

How God's Provision Works in Our Lives



Part 3/4

Beauty of Holiness
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The theme of our study today is the beauty of holiness. This is the third in a successive series of studies on this theme. In the first study we dealt with the theme that God demands holiness in His people. In the second study we dealt with God's provision for holiness. And in this third study we're going to deal with the theme: How God's provision works in our lives. The practical and experiential application of the truths that we studied up till now.

I'll be following again in the printed outline that is available in the third panel headed three, How God's Provision Works in Our Lives. I just want to go back to some material from the previous study. We said in the previous study that there were seven aspects of God's provision as revealed in the Scripture and that here again is a visual aid that should help you to remember, or if you were not here, to bring it before you. The sevenfold provision of God for holiness: 1) Christ; 2) the cross; 3) the Holy Spirit; 4) the blood of Jesus; 5) the Word of God; 6) our faith; and 7) our works, that is, the actions which express our faith.

Now in our study today we'll be seeing how these provisions of God actually work in our lives, how they enter our experience, and how we are to respond to each part of God's provision. So just bear that in mind and we'll turn now to 1 Peter 1 and read again a verse that we have read several times and we will read several times more in the course of these studies. First Peter 1:2, where Peter is describing Christians, and he says this:

> ". . . elect [or chosen] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: . . . (KJV)"

I pointed out to you that logically the first thing that we encounter is God's foreknowledge, which is in eternity. And on the basis of His foreknowledge, in eternity, God, in eternity, chooses us. All this happens before time even starts to roll. God foreknows us and God chooses us on the basis of His foreknowledge. I think it's important to establish that fact. God's choice is not arbitrary, it is not unreasonable, it is not unfair. God chooses us on the basis of His knowledge of us; He knows how we will respond to

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the situations in which He intends to place us and how we will respond to the call of the gospel when we hear that call. So His choice, His election, is based on His foreknowledge. To me there is no problem in believing God knows all in advance. And if He knows all in advance, then it is reasonable that in advance He chooses on the basis of what He knows. And this is what the Bible really teaches.

For another Scripture on this theme, let us turn to Ephesians 1:4-5. We'll read verse 3 to get the context.

> "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world [notice this all happened before time began], that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: . . . (KJV)"

Notice His choice is for us to be holy. In other words, His choice issues in our holiness. And then verse 5:

There we have the two things that happened in time: God chose and He predestinated. But we also have in 1 Peter 1:2 the other fact, that He foreknew. So now we have three successive facts; God foreknew, He chose, He predestinated. And the word *predestinated* indicates that He arranged the circumstances of our life in such a way that His purposes could be fulfilled.

Now this is further reinforced by the teaching of Romans 8:29–30. We'll deal only at the moment with verse 29.

> "For whom he [God] did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [the Son, Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brethren [we being the brethren]. (KJV)"

There we see that God foreknew and He predestinated. Now if you put these three passages together, you get a picture of God's operation in eternity, which I want to show you now in visual form here in this outline that you have here. Now we have the operation of God in eternity. The Father, God the Father, does three things: He **foreknows**, He **chooses**, He **predestinates**.

Now the word *predestinates* puts some people's back up. They dislike it because it's associated with a very narrow view of divine election which is unscriptural. Divine election is not arbitrary or unreasonable, but it's on the basis of foreknowledge. You have to put foreknowledge first. God foreknows, and on the basis of His foreknowledge He chooses. As a result of His choice, He predestinates. And I have explained predestination in simple language here: He arranges our life course.

Now that all happens in eternity and it is essentially the prerogative of God the Father to do that (though I'm not saying that the Son and the Spirit are not associated because, of course, they are). Now we move on to the operation of God in time. Section 2 on your outline, the operation of the Holy Spirit. And I've put there in your outline the Holy Spirit **draws**, **separates** and **reveals**. Or, in one word, *sanctifies*. In other words, I'm suggesting to you that in this context, the word *sanctify* as an operation of the Holy Spirit means 'to draw, to separate and to reveal.'

Now go back again to 1 Peter 1:2, which is a key Scripture for all of this teaching, and notice the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit and where it is placed in the context. 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,' God foreknew; He chose.

