – Our Sanctification

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John 17:16-19

August 30, 2015

Turn with me in your Bibles to John 17. We are going to continue our study of the Gospel of John in general, and of this 17th chapter in particular, which we have been looking at now for a number of weeks. The 17th chapter of John is the ‘High Priestly Prayer of Jesus’. Charles Spurgeon said about the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus that in some sense, John 17 is the Holy of Holies in the Bible. That there is a sense in which, as we look at the intimate communion between the Son and the Father that is expressed in this prayer, the veil is lifted in an extraordinary way. We see the heart of our Savior, and the love that He has as the eternal Son for the eternal Father, and the intimacy and communion that they have.

But as we’ve been looking at this prayer, we’ve sought to mind the truths that God has for us here. We’ve looked at it under some questions. We looked at, began looking at last week what Jesus prays for. We had previously considered the *Where? When? Why? Who?* and we moved into really the meat of what Jesus prays for, the requests themselves, last week. We see that there are several things that are on His heart the night before He is to be crucified, these last moments before He begins the journey to the cross, this time of communion with the Father. What is it that He prays for? What is on His heart?

We saw the last time, the first thing He prays for is for our protection. That was last week’s message, ‘What Jesus Prays For – Our Protection’. Today we’re going to see that what Jesus prays for, the second thing, is our sanctification, and that is the title of the message this morning, ‘What Jesus Prays for – Our Sanctification’. We see this in Verses 16-19 of this prayer that He prays for our sanctification, which really means our holiness. That what is on the heart of the Savior the night before His crucifixion is His earnest desire for the holiness of His people. This is what His heart beats with, a desire for His people to be holy.

Holiness is not very fashionable, it is not a concept that is very fashionable in evangelical Christianity today, and hasn’t been for some time because holiness means *‘to be set apart, to be different’*. It seems that what has been happening the last 40 or 50 years in so much of the evangelical mindset is the mistaken thought that we can reach the world by being like them. The quest is always for relevance and sort of the unstated, I guess most of the time it is unstated, but the unstated

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idea is, “Hey, we’re not that different from you. Come to church. We’re not that different.” But the Bible says that God’s people are different, that by definition they are radically different. Now it is not that we are born that way, physically no, we were just like every other unbeliever, lost without hope, without God in the world, slaves of sin. But the message of the Gospel is that God transforms and saves those who look to Christ, and He radically alters our nature, and our calling. So that in reality, when we try to reach somebody to make them listen to our message by saying, “Listen, I’m just like you,” trying to be relevant, and in reality we are utterly irrelevant. If we are just like them, why would they want to listen to us? No, “God has done something in my life and I have been transformed. I’m just another beggar, telling another beggar where he found bread. But we found bread, and it has made all the difference.”

So, as we read earlier, from 1 Peter, we’re called to be holy, “for I am holy,” 1 Peter 1:16, the refrain is three times in the book of Leviticus, which in God’s providence, our Sunday morning Bible study was over the book of Leviticus, taught by our Associate Pastor, Elder Steven Gaines. It is wonderful how the Lord puts these things together because he and I did not collude on this at all, but the Lord doesn’t need us to do that, does He? Not to say that sometimes we shouldn’t work together, I’m not trying to advocate no teamwork, or anything like that. Don’t read more into it, I just always am blessed when God does it in spite of, anyway, moving on. ‘What Jesus Prays For – Our Sanctification’. Let’s read God’s word together. Let’s read the entire prayer, and we’re going to be focusing on Verses 16-19, but let’s get it all in its context.

John 17:1-26 ~ Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 3 This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

6 “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and

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they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. 9 I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. 12 While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

13 But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. 14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

20 “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

25 “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

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Let's pray together.

