

Cleansing and Sanctification



What God's Word Will Do for You (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. This week I've continued to share with you on the theme, "What God's Word Will Do For You."

Yesterday, I explained how, through His Word, God has made it possible for us to achieve continuing victory over sin and over Satan. Today, I'm going to speak about two further effects that God's Word will produce in your life. They are cleansing and sanctification.

For our first Scripture, we will turn to Ephesians 5:25–27. Paul addresses these words to husbands, but the main thrust of what he is saying is not about human husbands in their relationship to their wives, but about the relationship of Christ, as the bridegroom to His bride, the Church. And he tells us two very important provisions that Christ, as Savior and Lord and bridegroom of the church, has made for the church. Here is what he says:

> "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless."

You see the two provisions that Jesus has made there for the church. Two vitally essential provisions for the well-being of His people. The first is: He gave Himself up for her. That is, He died a redeeming death on behalf of His people on the cross. And there he shed his blood to redeem His people. So, the first provision of Christ is that He has redeemed us by His blood for Himself. But then it says that He redeemed us by His blood that He might do something further. That He might cleanse us and sanctify us with the washing of water with the Word. The Word there means, of course, the Word of God. So the Word of God there, as in other places in Scripture, is compared in its operation to pure water which, as it works upon us, cleanses us and sanctifies us. And the Scripture indicates that both these provisions of Christ are essential for

us to become the kind of church He wants as His bride.

First, we must know that we have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus but that, in itself, is not all. Beyond that, we must submit to the operation of His Word in our hearts and minds and lives to cleanse us and to sanctify us so that we can be holy and blameless. That's a tremendous goal that God has set for us, but since God has set the goal, we know that He has given us also the means to achieve it.

Now it's important to understand, in a simple way, the difference between cleansing and sanctification. The word "cleansing" is a familiar word even in daily life. It means to make clean or pure. The first operation of God's Word is that He purifies us. He purifies our minds, our hearts, our thoughts, our motives. He washes away that which is sinful and unclean and degraded, but He also sanctifies us. Now the word "sanctify" tends to be a rather religious word that frightens some ordinary people, but let me explain it simply this way: Any word that ends like that, "-ify" or "-ification," just means to "make something whatever it is" that comes at the beginning of the word. Like "purify" means "to make pure," "purification" means "making pure." Now "sanctify" means "to make sanct." You say, "well, what is sanct?" It's the same word as "saint." and what is saint? In the original language of the Scripture, it's the word for "holy." So, very simply, sanctification is "making us holy."

Now, there are two aspects of sanctification. First, the negative then the positive. In the negative, sanctification means being separated from sin, being separated to God from all that is impure and unacceptable to God. But beyond that, there's also a positive aspect of sanctification which means partaking of God's own holiness. Becoming holy with Gods holiness. This is stated for us in Hebrews 12:10 & 14. In verse 10, the writer speaks about the relationship between the discipline of human fathers and the discipline of God, as our heavenly Father. and he says:

> "Our [human] fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness."

So, the ultimate purpose of God's dealings and discipline in our life is that we may share in His own holiness. That's not merely negative. It's not merely abstaining from sin and from that which is impure, but it's actually receiving within us the very nature and holiness of God Himself, so that we become holy with God's holiness. And then, in the 14th verse, in this same context, the writer of Hebrews goes on to say:

> "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."

That's a very solemn truth; that we have to become holy if we are ever to see the Lord. God's provision to make us holy is the "washing of water by the Word" which both cleanses us and sanctifies us. It makes us holy.

However, there's an important difference in the way that God works to make us holy and in the methods so often followed by religion. Religion tends to work from the outside inward. It starts with externals and says, "do this and don't do that and then you'll be holy." Jesus speaks about this kind of holiness in Matthew 23, but He dismisses it as inadequate and unsatisfactory. That was the holiness of the scribes and Pharisees. This is what He says to them:

> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also."

