

BEING SANCTIFIED

“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified...”

—1 THESSALONIANS 4:3

Part of God’s general will for all people is that we be sanctified. What exactly does that mean and how do we apply being sanctified to our lives?

Being sanctified is not directly about conduct, doing, but about character, being. The quality and nature of our conduct grows out of the quality of our character. The word ‘sanctification’ involves a simple idea, which is to set something apart for the purpose it was created. For example, to sanctify a pen is to write with it. That is the purpose for which it was made, but if we use it to stir our coffee, the pen is not being sanctified. To sanctify a car is to drive it, but if we keep chickens in it, the car is not being sanctified. When Paul states that the will of God is our sanctification, it is that we find the purpose for which we were created and live accordingly.

The connotation of holiness in our contemporary usage is to be ‘squeaky clean’. Cleanliness is an aspect and consequence of true holiness, but the word ‘holy’ means literally to be ‘set apart’. When ascribed to God, holiness is in acknowledgement of His uniqueness. He is wholly different and set apart from the creation of which He is the Creator. In itself, the designation ‘holy’ says nothing specific about God’s character, but in the New Testament, when ascribed to human beings, it is to those who have been set apart to Christ for ‘the sanctifying work of the Spirit’ (2 Thessalonians 2:13). The sanctifying work of the Spirit makes

possible that for which we were created in the first place - to be a physical and visible expression of the moral character of God.

The ultimate description of God's moral character is found in 1 John 4:8, which states "God is love." Not only is God loving, He is love. It isn't one of His attributes like His omniscience (all knowing), omnipotence (all powerful), but is the very core and nature of His being. Having been created in His image, we should expect love to be an ultimate expression of His purpose for us, both in terms of our love for God and for one another. As there is no higher expression of God's image in human experience than love, we can conclude that love is the highest expression of our sanctification. Everything else that is the will of God for us grows out of love, because love is the practical expression of the image and righteousness of God, which is the measure of our sanctification.

PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for your work in sanctifying me for my purpose on earth. Help me to grow in your love, for which I was created.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I being sanctified by God's love expressed in my interactions with others?