Our Father, we ask that You might open the eyes of our hearts to see the high calling that You have placed before us to be holy, and to understand the grace that is ours to make us holy if we will just simply believe and follow You. May You be glorified. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

You know Jesus is about to leave the world. His earthly ministry is coming to an end, and so the things that burdened His heart on this last night, which we have recorded for us in John 13 to John 17, 'The Farewell Discourse', we've called it, those five chapters are a record of the things that Jesus said to His disciples on the night before He was crucified. Then the 17th chapter of that Farewell Discourse, is His prayer to the Father. What is it that is on His heart? You know, He is concerned about the state of the world. He uses the word 'world' 18 times in that prayer. He says, "I'm not praying for the world, I'm praying for them," and yet the reason He is praying for them is so that they may make an impact on the world. We're going to see that as we go forward.

When you look around you at the state of the world today, I mean, those of us who are old enough to remember what the 80s were like, or the 70s, or going farther back, things have changed radically—the moral confusion, the spiritual malaise, just the explosion of all kinds of bizarre religious beliefs. I mean, we could just go on, and on, and on about the state of the world. Then you look at the politics of it today, and you hear talk radio, you watch the news, you read news online, and you see so many things are wrong. Well, what can we do? What can be done? Well, politically we can do what we can do. I mean, it is worth about that much, and I still say we should do that much. I'm not saying don't do it, but what can you do to impact the world? What Jesus is saying right here, what He is praying for is of nuclear impact in the world. And if you want to make a nuclear impact in the world, what you need to do, what you and I need to do is to, by God's grace, be holy. If we will be holy, we will make a dramatic impact in the world, and it will weigh far and above anything that can be done politically. The holiness of God's people is the greatest power that the world can experience because God is manifesting Himself in His holy people. We're going to see this.

He is basically arguing that the effectiveness of the people of God in their mission to the world is directly proportional to their holiness. The word 'holiness' in English didn't occur, the word in Greek occurs three times. We translate it with the English word 'sanctify'. When Jesus prays, the second request that He has actually

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made in the passage is in John 17:17, *Sanctify them in the truth;*... We saw last time He prayed, *...keep them...*, in Verse 11, *...keep them in Your name...*, that was the first request, “Protect them.” But in Verse 17 He says, *...Sanctify them...* He is praying for our sanctification. He’s praying for our holiness. The outline of today’s message, what we’re going to do, we’re first of all going to look at three questions about sanctification. We are going to see, *What does it mean to be sanctified?* That is our first question—*What does it mean to be sanctified?* Secondly, we’re going to see that Jesus teaches us how we are to be sanctified. And thirdly, *Why He wants us to be sanctified? What does it mean to be sanctified? How are we to be sanctified? And Why does He want us to be sanctified?* Those three questions.

1) What Does it Mean to Be Sanctified?

Now, let’s look at *What does it mean to be sanctified?* To understand this, let’s look at the word itself. The New Testament word translated ‘*sanctify*’ means ‘*to make holy, to set apart in holiness*’, it means ‘*to be separate, to be set apart for spiritual purposes, for religious purposes of worship*’. As is often the case, to really do a good word study of a word that you are studying in the New Testament, the real meaning is so often found by looking at the Old Testament word because the New Testament authors are using Old Testament concepts and constructs when they are preaching and teaching. When they use the word ‘*holy*’ they don’t take the Greek word and just whatever it meant. No, they are thinking in terms of all of the Old Testament. So the Greek word ‘*hagias*’, comes from the Old Testament Hebrew word ‘*kadosh*’, if we are really going to understand it properly. When we look at the Old Testament word ‘*kadosh*’, it means ‘*to be separate, to be separate from the common, set apart unto the sacred*’. It is the idea of separated from, separated to. Separated from something, separated to something, and the emphasis actually falls on the separated to part. It starts with the separated from, it has to, but that is very important, the balance tilts to the side of separated to. Separated from, to see this the book of Leviticus, that was taught in Sunday school today, is where you find the use of the word ‘*holy*’ over, and over, and over again, and the concept illustrated because the book of Leviticus was the book of basically teaching the people how to worship, how to approach God at that point in redemptive history. The idea of ‘*holy*’ meant ‘*to be separated from ordinary usage, for God*’. Let me give you an example.