Now, 'through sanctification of the Spirit,' capital S, the Holy Spirit. Through the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit who brings us by His sanctifying operation to the place of obedience to the gospel, and through 'obedience' to 'sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' Now we are dealing not with the Father in eternity but with the Spirit in time. In time, the Spirit sanctifies: draws, separates and reveals.

> "Turn to 2 Thessalonians 2:13. As I told you we'd be going back to that Scripture many times.
> But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you [notice Paul begins with a choice, the foreknowledge is part of the choice but is not stated there] to salvation [the end of God's choice is salvation] through sanctification of the Spirit . . . (KJV)"

The agent who brings us to salvation is the Holy Spirit by His sanctifying operation. He brings us to the place of accepting the truth of the gospel, obeying it and entering into salvation. The work of the Holy Spirit is in time, but this

is most important to understand, it begins before we consciously accept salvation.

There are two remarkable statements about two great men of the Bible: Paul and Jeremiah. We'll look at these now. Galatians 1:15 we see what Paul says about himself:

> "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, . . . (KJV)"

You'll notice that Paul says that he was separated from his mother's womb. From the very moment of birth, God began to set Paul aside for His special purposes in Paul's life. And yet, for some years Paul was actually the chief persecutor of the church. So that Paul was not conscious of salvation, he had not acknowledged Jesus Christ. He was actually in open opposition to the gospel and yet, all that time, God the Holy Spirit was moving in his life to separate him and to bring him to the place where God's destiny could come into fulfillment.

> "The prophet Jeremiah makes a similar statement in Jeremiah 1:5. Jeremiah 1:4 says this:
> Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. (KJV)"

Notice that Jeremiah's destiny was settled when he was still in his mother's womb. 'Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, I set thee apart, unto the purpose of God in thy life, which was to be a prophet to the nations.' And then God said, 'I ordained thee.' So God's purposes began to work out in Jeremiah while he was still in his mother's womb. Yet at the time that God called Jeremiah,

Jeremiah was saying, 'Lord, don't call me. I'm too young. I can't be a prophet.' He was not conscious of the divine destiny that had begun to work in his life from his birth. And in fact, at first he was unwilling to accept the divine destiny in his life. So we see that sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit begins before we come to a conscious awareness of salvation and an acceptance by our will of God's purpose and program for our lives.

Now we come to the point where God actually intervenes in our conscious experience. And we come to the third section of your outline if you wish to follow there: Our Destiny Brings Us to Hear the Preaching of the Cross. There are two Scriptures that are not in your printed outline but I would like to refer to briefly. The first is in 2 Thessalonians again. Chapter 2 verse 13 we had already read, but I'll read the latter part again and then go on into verse 14:

> ". . . God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: [now verse 14:] whereunto he called you by our gospel, . . . (KJV)"

The call is the moment when God's destiny is revealed to us through the preaching of His Word and we are brought to the place where we must respond and make a personal commitment to the demand of God upon our life. That's the moment of being called.

Now if you'll turn to Romans 8:29 you have again this same truth. We read verse 29 but we'll read it and read on into verse 30.

> "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brethren [of whom all believers are members]. [Now verse 30:] Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: . . . (KJV)"

Here is the divine intervention in time in our personal conscious experience. We come under the sound of the gospel; we hear the call of Almighty God through His Word and through the gospel. This is the watershed of human experience. I've always related this—that when I was in Denver, Colorado, some years back, some people took me out on a trip to the eastern slope of the Rockies and then they pointed a little further out west and they said, 'Just over there is the watershed of the North American continent.'

And there came into my mind such a vivid picture of what that meant. I thought about some drop of rain or flake of snow descending out of heaven and landing just by that division between the eastern slope and the western slopes. And I could see in my mind two drops of rain or two flakes of snow descending right beside this watershed, one on the

west, one on the east, separated maybe by two inches in the place where they fell. But yet their destiny would be totally different. The one that fell on the western slope would end up in the Pacific, the one that fell on the Eastern slope would end up, say, in the Gulf of Mexico. There would be a difference of thousands of miles in their ultimate destination, and yet the initial difference was maybe just two inches. That was the watershed, the point of division. And that is what the cross is. It's the watershed of every human life. It's the point of division. The point of decision. The point where our destiny is settled in experience. The point where we have to say yes or no to the call of God and to the claims of Jesus Christ. And this is the critical moment in every human life. Look at what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:18:

