

SANCTIFICATION

By Milton Smith

The word “sanctification” means simply “set apart for holy use.” We should take note that the use of an object (or a life) is what is changed. Obedience to God’s law is necessary to sanctification, and sanctification itself is necessary to serving God. Sanctification was regularly emphasized and taught in the Old Testament. For example, Jehovah set the Sabbath day apart as holy for His people. Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 5:15, “Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.” (Deuteronomy 5:15.) This was a special day set apart by God to be kept holy by the children of Israel. Other examples of sanctification in the Old Testament involved such things

as the tabernacle, certain vessels, the priesthood, etc.

We also have clear examples of sanctification in the New Testament. Christ, Himself, was sanctified. (John 10:36; 17:19.) The apostles were sanctified by God. (John 17:15-17.) In other words, these men specially called by Christ were “set apart for holy use” in a special way for a particular work. Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:25-27 that the church is sanctified by God. This means that all Christians are set apart for holy use by God. But we might wonder; how can mere human beings be sanctified? Of course, our sanctification would be quite different from the sanctification of Jesus Christ.

Today, Christians are sanctified by obedience to the truth and by being washed free of the guilt of sin through

the blood of Christ. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:11 that God’s children have been washed, sanctified, and justified. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:2 that we are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ . . .” Being sanctified by God should send a very clear message to God’s people: we should show dramatic change in behavior and life once we are set apart for God’s service! When we are born again into the family of God, we are expected to walk “worthy of this calling.” (2 Thessalonians 1:11.)

Today, if you are a Christian, walk and live like you are somebody special—because you are!

— Tulsa, OK

Characteristics of a Growing Church

By Joe Slater

Phenomenal growth characterized the early church. Starting with about 3000 conversions on Pentecost Day (Acts 2:41), it wasn’t long until the number of men reached 5000. (4:4.) When we get to 5:14, “believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.” Dizzying, isn’t it? What characteristics produced such growth? Can we develop those same qualities?

Obviously, our first-century brethren were intensely evangelistic. Even when threatened with severe punishment, they proclaimed the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and salvation through Him. (Acts 3 & 4.) But it doesn’t stop there. Evangelism bears fruit only when people are listening. What motivated the crowds to hear?

The early church had credibility, and for good reason! Generous brethren gave bountifully to supply the needs of the less fortunate. (2:44, 45.) As a result,

the church enjoyed “favor with all the people.” (2:47.) Someone has observed that “people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” By demonstrating the love of Jesus, the Christians in Jerusalem earned the right to be heard.

A couple of them, however, sought to be praised rather than to be helpful. Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, lied about their contribution, claiming to have donated the full proceeds from selling a possession when, in fact, they gave only part of it. Peter affirmed that they had every right to keep a part for their own use. (5:4.) Their sin was in lying about it. Ananias was struck dead instantly, carried out, and buried without ceremony; Sapphira, appearing later, suffered the same fate. “So great fear came upon the church and upon all who heard these things . . . but the people esteemed them highly.” (5:11, 13.) Here

was a church that upheld high standards! Even worldly people respected that. In our day, when so many are afraid to say or do anything that might seem “intolerant” or “judgmental,” we might take a lesson from Acts 5!

Besides being evangelistic, being generous, and upholding high standards, these brethren were unified. “And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch.” (5:12b.) Nobody complained when Ananias and Sapphira were severely disciplined. None were introducing strange new doctrines or practices. Such unity attracts people who are weary of the world’s chaos. They crave the rest that Jesus offers. No wonder they listened to the gospel. No wonder the church grew!

— Justin, TX

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

OF WEEDS AND SIN

By Luke Bower

With all this warm weather a few things have started to turn green. One of the things my daughter has noticed is the emergence of dandelions. As a kid, dandelions are just pretty flowers; but as an adult, they are weeds that plague my yard.

It is funny to watch the different ways people try to solve their weed problems. Some get the lawn mower out and just mow over it. Others simply pull the tops of the plants off, but leave the roots. Unless you get down on your hands and knees and dig out the roots of the plant, it quickly grows right back.

The other day, I read a story about a mother who had instructed her son to pull all the dandelions from the yard, because she was tired of seeing them. The mother showed the boy how to remove the plants properly, root and all. As the day got hotter, the boy decided to take a short-cut. He got out the hoe and started popping the tops off. The son figured that as long as his mom couldn’t see them, it didn’t really matter. But his mother saw what he was doing. She explained to her son, “Unless you get all the way down to the root, the weed is destined to come back.” She also took the opportunity to explain how some people treat sin. She told him, “Some people think that if sin isn’t seen by other people, it doesn’t matter. But unless the sin is completely rooted out, it shows up again.”