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A silversmith, or a smith, who deals in metals, makes a silver bowl, and makes a gold bowl. Maybe he makes ten, imagine he makes ten gold bowls, but he makes one because the high priest has asked him to make one for worship. So this bowl, as he makes them, he sets it apart. This is the bowl for worship. These other nine are for anything anybody wants to use. But this bowl is reserved for God, and for God's purposes exclusively. The idea of an ox or a sheep the same way. You'd be encouraged to bring your offering, and you were to set apart an ox or a sheep to be used in worship. "This is the one that we're going to offer next month at Passover, not any of the others. It is that one. He is holy to the Lord, he belongs to God," and it is unthinkable to take that which is holy and then use it for common use. That is the idea of the Old Testament concept of holiness. It is true also of people, the tribe of Levi, or the holy tribe. They belong to God. There are 12 tribes, but God took one for Himself. And the Levites, Leviticus comes from that, the Levites were the ones in charge of taking care of the tabernacle, and from the Levites the priestly line was derived, and the high priestly line of Aaron was derived from the Levites. So they were the ones that God set apart to Himself to enable the people to worship correctly. So it means '*set apart from the ordinary, set apart unto God*'. Now that is what it means to be holy, so what does it mean when Jesus prays for our sanctification? He is praying for us to be set apart from the ordinary, and set apart unto God.

Now let me take a moment and deal with two dimensions of sanctification. We are still under *What does it mean to be sanctified?* What I want to do under this point, *What does it mean to be sanctified?* I have two sub-points, and each of them have some sub-points. I know you like that when I have A, 1, 2, 3, 4. The two sub-points, the first we're going to look at are two dimensions of sanctification, so I'll be telling you two dimensions. Then we are going to look at four aspects of sanctification, okay? And that is going to complete our first point, *What does it mean to be sanctified?* Two dimensions of sanctification. When we look at how the Bible uses this word '*sanctify*' we see that it is used in two distinct ways. They are intimately, organically related, but there is still a distinction, and there are two types, two dimensions to sanctification. There is positional sanctification and progressive sanctification. So the two dimensions of sanctification are '*positional*' and '*progressive*'.

A) Positional Sanctification:

Positional sanctification happens at the moment of salvation. There is a sense in which, when someone believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, they are instantly

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sanctified, irretrievably sanctified. I mean, forever sanctified. This is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:9, when he is talking to the Corinthians, he says basically, “Anyone who lives a life of repeated, wicked sin,” he talks about adulterers, idolaters, homosexuals. He goes on and on, this list, and then he says, “Such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified. You were that, but now you’ve been washed, regenerated. You were that, but now you’ve been sanctified, you’ve been set apart unto God.” So the idea is that when someone is saved, God sets them apart unto Himself and they are forever sanctified. The Lord knows those who are His, He separated you out when He saved you, and so in that sense, you are positionally sanctified. Nothing can change that. It is just like your justification, once you believe you are justified. That is, credited with a righteousness for all time. Positional justification, positional righteousness. Because you are in Christ, you are righteous forever. Because you are in Christ, you are sanctified forever.

B) Progressive Sanctification:

But the Bible also speaks of another aspect of sanctification, that is progressive sanctification. And that is, essentially, that sanctification isn’t only, it is an instantaneous and eternal action of God, that is positional sanctification, instantaneous, eternal action of God. Progressive sanctification is an ongoing process where we and God cooperate together in the process of growing in grace and in righteousness. This is the kind of sanctification Jesus is obviously talking about because the disciples that He is praying for, and those who will believe are already sanctified in the positional sense, right? When He says, “Lord, sanctify them in the truth,” He is talking about progressive sanctification. He is praying for the progressive sanctification of the people of God. And that is, that though you’ve been set apart by God, and you belong to Him, the calling of the Christian life is to live out what you are in your experience. It is to show in your life what is already real in your heart. “I belong to God. I’ve been set apart unto God. I am holy unto the Lord, and I want to learn to live my life that way.” So the Lord, for His glory, has chosen to progressively sanctify His people by the work of His Spirit.