> "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish [who are perishing, it's a continuous tense] foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (KJV)"

You see, the cross does not change. The message does not change. But it's our response that decides our destiny. We accept it, we submit to it, we enter into salvation. We refuse it and reject it, and we are perishing. The division is at the cross. This is the watershed, the vital moment of decision and destiny in every human experience. I like also the words of Paul in Philippians 3:12:

> "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. (KJV)"

I like the word *apprehended*. It certainly was true of my personal experience. It suggests to me the great hand of Almighty God, reaching down at a given point and a given moment and being laid upon a human life. And that life can never be the same again. The moment of choice, the moment of destiny, the moment of calling when God's hand stretches down out of heaven and He apprehends you for a purpose

that He planned from eternity but only gradually becomes revealed to you in time as you yield to His call. Now I've tried to set this forth here in the outline in a way that I believe will make it clearer to you. The first visual aid that we had spoken about the Father is in eternity: that He foreknows, He chooses, He predestinates. All that is in eternity. Now in time, it's the Holy Spirit who comes to work out the Father's choice and destiny. It's through sanctification of the Spirit that the plan comes into force in our life. Now I haven't used the word *sanctification* here. I've split it up into three other English words: draws, separates, reveals. That's how I understand sanctification. Jesus said in John 6:44:

The initial move comes from God, not man. No man comes to Jesus Christ by His own initial choice. The initial choice is with God the Father. John 15:16 Jesus said:

Never be deceived about this. The initiative in salvation is with God, not with man. Man does not make the initial choice. All that man may do is respond to God's choice when it's revealed to him. So the Holy Spirit draws. In drawing He separates. In separating, He brings us to the point of revelation.

Now this line here, this dotted line indicates the course of your life as it would have gone on had not the Holy Spirit begun to move upon you. But when the Holy Spirit begins to move upon you, He begins to draw you in a different direction from that which you would normally have followed. And in drawing you in that direction He begins to separate you from the course that you would previously have followed and then He brings you to a specific point which is the preaching of the cross.

And at the preaching of the cross you make your decision. Your destiny is settled by your response. And at the cross, I have what I call the blood line. When you go to the cross, submit to the cross, acknowledge Jesus Christ and bow before Him, then you cross over the blood line; you cross out of Satan's territory and into God's territory. You move over into the inheritance of the saints in light. The

point of division is the cross. The dividing line is the line made by the shed blood of Jesus. Now the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is all along this line. It begins before you're saved, before you're conscious of God's plan, He draws you out from the crowd, the multitude, from those who will not respond or listen. He separates you, your life begins to take a different course and He comes to the place where He opens your eyes to see Jesus and the cross. Then you must respond. After that there is no more neutrality. This is the watershed, this is the dividing line. This is where human destiny is settled. If you submit to the cross, if you obey the gospel, then you cross over.

Now the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work is not completed yet, He goes on sanctifying after salvation. But the point of this really is to show you that the sanctifying begins before you consciously accept salvation and believe the gospel. So

this is in time. Way back here we had eternity. Let's turn back to that for a moment and look at that again. In eternity the Father foreknows, chooses, predestinates. That is, arranges our life course.

Now, God's predestination and choice are worked out through the agency of the Holy Spirit in time. The Holy Spirit comes into our lives imperceptible, not recognized, often not understood, and begins to draw us in a new direction. I can remember so vividly when this really started to happen in my own life, I couldn't understand what was happening. All the things that had been so tremendously exciting and attractive lost their appeal. I thought I was getting old before my time. I just could not understand. I would go out to dances, which I used to love, drinking parties, fall asleep at midnight. I thought, *I must be getting old before my time*. But the Holy Spirit had already begun to separate. And I looked at those pleasures and those entertainments and those activities and they seemed so strange and remote. I thought, *How could I have found pleasure in those things?* But I knew nothing of salvation, I knew of no alternative. I just thought, *Life is losing its real significance. I've not got that taste for pleasure. I haven't got those appetites I used to have*. And then there came a moment when I was confronted with the preaching of the cross. And as far as I was concerned, no one had to tell me, I knew very clearly that I had to make a choice and I had no right to expect that God would give me a second choice.