We need to make sure we aren’t hiding our sin, but actively working on removing it from our lives.

“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13.)

— Abilene, TX

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” (1 John 1:8-10.)

THE POWER OF ONE

By Flavil Nichols

During the War Between the States a young woman learned the truth and obeyed the gospel. Her sweetheart, J. H. Halbrook, was a confederate soldier. He was captured by the Union Army and kept a prisoner in Michigan until the war was over. He was then given a ticket to Nashville and \$2.50. From there he returned to Centerville, Tennessee, found what was left of his home and family, and was reunited with his girlfriend. Then, they were married.

Mr. Halbrook’s new wife studied the Bible with him and he soon became a Christian. He thought the truth was so good and so simple that he began to teach and baptize many of his friends and neighbors. Then he began to preach, but he recognized his need for more training, so he enrolled in Mars Hill Bible School and was taught and trained by T. B. Larimore.

Upon completing his studies at Mars Hill, Mr. Halbrook and his wife chose to move farther south rather than going back to Tennessee, and they went into the counties of Walker, Marion, Fayette and Lamar counties in Alabama. Among his many converts were Charley Alexander Wheeler and his wife. Mr. Wheeler, after obeying the gospel, soon began preaching to others. He started more than 100 congregations and baptized more than 6000 people.

But wait! The story does not end there! One of those 6000 baptisms was my father, the late Gus Nichols. And under my father’s preaching 12,000 people were converted to Christ! And how many of those 12,000 began to preach “the glorious gospel of Christ?” No one can know the exact number, but I personally know several who did.

I am one whom he baptized and encouraged to preach. And under my preaching about 3000 have been baptized. Among that number a few have gone on to preach the gospel.

Only eternity will reveal the total results of the teaching of that one girl over 150 years ago. But at least 21,000 people have already become Christians through this single thread in the fabric of her influence.

“Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37), for you are important! Just one can be very influential.

— Huntsville, AL

“I THIRST”

By Richard Dent

Jesus was almost dead. He had been crucified on that old cross for some period of time. His body was drained of fluids, thus he uttered the words, “I thirst.” (John 19:28.) He did not receive water but instead was given sour wine poured on a spongy-like substance.

Have you ever been really thirsty after doing some hard work in the yard or pasture on a hot, steamy day? Of course, the answer must surely be “yes.” There’s not much better drink to be had on a hot summer day than a cold glass of water. My yard man mows each week and I often tell him it will be a two or three glass day between rounds.

Jesus was traveling through Samaria and He came to a town called Sychar. He was tired from his journey so he sat down by a well known as Jacob’s well. (John 4:4-6.) A woman from the city came to draw some water from the well and Jesus asked her for a drink. The woman was shocked at Him speaking to her because normally Jews had nothing to do with Samaritans.

And then . . . and then . . . she is surprised even more when Jesus mentions “living water.” (John 4:10.) Jesus reminds the woman that water from Jacob’s well is a temporary quenching of the thirst but the living water that He could give would spring up into everlasting life. (vs. 13-14.) Next, she asks Jesus to give her that water so that she would never thirst again or have to draw water from Jacob’s well again. (vs. 15.) She gets much more than she had expected.

Remember that Jesus used this situation to get an audience from many people of Samaria. He reveals Himself as the true Messiah and the woman hurries back to her village and tells the people to come and see a man that knew “all things that I ever did.” (John 4:25-26, 29-42.) A whole lot of people must have received spiritual water from the encounter of Jesus and the woman of Sychar. Jesus stayed there two days. (vs. 43.)

Spiritual water . . . now that is the drink that our souls dearly need. Revelation 22:17 states, “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”

If your soul is as thirsty as mine you will want to attend worship services on Sunday or any other time you might get an opportunity, such as gospel meetings, Bible school and Wednesday night services. Read the periodicals such as the “Old Paths” and “The Spiritual Sword” as well as others. Lap it up and your whole body (physical and spiritual) will be nourished by so doing.

Do not stay thirsty too long.

— Liberal, KS

Editorial . . .

SHOW A LITTLE KINDNESS

By Dalton Key

I’ve heard that kindness is a hard thing to give away; it just keeps coming back! This truism notwithstanding, common courtesy, like common sense, is not all that common. Most of us are much more enthusiastic with receiving kindness than in extending it, especially toward those who disagree with us.

I don’t have to agree with you. I don’t have to approve of the things you do, the positions you hold, or the associations you choose to pursue. But I do have a divine obligation to be kind to you.

Where have we gotten the warped notion that difference in thought permits discourtesy in speech and conduct? Such thoughtless thinking was never learned from the Lord.