Little by little, day by day, we are to get more and more holy. This is the plan of God and Jesus prayed for that on the night before He was crucified. He prayed for your sanctification, and He continues to pray, if you belong to Him, for your sanctification, and my sanctification. Let me share a few verses that show this idea of sanctification. In fact, turn over to 1 Thessalonians 4:3. These are verses that show what progressive sanctification is, and how it is clearly taught in the New Testament. 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Paul says this:

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1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 ~ For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

Do you see that? It is a picture of movement, of being separated in your experience from the way you used to be. To be sanctified means that you are being set apart from a life of sexual immorality, a life of lustful passion like the Gentiles, and you are learning how to possess your own vessel in sanctification and honor. That is a process and to show you this, just look over at Verse 23 of Chapter 5. Here the apostle Paul, in wrapping up his letter, getting to the very end, this is a benediction that sometimes we will pray at the end of a service.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 ~ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

The good news about sanctification is He has called you to it, and He will make it happen. That is our great confidence. He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus, and yet He calls us, as we saw in Chapter 4, Verse 3, it is God's will. Listen, do you want to know God's will for your life? Isn't that something that we hear people say, "I want to know God's will for my life?" "Should I marry this person? Should I not?" "Should I go to this college? Should I go to that college?" "Should I buy this car, or that car?" Well, I do know the will of God for my life, and for your life, it is for our holiness. Now we can prayerfully consider these other options, with sound counsel, and all that, find God's will for our lives, yes. That is a whole other issue, but we do know, in every circumstance that God's will for your life is your holiness, if you belong to Jesus Christ. And so you see this also in Hebrews 12:14, where there is an exhortation there.

Hebrews 12:14 ~ Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

The verb 'pursue' has two objects, and the word translated 'pursue' in Hebrews 12:14 is a word that is often used for persecution. It means 'to chase after, to catch'. What does he say to chase after? "Chase after peace with all men and chase after the sanctification, the holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." The

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idea there is that if you are not being experientially sanctified, if there is no evidence of sanctification in your life, you need to question whether or not you are really born again. Now sanctification is an up and down process, but over time there should be growth in holiness. And sometimes that graph, the graph should look like this, as a regression, but if you look at the graph closely it will be like this. There will be periods of decline, periods of sin, times where you are not walking as close as you need to. On a daily basis it should look like that, right? But over time, it is like the movement is up. That is the Christian life that Jesus prays for us.

Now let me just give you a definition from the Westminster Confession of Faith Shorter Catechism. The question, catechisms, are a way of teaching theology in a question/answer format. The question is: *What is sanctification?* Here is what the Westminster folks said:

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die to sin and to live unto righteousness.

Another way you can define sanctification is sanctification is daily becoming more like Jesus, and this is the will of God for our lives. This is what Jesus prayed for. He wanted His people to be sanctified. Those are the two dimensions of sanctification. We're still looking at the question, what does it mean to be sanctified? To really understand it, though, I think there are four aspects of it I want to just share to get a sense of what it really means to be sanctified, four aspects of sanctification. We're still under the question, what does it mean to be sanctified.

The first is, I think one of the things, one of the aspects we need to reflect on, and basically what it means to be sanctified is it means that we are seeing ourselves as God sees us, and we are aspiring to be what God wants us to be. So there are four things that I think can help us. The first is the question of ownership, to see ourselves as God sees us, as the Gospel says, is that we are now owned not by ourselves but by God. And this is a key principle that helps us in sanctification.