He might have, but one thing I was absolutely conscious of was that if I did not respond then, I might never have another opportunity. And I thank God that by the divine intervention of the Holy Spirit I responded. Many of you have heard my testimony, but let me tell you this much. The first time I heard the gospel in a Pentecostal assembly, when the appeal was made I couldn't understand what they were talking about. I sat there in the silence just wondering what was going to happen. They said, 'Anybody that wants [whatever this might be and I couldn't understand it], put up your hand.' And as I sat there in the silence, there were two voices speaking to me. One said, 'Now if you put your hand up in front of all these old ladies and you're a soldier in uniform, you're going to look very silly.' The other voice said simultaneously in the opposite ear, 'If this is something good, why shouldn't you have it?' And I was paralyzed, I was unable to respond either to the one voice or to the other. And as I sat there in the silence, a miracle took place. The Holy Spirit actually moved my arm up for me. And with shock and surprise I realized that my arm had gone up without my moving it. That's as far as the Holy Spirit can go. He can give you a kind of push, but in the last resort, you've got to make a decision. Two nights later I was in another gospel service, still ignorant. When they made the appeal, I said to myself, *Well, somebody else did it for me last time*. I couldn't expect that to happen twice. That time I put my own arm up. I didn't get saved, but I had taken responsibility personally for that decision. So the Holy Spirit will bring you just as far as He can and just as close as He can, but ultimately you have to make the personal decision.

Now, section 4 in your outline. We come to the application of the blood. And we'll turn back to 1 Peter 1:2. Some of you are getting to know where to find that verse by now. All right. First Peter 1:2:

> ". . . elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through [the sanctifying work] of the Holy Spirit, unto obedience [to the gospel. And as a result of obedience, what follows?] and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus . . . (KJV)"

The blood is not applied until we obey, until we submit, until we yield to the claims of God upon our life. But when we obey, then the Holy Spirit, who is the administrator of the blood of Jesus, sprinkles us. We are cleansed, redeemed, set apart to God, we cross the blood line into the inheritance of the saints in

light. This is stated also in Acts 26:18, a Scripture that we have looked at before. Let us glance at it once more. The call of the apostle Paul to the Gentiles. This is what he was to do for them through the preaching of the gospel:

> "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (KJV)"

Our sins are forgiven through the blood of Jesus. When our sins are forgiven through the blood, then we pass over into the inheritance of those that are sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ. And if you want another Scripture along this line of inheritance, well let's look at two. First of all, in Ephesians 1:7.

> "In whom [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,

> according to the riches of his grace; . . . (KJV)"

So when we receive forgiveness of sins, we have redemption. We are bought by the blood of Jesus out of Satan's territory into the inheritance of the saints in light. And Colossians 1:12–13 again brings out the same truth:

> "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet [but the Greek says *capable*] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: . . . (KJV)"

Here's the dividing line between darkness and light, the power of Satan and the power of God. It's the blood line. God, through the blood, has made us capable to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. And it says in verse 13:

> "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son [the Son of His love]: . . . (KJV)"

There is a translation which takes place when the blood of Jesus is applied. We are carried over

totally—spirit, soul and body—out of Satan's territory into Christ's territory. The word *translation* indicates a total transfer. There were two men in the Old Testament that were translated, Enoch and Elijah. And each of them went entire—spirit, soul and body. All Elijah left behind was his mantle for Elisha to pick up. And where the Scripture says 'we are translated,' it means our total personality has been moved over by divine operation out of Satan's territory and into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. The dividing line between the two territories is the line of the cross, the place where the blood is applied. That terminates Satan's authority and brings us under the kingdom of Jesus Christ which is a kingdom of love, not of hatred and of power.