Christ was the walking demonstration of “truth in love.” He never refused to speak with someone He disagreed with. He listened. He waited to hear the question before giving an answer. He never got into shouting matches with His enemies. He never started or spread ugly, unfounded rumors about others, even those who were actively working Him harm. He never attempted to silence His critics by means of mean-spirited barbs, baseless accusations, or snarky jabs of sarcasm.

We would all do well to follow the Master’s example.

To be right, both morally and doctrinally, is imperative; to be right in our treatment of others is no less important. Being long on scriptural argument provides no license for coming up short on scriptural attitude.

“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:17-21.)

May we all determine to be more like Christ, “speaking the truth in love,” (Ephesians 4:15), and less like the dog-eat-dog world seeking to shape us into its mold. It is never the wrong time to be kind.

**IGNORING THE GRAY HAIRS**

By Bobby Key

Have you ever known a person to be pronounced healthy at a medical checkup only to be dead of a heart attack within 24 hours? Death comes upon some of us quite suddenly, and with little apparent warning, and yet with others the tell-tale signs are there sometimes months or years before the departure comes.

God has been generous to His people in that He has always given ample warning. Before destroying the world by water, He gave notice 120 years in advance. The Jews were adequately warned before they were taken into captivity and finally destroyed as a nation; however they paid no heed to God’s prophets and went right on sinning.

The wise king said, “Truly, this only I have found: that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.” (Ecclesiastes 7:29.) The people of God have never been faithful to the old paths for very long. Too many are wanting

something new and different. The errors that are being propagated today by some and innovations that are being urged by others, as bad as they are, are not nearly as disturbing as the apathy of the brotherhood in general toward such things. We are in great danger of losing our identity as the New Testament church and most don’t even know it. Perhaps some of our people are like Samson; the Lord departed from him and he knew it not! (Judges 16:20.)

Some of our people are openly declaring the church to be just another denomination; they say that it doesn’t matter what a Christian believes or teaches about premillennialism, instrumental music, fellowship or even baptism for remission of sins. And all the while, many others see no problem, no dangers, and no warning signals, seeming to say, “We hear no evil, we see no evil, why bother? Let’s just love everybody, criticize nobody, and live in peace.”

Ephraim ignored the gray hairs. Hosea said, “Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it; yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it.” (Hosea 7:9.) Because of neglect and evil associations, the once proud nation had its strength sapped. Without realizing it, Ephraim had become like the heathen about him. Israel had grown old in iniquity and the time of captivity was at hand, yet they were aware of no danger. They were in the state of a silly old man, who through age and infirmity had become nearly bald, and with the few remaining hairs of the head turning quite gray, yet not realizing or acknowledging the situation. How pathetic.

“Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?” (Mark 8:18)

— Miami, OK

A PERSON OF INTEGRITY

By Danny Tunnell

Have you ever known a person of integrity? A person who has high moral values? A person who is incorruptible and honest? A person you can fully trust?

That person is like Jesus. Above everything else, Jesus is a person of integrity. Whatever He says, He means what He says, even if it seems to our natural minds too-good-to-be-true.

Because Jesus has integrity, we can believe what He said in John 14:2-3. In His Father’s house are many mansions. He has gone to prepare a place for us, so that where He is, we can be also.

The more we believe in Jesus’ integrity, the more we believe John 14:27. Jesus has left us His peace: “My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

We can believe in Jesus’ words in Matthew 11:28-30. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

These promises mean nothing if Jesus lacks integrity. I believe in Jesus’ integrity.

The Bible says a lot about integrity. “The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him.” (Proverbs

20:7.) “Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one who is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.” (Proverbs 19:1.) “The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.” (Proverbs 11:3.) “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on You.” (Psalm 25:21.)

The Lord told Solomon that if he would walk before Him, as David his father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, then God would establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (1 Kings 9:4-5.)

The literal translation of Psalm 119:1 reads, “How blessed are those having integrity, who walk in the law of the Lord.”

How about you and me? Are we people of integrity?

Integrity means that if our private life was suddenly exposed, we’d have no reason to be ashamed or embarrassed. Why? Because there is no hypocrisy or phoniness.

A person with integrity is the same on the inside as he or she claims to be on the outside. He or she is the same person alone in a hotel room a thousand miles from home as they are at home with their families. They can be trusted.

A person who serves Christ and lives a pure life with integrity is not necessarily welcomed and admired by everyone. Some

who live differently may react with scorn or hostility. The person with integrity’s very presence is a rebuke to them.

Every Christian needs to be a person of integrity so that he or she can back up their ministry with their lives. Christians should never give unbelievers any occasion to doubt their integrity. “Providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” (2 Corinthians 8:21.)

— Miami, OK

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