1 Corinthians 6:18, we quoted from 1 Corinthians 6 earlier when he says in Verse 9 or 10, "You were washed. You were sanctified." In Verse 18, he says, "I exhort you," basically. Let me just turn over there to 1 Corinthians 6:18. He says:

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1 Corinthians 6:18 ~ Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

And here's Verse 19:

1 Corinthians 6:19 ~ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Ken mentioned the word *redeemed* earlier. Redemption is a precious word, and there it is. Bought with a price is the idea of redeemed. You were bought by God. If you are a Christian, you belong to God. He bought you with His own blood. So this idea of sanctification, why I should be pursuing holiness, is because I'm not my own. What business do I have to live for my own agenda, what I want to do? Really, what business is it of yours, if you belong to Christ, what you want to do? Don't you belong to Jesus? Ownership, when you come to Christ and you confess Him as Lord, it means Master.

Secondly, relationship. Sanctification needs to be seen relationally. It's a personal issue. I said it's not just *separated from*. It's *separated to*. A bowl was separated from common use to the worship of God. For us as Christians to be separated and sanctified properly, to be holy, we need to be separated from, that is, we need to try to abstain from immorality, abstain from the lusts of the flesh, abstain from greed and all the things that we could be tempted to do—fear and anxiety. But what is it? We need to be separated unto God. There needs to be a Godward vision that we are offering ourselves not to these activities, these thought processes. We're offering our bodies, our minds, our souls, to God to be used for Him, in communion with Him. Jesus was sanctified. And interestingly, we saw in John 17, He says in Verse 19:

John 17:19 ~ For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

Jesus never had sin, so what does it mean to be sanctified when He says, "I sanctify Myself?" He's emphasizing the part of sanctification that is *to*. Do you see that? Separated from, He had no issues to separate from the world like you and I do. He was saying, "Father, I'm sanctifying Myself now. That is, I'm dedicating Myself to You to do Your will." And so sanctification has this aspect that I'm not

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my own, but because I love God, I want to be available to Him. I belong to Him. I love Him. Jesus was devoted to the Father. We're to be devoted to God. That's what sanctification means. It's not just a matter of do's and don'ts. It's a matter of worship, which leads us to the third thing. There are four aspects of sanctification—ownership, relationship, and thirdly, surrender.

Sanctification truly is at its essence the surrender of the heart to God. Romans 12:1 pictures this beautifully, what the calling of the Christian life, the holy life, is. And Paul uses an image there. He says basically picture yourself as a priest in the temple of God, and picture yourself as the offering. You're the priest and the offering just like Jesus was the Priest and the offering. What does he say in Romans 12:1? He says:

Romans 12:1 ~ Therefore, in view of God's mercies, I beseech you brothers, that you offer your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship.

He said, "Listen, in view of all that God has done for you," and he spent those first eleven chapters explaining the wonder of the Gospel, all that God has done for us in Christ. And then Romans 12 turns to the practical section of Romans. What am I to do now in light of all that God has done? The hinge between the theology of what God has done for us, and practice, a life of holiness, the hinge is worship, to offer yourselves to God in worship. And so the Christian life, the way that you overcome sin is you say, "I'm not going to do that," but you offer yourself to God. You don't just say, "I'm not going to do that, and I'm going to try to do something else, and I'm going to do it on my own." You say, "I'm not going to do that. I don't want to do that. Lord, I need You. I give myself to You." Let me show you this. Actually, turn over to Romans 6, a very helpful passage on showing how we practically seek our sanctification by surrendering to God. Verse 12:

Romans 6:12 ~ Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,...

Now, there's the negative command. There's the separation from. Don't let sin reign. Now, there's a lot there. Sin wants to reign in your mortal body. Sin desires to master you. If you have any sense as a Christian, you already know that. There's no news there. Sin wants to reign over you. And so Paul says:

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Romans 6:12 ~ Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,...