Now after the application of the blood, we come then to the continual washing with the water of the Word. And we turn to Ephesians 5:26, beginning at verse 25. 'Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it' in redemption on the cross. That He might thereafter sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word. Christ redeemed the church by His blood that He might then sanctify us with the washing of water by His Word—His end purpose being verse 27:

> "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (KJV)"

The holiness of the church is not achieved merely through the redemption of the blood, but through redemption by blood followed by washing and cleansing by the water of the Word. Now let us look also in James 1. You remember that the cleansing of the water of the Word is typified in the tabernacle by the laver, which contained clean water—that, in our last study, we saw the relationship between the altar of brass and the laver of brass, both of which were in the entrance to the tabernacle. But first of all, the blood was shed on the altar of brass and after that every time the priest went to and fro between the altar and the tabernacle, he had to wash his hands and his feet in the clean water in the laver. The clean water representing the Word of God, so that we have, first, the redemption by blood, and second, the cleansing and sanctifying by the water of the Word. And the total operation produces a church that is holy and acceptable to God. But the redemption by the blood is not the ultimate. The ultimate is first redemption, then the sanctifying and the cleansing by the Word. Now you'll remember, if you were here for the previous study, that the laver was made of brass and you remember where the brass was obtained from? Who remembers that? The mirrors of the ladies. So that there's a connection between the operation of washing by water and the function of the mirror. Now in James 1 we are told that amongst other things, the Word of God is a mirror. Let's look at it here. James 1:23 and following:

> "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass [mirror]: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. (KJV)"

It's possible to look in a mirror, see all sorts of things that need adjustment, that your hair is untidy, your tie is crooked, your face is dirty, there's a stain on your suit, and yet walk away, forget what you saw, take no action whatever to remedy it, and the result is you might just as well not looked in the mirror. And James says if you read the Bible, hear the Word preached, see your condition, but take no remedial action, you're like a man who looked in the mirror, saw everything that needed adjusting but did

nothing about it. The mirror did him no ultimate good whatever. But James goes on to say:

> "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein [after he's heard the preaching goes on acting upon it], he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. (KJV)"

So that the Word of God is like a mirror that is held up before us. It shows us not our outward physical condition such as we see in a physical or material mirror, but our inward spiritual condition. I tell people in deliverance services such as we've already had today, 'Don't expect me to walk up to you, stick my bare finger between your eyes and say, 'You have a demon, you need to get rid of it.'' I don't do that. What I do is to hold up the mirror, they look in it, and then act on what you see. It's your decision; it's your responsibility, not mine. And this is true of all preaching, teaching and ministering. We can hold up the mirror, but you're responsible to act on what you see. And if you see and don't act, it doesn't do you any good. In fact, it brings you condemnation and not blessing.

Now the mirror and the laver were both made of one and the same metal, which was brass. And in the Bible brass always stands for judgment. Let me give you three basic metals, all of which have a spiritual significance in the Scripture. Gold stands for the divine nature and for faith. Silver stands for redemption and brass stands for judgment. These are principles you'll find work out all through the Scripture. On the Isle of Patmos, John the Revelator saw Jesus in His glory and His feet were as fine brass that burned in a furnace. That's a picture of Christ coming to judge the wicked, to trample them under His feet in judgment.

Now, when we look in the mirror and see our true condition, God expects us to judge ourselves by what we see. Turn for a moment to 1 Corinthians 11:31. Paul, and the Holy Spirit through Paul, puts the responsibility upon us:

The highest level on which to live is the level on which you judge yourself by what you see in the Word. Verse 32:

> "But when we are judged [by God as believers], we are chastened [punished, disciplined] of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. (KJV)"

The highest level is not that God should have to continue punishing you, but that when you see something wrong in your life in the mirror of the Word, you act upon it without having to be punished. But if you don't act upon it, then God will apply His discipline and start chastening you, His object being to prevent you going the way of the world into condemnation. But if you resist God's chastening, and go the way of the world, then you come into the same judgment that comes to the world. But if, when you look in the mirror and you see there's something wrong, you see some fault, you see some error, some wrong emphasis, some wrong attitude in your life, clearly revealed by the mirror of God's Word, if you will then judge yourself and say, 'That's wrong, I shouldn't be doing it, I renounce it. Lord, I repent, deliver me from it.' Then God will not have to chasten you. I find that many Christians run into all sorts of experiences of chastening that they could easily have avoided if they would have only acted upon what God showed them in the mirror. Many of our troubles are not persecution for righteousness' sake. Don't deceive yourself. They're the result of your own stubborn, going your own way in spite of the fact that God showed you in the Word what you look like in His sight and you wouldn't act upon it. So God said, 'All right, I'll have to take out the stick and start disciplining you, because you wouldn't avail yourself of what the mirror showed you.'

