Sanctification

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[0:00] sanctify them in truth. Your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth. So in this high prayer of Jesus, where he prays, sanctify them in truth, do we have the faith to make it personal? Dare we say, sanctify me in truth.
These words are taken from what is commonly referred to as the high priestly prayer of Jesus, only recorded in the Gospel of John. They are the high point to the upper room discourse, again only recorded by John from chapters 13 to 17. And in these chapters our Lord is preparing and teaching his disciples for his coming death and resurrection. As far as the prayer is concerned, it has three bits to it. The first five verses, Christ is praying to his Father. In verses 6 to 19, he's praying concerning the disciples. And in verses 20 to 26, he's praying about the church.
So he's now praying in the second division about the preservation and development of the disciples. And I want to talk first of all about the ground or the foundation for this teaching that we find in the Word of God.
And this teaching is based on the doctrine of election. Now listen to what he says in verses 1 and 2. The hour has come. Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all you have given him. And then in the following verse, So in these verses, the idea that in the mind of Jesus there is an elect body of people who will, in the providence of God, respond to his word, is very true. And there's only one exception, and that is Judas.
[3:04] In John 15, we read this. You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, so that whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

So this truth, this teaching about election, what's it fundamentally mean? It fundamentally means this, that in your salvation and in mine, God alone took the initiative.
The writer of 1 John, John the Apostle, he puts it this way, we love God because he first loved us. So this is something that is coming about in the goodness of God, in his elective will, without any assistance from any of the disciples.
Now you will find that this idea is more to the fore in the Gospel of John than it is in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. And it first of all comes to bear, or to come out, in the teaching of Jesus that he gave to Nicodemus when he stated concerning the work of the Spirit in effecting the new birth.
[4:41] There he likened the work of the Spirit to that of the wind. He says this, Do not marvel that I say to you, you must be born from above.

The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know from whence it comes or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.
So what is Jesus actually saying to Nicodemus? He's saying that the wind, and in Greek, the word wind is pneuma, which also means Spirit.
It means that the wind is sovereign. The wind blows where it wills. The wind is sovereign.
That is the case of the movement of the Spirit relative to the new birth which you and I have experienced as Christians.
[5:51] Yet there is a profound purpose behind all this. Go back to John 15. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and your fruit should remain so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

So the idea is not just that Jesus Christ has chosen you and me. He's chosen us that we might do something.

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And this is what you find in the epistle to the Ephesians, where Paul says this, Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.
So here it is. In the wonder of the teaching of Paul, the teaching of Scripture is that you and I, who were sinners, have been chosen to be holy.
Writing to the Romans, he puts it like this. Romans 8, 29. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
[7:41] So the foundation of this doctrine lies in the truth of election. And the elective will of God is this, that we should be so transformed that we radiate the person of Jesus Christ.

Let me go on now to secondly think about the meaning of this sanctification. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth.
Looking at the call of Jeremiah to the prophetic office, in chapter 1 and verse 5, we read this. Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.
Before you were born, I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations. The middle phrase is, before you were born, I consecrated you.
Now the Hebrew language has a word for this. And the word, or the verb, means this. To set apart as sacred to God.
[9:00] And that is the basic meaning of sanctification. In the 4th century, when the Old Testament, along with the New, was being translated into Latin, which was then the common language of everybody, the translator used a verb which means to make holy.

People think today that that is the fundamental meaning of sanctification. But it's only part of the teaching. For the real meaning is to set apart as sacred to God.
Now if we look at this Old Testament verb, which means this, to set apart as sacred to God, we find that, as we've already seen, it applies to the prophet Jeremiah.
It applies to the temple in 1 Kings 9-2. It applies to sheep for slaughter, Jeremiah 12-3, and it applies to the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20-8.
So in other words, what we're saying is this, that the object of that verb not only applies to persons, but also to inanimate objects.
[10:23] In the construction of the tabernacle and later in the temple, there was an object called a laver. And the laver was literally a hand basin on a stand where the priests could wash their hands.

And Exodus 40-11 clearly says, you shall anoint the laver and its base and set it apart as sacred.
Now, what about the New Testament? In 1 Timothy, the apostle is writing on the subject of eating foods that are set before us, and he makes this observation in chapters 4, verses 4-5.
For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.
So, when he says, sanctify them in truth, he is praying that the disciples will be set apart as sacred to God by the medium of the word of God.
[11:36] Now, there are a number of implications to all of this. One of these is to be found what the apostle says about unbelieving husbands or wives.

1 Corinthians 7 and verse 14. The unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband.
It's the same verb to set apart as sacred. Now, clearly, it doesn't mean that the partner is made holy, the unbelieving partner, but it does mean that the unbelieving partner is set apart as sacred to God and will, because of the covenant, eventually come to faith.
And the same truth is also applied to children who are brought up in devout Christian homes. They are part of the covenant and will come to faith through the goodness of God.
That's what it means. Now, let's think finally about its progress. Sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth. For their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.
[13:02] So, by this statement, sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth. We're having to listen to not only the word of God written, but the word of God preached has a role in your progress in sanctification, in setting apart to God, and of making holy in your life.

In verse 19, I've translated it like this. For their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.

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Yet, the fact is that the same verb is being used in verse 17, where he says, sanctify them in truth, and in verse 19, where he's actually saying, I have set myself apart as sacred to God, so that we in turn may also set apart as sacred to him.
It's a wonder. It's coming to us through Christ. Listen to what he says to the opening verses of the church at Corinth.
To the church of God, which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.
[14:38] The Corinthians, if you'll read the epistle, you'll find they had many problems. Yet, the apostle is clear to say that even with their problems, they are set apart as sacred to God.

at the end of the first chapter, he says this, he is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.
And in that verse, he's identified the four basic needs of humankind. Wisdom. we need God's wisdom.
Righteousness. We don't have it by ourselves. We need his righteousness. Sanctification, the process of setting apart as sacred to God, we don't have that by ourselves, only through Christ.
And redemption, the act of God setting us free from the sins of the past. None of these things we have by ourselves, but they all come to us complete in Christ Jesus, our Lord.
[16:05] Is that it? No, it's not. Because we have a part to play. Writing to the Philippians, he says this, chapter 2, verses 12 to 13, therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

What's it mean? It means we've got a part to play. if it is the case that this sanctification means God setting us apart as sacred to God, how does that affect us?
It affects us like this, that in our life, in our devotion, in our worship, prayer, and in our scripture reading, we have to set apart as sacred to God a time for waiting on him.
This is a practical truth. Sanctify them in truth, your word is truth. We're said to be sanctified through the person of Christ the word.
Not only the preached word, but the written word, allowing it to speak to us, to challenge us, and to lead us on to new visions of glory.
[18:01] You see, if you're not being challenged by God's word, to go on with him, you might think that you're standing still, but the fact of the matter is, you're going back.

Hence, he writes to the Colossians and says this, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
So it is by the practice of personal worship, which includes our personal reading of the word of God, that we continue to be set apart to God as sacred, and in so doing, your life and my life, being transformed from one degree of glory to another.
If you want it in simple words, the old gospel hymn has it like this, take time to be holy.
that is where the challenge comes, using our time, set apart as sacred to God, allowing him to lead us, challenge us, and bless us.
[19:43] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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