But it's not enough to just say, "Don't." Just trying to say, "I'm not going to do something. I'm not going to do something," is very ineffective. It's fruitless. "I'm not going to do this anymore. I'm not going to do this anymore. I'm not going to do this anymore." Then you do it. How do you stop doing it? Look what he says. He says:

Romans 6:12 ~ Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness;

So essentially what he said in Verse 12 is he's being a little more specific, still focusing on the negative. Don't let sin reign. How?

Romans 6:13 ~ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness;

Don't present the members of your body to sin. Now, I think this is actually a powerful truth to help you become more holy, because what it says is whatever sin that you are tempted with, maybe your besetting sin, or the sins in your life that you wrestle with, you do them because in some way, they seem to gratify your desires, right? That's why we sin. We think it's going to be good for us. We think we want to do it. But according to the word of God, if you're born again, you really don't want to do it. You may feel like you do, but that's a lie. In your heart of hearts, you don't want to, because you've been sanctified, set apart unto God. And what he says is when we sin, what we're really doing, whatever the sin is, it's like we're presenting the members of our body to sin. He personifies sin. Sin is this power that wants to reign over you, and the way it reigns over you is it asks you for the keys to your car. And when you sin, you're giving the keys to your car to sin, and then sin takes you where you don't want to go. You think you want to go, but you really don't, because when you get there, this is not where I wanted to go.

Paul says, "Stop presenting your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. Stop it." In fact, the word *instruments* here means weapons. To change the metaphor, it's not like you're giving the keys to your car. It's like an intruder has come into your house and he wants to do harm to your family, and you hand him the gun. That is what sin is. Now, when you look at it that way, we see how

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incredibly stupid it is, don't we? We have to learn to think God's thoughts. It's not just there. He says, "Stop presenting your members." Now, your members can mean your mind, your hands, your tongue, your body, but also your imagination. Don't present your imagination, don't present your mind, don't present your tongue, to sin, to use as weapons against you. But what does he say? He doesn't say, "Don't present your members." He says, "Present yourselves to God." Do you see that? That's worship. That's surrender.

So what you end up doing:

Romans 6:13 ...but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead,...

And now that you've presented yourself to God, present your members to Him:

...and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

The choice when you're tempted to sin is, are you going to turn the car keys over? Are you going to give the weapon to sin? No, I don't want to do that. How do you stop? You turn to God and you give yourself to God in worship, and you give your members to Him. "I'm going to serve You." You cry out to Him. "Lord, help me. Here I am and I'm so deceived. I think I want to go this way, but I don't want to go this way. Lord, help me. I feel like I want to. I want to go this way, but I even want to want this more than I want to. Help me. I yield myself to You because of what Christ has done for me." And when you do that, then you're acting as one of those who's alive from the dead, and your members are instruments of righteousness, and as Verse 14 says:

Romans 6:14 ~ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

So that surrender is so important and it leads to the fourth aspect of sanctification. Ownership, relationship, surrender, and then the fourth is holiness, real holiness. You will become more righteous. There will be more good works. You will look different in your character as you pursue sanctification. Now how? How are we to be sanctified? That's our second question.

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2) How are We to Be Sanctified?

It's really clear from John 17:17.

John 17:17 ~ Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

There are some people who think you can be sanctified, you can be set apart, devoted to God, through the sacraments. That's what the Catholic Church thinks, that if you partake of the sacraments, you become more holy and more sanctified. There are some people who think you can be sanctified through religious experience, that what we need are more emotional religious experiences. There are some people who believe you can be sanctified through motivational pep talks where they derive principles from sociology, or whatever, and just put a Bible verse on it. But Jesus said that the primary means of sanctification is the word of God.

John 17:17 ~ Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

What's going to sanctify us is not anything else but the word of God. What we need desperately is the word of God if we are to be holy, if we are to grow in holiness. That's what He's been saying throughout this Gospel.