I don't believe that choosing to serve Jesus Christ is a terribly hard option. Personally, it grieves me when I hear preachers indicating that if you decide to serve Christ, everything will go wrong. I don't believe that. One thing I'll tell you, there may be persecution, there may be problems in the Christian life, but if you don't decide to serve Christ, it'll be far worse, be sure of that. Don't get the emphasis on the wrong place. I do believe there are persecutions; there are oppositions in the Christian life. But much of what we run into is not persecution or opposition, it's God's chastening for our pigheadedness. Because we saw what He was trying to show us in the Word but we wouldn't act on it.

All right. Now the beautiful thing about this mirror is that it shows you more than just how bad you look. When you've acted on what God requires of you and you look again in the mirror, you know what you see? You see Jesus Christ and how you can be in God's sight in Christ. Turn to 2 Corinthians 3:18 where there's another reference to this wonderful mirror. The contrast is with the people under the Law of Moses who could only look at Moses' face when it had a veil over it. There was a certain incompleteness of revelation indicated by the veil. But Paul says now under the New Covenant:

> "But we all, with open [unveiled] face, beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are [continuously] changed into the same image [the same image that we behold in the mirror] from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (KJV)"

Here is a tremendous truth that the Spirit of the Lord can only work upon you for good while you are

in a certain position. What is that position? Looking in the mirror of the Word. If you take your eyes off the mirror of the Word, the Spirit of God cannot work upon you. The Spirit works to change you into what God wants you to be while you are looking in the mirror of the Word. Then you see the glory of Christ, the beauty of holiness, and as you look in the mirror, the Spirit of God changes you into the likeness of what you behold. That's God's program for transforming you, for sanctifying you experientially, for changing your reactions, your desires, your attitudes, your moods, your passions. They are changed when you look in the mirror and believe what you see. The Holy Spirit changes you from glory to glory to glory. There's an ever-increasing unveiling and unfolding of the glory of Jesus Christ in the mirror of the Word which is available only to the believer who continues looking in the mirror. The problem with so many of us is that when problems come we take our eyes off the mirror. I've always been impressed by the words which are spoken in Hebrews about Moses. In Hebrews 11:27 it says:

> "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. (KJV)"

Isn't that beautiful? How can you see the invisible? Not with the natural eye, not in situation or circumstance, but in the mirror. The mirror shows you the invisible, the eternal. Turn on in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.

When Paul says *light affliction*, that makes me wonder what some people are complaining about. Beaten five times, stoned once, twice shipwrecked, read the list. And at the end of that, 'our light affliction.' Some people try to tell you that Paul was a kind of invalid. Have you ever heard that teaching? Had a sickness of the eyes, hobbled around. Friend, give us more invalids like that in the church, that's all I can say! Any man that could put up with what Paul went through isn't much of an invalid. And at the end of all that he says:

> "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look [only while we are looking] not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal [transient, impermanent]; but the things which are not seen are eternal [they last forever]. (KJV)"

Where do we look? At the eternal, invisible things in the mirror of God's Word. And while we look, our 'light afflictions' produces the divine purpose. But if we take our eyes off the mirror, then the Holy Spirit has to stop operating until He gets us with our eyes back on the mirror of the Word again.

Turn to Romans 15:16 and see the end of this process of divine intervention by the Holy Spirit. Paul, speaking about his ministry to the Gentiles:

> "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering [to God] of the Gentiles might be acceptable [to God], being sanctified by the Holy [Spirit]. (KJV)"

Now the tense there is the perfect tense: Having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This is the end of the Holy Spirit's process of sanctification that began before we even knew God, drew us, separated us, revealed the cross, brought us to the blood line, carried us over, continuous sanctifying while we are looking in the mirror, while we are being washed with the water. The ultimate purpose being that the offering up of the Gentiles, the believers in Jesus Christ, might be acceptable to God having been fully, completely, perfectly sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Now in closing this study, let's look for a few moments at our response to God's intervention in our lives—that is, faith and works. First of all, our faith. There is a point where God cannot move beyond our faith. He begins to move without our exercising active faith. But the culmination of His purposes depend upon the response of our faith. There is a moment when faith becomes indispensable if God's purposes are to come to their fulfillment.