You understand what Jesus was saying, He's saying, "You Pharisees, you're working all the time on cleaning the outside of the dish and the cup, but you haven't cleaned what is inside and what is inside is necessarily always going to make the outside unclean again, no matter how many times you try to clean it." The mistake of that kind of religion is trying to make us holy by working from the outside inward and there are many things that correspond to that in many sections of the church today, where holiness is achieved by a set of man-made rules. The problem is, it never changes man inwardly.

Now God's way of making us holy is to work from the inside outward. Just contrast what Jesus says in Matthew 5:8:

> "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Jesus says if your heart is pure, that will take you through to the very presence of God. If you are pure in heart, your words, your thoughts, your actions, will all be pure because in Proverbs 4:23, the Scripture tells us that out of the heart are all the wellsprings of life. Everything in our live ultimately proceeds from the heart. If the heart is pure, the life will be pure. but you cannot have a pure life without a pure heart. Now, God works to make us pure within by renewing our mind, by changing the way we think. This is stated in Romans

> "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

We are told that we are not to be like that people of the world who don't serve Jesus Christ and don't honor God. We are to be different. We are to be changed, but we are to be changed, not by outward rules and regulations, but by the renewing of our mind. The change has got to proceed from within and Paul tells us once our minds are renewed, we will be able to prove to find out, in experience, what is good and acceptable and perfect. To find out the real will of God for our lives. God's will is not revealed to the unrenewed mind. It's only the renewed mind that can appreciate and enter into the will of God.

Now, how does God's Word renew our mind? I would suggest to you that we can think of it in three ways. First of all, it washes away impurity. It cleanses us from defilement from impure thoughts, from dirty speech, from evil desire. It washes those things away from us. Secondly, it changes our values. We get different standards. We look at things differently. We evaluate things the way God evaluates them. We begin to call sin, sin and righteousness, righteousness. We're not deceived by fancy psychological terms for that which is displeasing to God. And thirdly, God's Word, working within us causes us to identify with God's purposes. Our motives change. We are no longer primarily concerned with what we want, but we're concerned with what God wants. We identify with God's purposes being worked out in the earth. In the Lord's prayer, Jesus taught us to say, "Thy kingdom come." That becomes the overriding motive and desire of our lives that God's kingdom may be established in the earth. With this motive we cannot help but live differently.

Now, when all these changes have been produced in our mind, they will be mirrored in changes in our outward behavior, but God starts in the mind with His Word.

All right, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I'll continue to share with you on "What God's Word Will Do For You." Tomorrow I'll be speaking about an aspect of God's Word that is unfamiliar to many people: God's Word as our Mirror.

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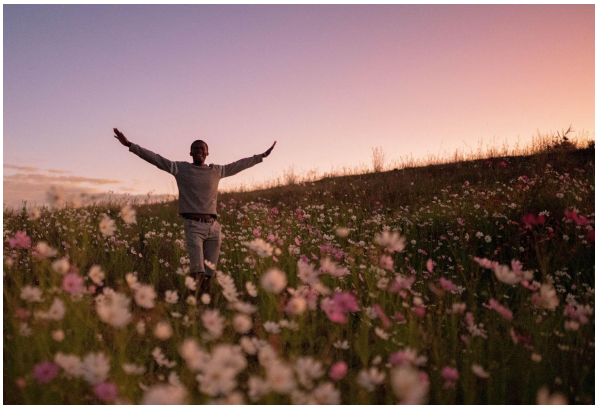

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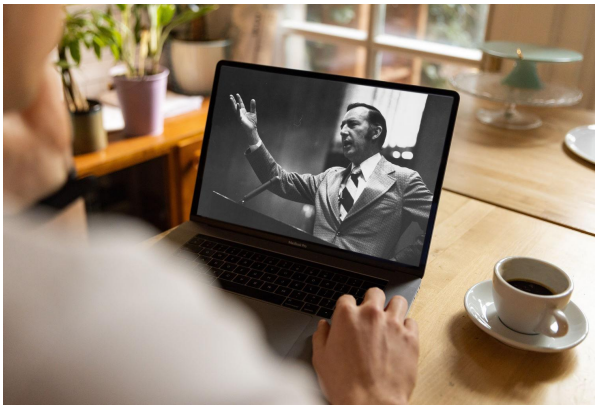

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