John 8:31 ~ "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

"If you continue and remain in My word, then you are truly My disciples, and if you remain in My word and show that you're truly My disciples, you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." That's progressive sanctification. You'll have a closer, more intimate relationship with God through the word.

John 14:23 ~ Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word;

"If you love Me, keep My word. Guard My word. Attend to My word. Listen to My word. Obey My word. That's what it means to keep My word." And what does He say after that?

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John 14:23 ~ 23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

In sanctification, the goal is relational. As you devote yourself to God, what happens is God’s presence becomes more experientially real in your life. Now, there are times where God doesn’t let you feel His presence. You can’t go just by the feelings, but God’s goal is for us to live before His face. This is what we see. He wants to dwell with us. I don’t know why, but I know for sure that that’s what He says in His word. He wants you to walk before Him, to walk through your life aware of His presence. And one of the reasons that we don’t have any awareness of His presence, so often is, or the primary reason is because we are not pursuing holiness. So if the Lord seems very distant to you today, is it because you’ve stopped pursuing holiness? You’ve forgotten that He is holy, and He says, “Be holy, for I am holy. Come out from them and be separate.” In your heart, in your attitude, are you wanting to separate from the world? The beauty of sanctification is holiness, living before God is that we do the mundane, ordinary things of life, and yet it’s not in a common way. It’s not in an ordinary way. A mother can have three children in diapers. I was talking with someone recently who had three kids. You had the oldest one still in like the pull-ups, or whatever. They probably prefer that we not call it diapers. It’s a pull-up. I understand that. But sometimes you still have some accidents you’ve got to deal with. Maybe they’re not as often. So there are three kids in diapers, and there she is at home taking care of all the different chaotic things that can happen when you’ve got that many small children. It feels like you’re just trying to keep everybody alive through the day. We’ve still got the same number we started with. It feels anything but holy. It’s hard to have the time to have your quiet time. Now, you’ve got to try to make time for it, but it’s harder at that stage of life than it is later. There’s no doubt about it. Absolutely. And don’t let Satan kick you so much over that. Just ask God for grace to find time and to build a carve out time. And husbands, we need to be making time for our wives to have time with the Lord.

But when a Christian says, “I want to pursue holiness. I want to belong to You. You put me in this path. This is my place in life right now, is to love these children and to change these diapers, and to feed the baby, it’s to do this, but I want to do it as an act of worship to You. I want to do it in a way that’s different and is anything but ordinary,” because when you are before the face of God, He takes the ordinary and makes it extraordinary. When the presence of God is real in your life, then

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you're able to deal with situations in a way that's radically different, and that comes through the word.

Maybe you haven't had the time to spend like you'd like to, but grabbing some Scripture and meditating on it. *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice. Let your forbearing spirit be known to all. The Lord is near.* Try to apply that when something spills. It's taking the word of God and hearing the word, reading the word, memorizing the word, meditating on the word, applying the word. That's how we're sanctified. And it's also praying the word. "Lord, help me be like this. I want to be like this." Remember Jesus is praying for their sanctification. We need to pray for our sanctification. How? Essentially, though, it's in the word. It's through the word. That's the meat of the passage in John 17. ***Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*** This is why we devote so much time to the word of God in our worship services. We read the Bible. We read the Bible again. We read the Bible again. We preach the Bible. We spend that much time on it because we know that it's the word that sanctifies us. This is what we all need. We need to hear the word of God, to pray that God will speak to us through His word. So that's what and how. What does it mean to be sanctified, to be set apart? How are we sanctified? We're sanctified in the word.

3) Why Does He Want Us to Be Sanctified?

Well, there's one reason here in the text that's really clear. Look at Verse 17:

John 17:17 ~ Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

Do you see that? It's clear the connection of the verses, that what He's saying is, "Sanctify them in the truth, because Lord, I'm sending them into the world. And I sanctified Myself and went into the world." In fact, in John 10:36, He actually uses these same two words together. He speaks in John 10:36 and says, "The Father sanctified the Son and sent Him into the world." Jesus says that, and so what He's saying now is He's basically praying the same thing for us. "Father, sanctify them and send them into the world." The idea is that your sanctification, your holiness, is what empowers your impact in the world, that if you're sanctified, the more you become sanctified, the more impact you'll have. Now, it doesn't mean that you can look always around you and judge by results. No, that's up to God.