Now by faith we accept what we see in the mirror. We look in the mirror, we repent of our sins, we amend our way, we

submit ourselves to divine discipline, we walk in the light as He is in the light, we walk in the truth of the Word of God. And we are then in a position, by faith, to accept the beautiful truthsthat God's Word tells us about ourselves in Christ. Not outside of Christ, not outside of the grace of God, but as believers who have taken our place in Christ, accepted in the beloved, we now have a series of most beautiful statements, each of which applies to each believer but must be accepted by our faith. And I've just written up some of them, not all of them by any means.

Ephesians 1:6 says God has made us accepted in the beloved, Jesus Christ. Is it so important to realize that God just doesn't merely tolerate you, He wants you. The word *accepted* really doesn't do justice. The same word is used of the Virgin Mary when the angel Gabriel appeared to her and said, 'Hail, thou that art highly favored' — graciously accepted. You are the object of divine grace and favor. In Christ every believer becomes the object of special grace and favor. God welcomes us. Multitudes of people are walking through life feeling rejected. Their parents have rejected them, their friends have rejected them, society rejects them, sometimes the church rejects them. What they have to realize is that when they come to God in Christ they are accepted. Not just tolerated. Oh, many, many times I've led people in a confession like this: I thank thee, God, that I am accepted in Jesus Christ. God is my Father, heaven is my home. I'm a member of God's family, I belong. I'm not tolerated; I'm accepted.' Oh, how important it is to understand that you're accepted in Christ.

> "Romans 8:1:"

You are not condemned, you're not guilty. The past is dealt with. You are justified. Romans 5:9, by the blood of Jesus. Do you know what *justified* is defined as? You've probably heard this. 'Just–as–if– I'd' never sinned. That's what it means to be justified. Made righteous with the righteousness of Christ— a righteousness in which even the devil can find no flaw and no spot.

> "Hebrews 13:12, sanctified by the blood of Jesus. Set apart to God through the blood of Jesus. 1 John 1:7, continually cleansed.
> If we [continue] walk[ing] in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, [God's] Son, [continually] cleanses us from all sin.
> Romans 6:11 says:"

These are the statements of God's Word that we have to accept by faith. Having accepted them by faith we then work them out in action. Now here's the place where faith has to be translated into action, into deeds. And we'll look at this following your printed outline and then we'll look at the visual aid as well.

The outline, section 7 says: In Our Actions We Work Out What God's Word Reveals. There are two aspects to the outworking. There's the negative, what we don't do; there's the positive, what we do do. Never let the devil shut you up into the negative. You must pass through the negative into the positive. You must be dead to sin, but for heaven's sake, don't stay like that! You've got to be alive unto God. Dead to sin, alive to righteousness.

All right. Let's look in Romans 6:12-13 first of all. Speaking to people who have reckoned themselves dead unto sin and alive unto God, verse 11, verse 12:

> "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: . . . (KJV)"

The negative is, Don't let sin have any more control over your body. Don't any longer yield your members as instruments for sin to control. Somebody said once, 'Any person that wants to get to heaven has got to learn how to say no and mean it.' And that's the truth. There comes a moment when you've got to say no to the devil, no to sin and mean it. And I'll tell you, the devil knows when you say it and mean it and when you say it without meaning it. And the result is totally different in your experience. You've got to say no to the devil and to sin and mean it. That's the first part.