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Sometimes we can have the best evangelistic presentation, and we can really pour out our hearts to somebody, and nothing happens. And why is that? It's because God has not moved in their heart. Sometimes we can have the most haltering, faltering, evangelistic presentation, and we weren't even in a good place, we didn't think, and they get saved. Why does that happen? It's because God chose to work. That is true. The sovereignty of God is ultimately at work, but it doesn't negate our responsibility to pursue holiness. And what He's saying here is that the more holy we are, the more impact we will have. Why does He want us to be sanctified? He wants us to be more effective, more useful to God. That's what the essence of holiness is anyway. Holy means to be set apart like an instrument in the temple. This is set apart for God to use.

So when you're pursuing holiness, what you're pursuing is to be set apart from the world so that God can connect with me, I can experience His presence, and He can use me better. This is why we need to say no to sin and yes to holiness, because we want to be used by God for His glory. It's more than just about us that we don't like sin. We feel dirty when we sin. Of course we do. Sin brings misery. The way of the transgressor is hard, but that's not a sufficient reason. That's a good reason, but the sufficient reason is the glory of God, because of what Christ has done. That's why I want to let go of it, and that's exactly what Paul in the Scriptures teaches us over and over again. It's the love of Christ that constrains us, that if one died for all, then they who live ought no longer live for themselves. That's 2 Corinthians 5:14. Perhaps some of the reasons that we don't see more things happening around us, though, given that I've just said that the sovereignty of God, He's ultimately in charge of everything, yet I believe He wants us to consider, "Is my lack of holiness, is our lack of holiness, resulting in lessened impact in our lives?" If we were walking closer with the Lord, what would be happening in our families? If we were set apart more to Him, what would be happening to our neighbors, to our co-workers?

I love this quote by Robert Murray M'Cheyne. He was a Scottish pastor in the 19th Century, a wonderful man of God used by the Lord in an extraordinary way. He died at age 30. He was only 30 years old when he died, so he had a short ministry, but it said that when M'Cheyne died at age 30, all of Scotland mourned, the whole country. He wrote to a young associate who was studying in a seminary, and he said this:

I know you'll attend to the languages, to the Greek, to the Hebrew, and the Latin, but do not forget the culture of the inner man. I mean of the heart. How diligently

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the cavalry officer keeps his sabre clean and sharp. Every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember, you are God's sword, His instrument. I trust a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His Name. In great measure according to the purity and perfection of the instrument will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much, as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.

We're all called to be awful weapons in the hand of God. He can do so much through so little when it's surrendered to Him.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer...

Our Father, how grateful we are for Your grace and Your mercy. We're thankful that Your word tells us that if You, oh Lord, should keep a record of wrongs, oh Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You that You may be feared. We thank You that You are a God of grace and mercy, and that You keep lovingkindness for thousands. You forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin. We come today acknowledging our need of forgiveness and cleansing.

Lord, we are so blind and so easily fall into kind of a stupor, just coast through life when we ought to be pursuing You with everything that we are. God, have mercy on us the sinners. Help us to be able more clearly to see the beauty of our great Savior who sanctified Himself unto Your purposes, and is not only our justification, but He is our wisdom and our sanctification. Lord, make us holy. And for those that are here today who have not yet repented and believed, may today they stop resisting so glorious a God, and stop dishonoring You by living for themselves, and may You grant them the grace of repentance, to turn from their sin and to place their faith completely in the work of Jesus Christ. We pray all these things in Jesus' Name. Amen.

"What Jesus Prays For – Our Sanctification"

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