The second part is you yield your body and you yield your members by deliberate choice to God, the

> "Holy Spirit, for Him to control. You deny your members to the devil; you yield your members to God. And then we turn to Colossians 3:5 where we see a further aspect of this:

> Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: . . . (KJV)"

To mortify means to keep dead. First of all, you reckon them dead. Secondly, you keep them dead. Now, everybody has certain besetting sins. Yours may be lust, mine may be something else. There are certain areas in your lives where we have to keep that thing dead. It doesn't all happen in one instantaneous experience, it's a continuing reoccurrence of our decision that thing is not going to have any more dominion over me, it is dead. It is dead, it is dead, I mortify it, I keep it dead. But of course, it is not sufficient merely to keep it dead. There has to be the corresponding operation which we find in 1 John 3:3:

It's not sufficient to mortify, you must also purify, your body. And the Scripture says you do this by obeying the Word of God. First Peter 1:22:

The way we purify our members is by obeying the teaching of God's Word in connection with those members. We mortify them, keep them dead to sin, purify them, make them more and more pure and holy.

Then there is our relationship to other people. We must separate ourselves from the ungodly, the impure, the unclean. We must associate with the godly, the righteous and the pure. This is stated in 2 Timothy 2:20 and following.

Now 'the great house' is the church that Paul is speaking about. And he says in the church there are many different kinds of persons. They are vessels. Some are pure, some are not pure. Some are vessels to honor, some are vessels to dishonor. This is true in our experience. Wherever we go we find there are true believers that are leading holy lives, there are hypocrites and false believers, and others who are backslidden, turned away from God that are not leading clean and pure and holy lives. So Paul says there are vessels to honor, vessels that are pure, vessels to dishonor, vessels that are unclean. Now he says in verse 21:

> "If a man therefore purge himself from these [unclean vessels, notice it's not sin now, it's wrong associations], he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. (KJV)"

So there is a time when you must disassociate yourself from those that are not walking in the light, not walking in the truth, not walking in the Spirit. Even though they may be professing members of the church, they are not vessels unto honor, but vessels unto dishonor. The Scripture says we must separate ourselves from them. Then it goes on to say in verse 22 in the same context: Not only must you follow these good things, but you must follow them in the right company, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. So we have now this practical outworking very simply indicated here. In every case there's the negative followed by the positive. Never rest content with the negative.

First of all, on the negative: we deny our members to sin and to the devil we say no, you can't have me any longer, I won't obey you. But we must yield to the Holy Spirit. We say to the Holy Spirit, 'My members are now at Your disposal, instruments of righteousness for You to control.'

We mortify, we keep dead those unclean practices that are associated with the past. We purify ourselves and our members by continuing obedience to the Word of God.

We separate ourselves from the vessels that are vessels unto dishonor, the impure, the unclean, those that are not walking in the way of holiness. And by choice we associate ourselves with those that are walking in the way of holiness and righteousness and truth. This is all part of the outworking of our sanctification.

Now in closing let me show you two other verses. Second Corinthians 7:1 which we have looked at several times before.

> "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (KJV)"

Here's the process of cleansing ourselves on the basis of the promises of God's Word. In other words, the provision, as I said right at the beginning of our previous study, is in the promises. As we act upon the promises, we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.

Now there's a very, very beautiful picture in the Scriptures that I want to close with. It's in Genesis 28:12. You remember that Jacob had had to flee from his home, he was a wanderer, he was a cheat, he was a crook, he was empty handed. On his own testimony he had nothing in his hand but a staff that he walked with. He came to a certain

place, darkness descended upon him, he had nowhere to rest, he laid in the open field, he put a stone under his head for a pillow and that night in his emptiness, in his desolation and his desperation God spoke to him. You see, when you come to the end of yourself, that's where God speaks. And God opened his eyes in a dream to see this ladder that descended from earth to heaven. And the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. And you turn to 2 Peter 1:4 it says:

> "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (KJV)"

Putting these two images together we have this ladder, which is from earth to heaven, from the world's corruption to God's nature. And every rung on that ladder is what? A promise of God's Word. Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves, let us climb the ladder, step by step by step. Every time you claim a promise of God, you're lifting your foot one rung higher. The way up is by standing on the promises of God. Claiming them one by one in progression. As you claim the promises, apply them, work them out, you're escaping the world's corruption and becoming partaker of the divine nature. This is Jacob's ladder from earth to heaven. It's the Word of God and the promises of God. This is how we work out in practical living the sanctification that we receive first by faith.

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Sermon

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