

1.3

EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT TO BE HOLY

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

The Spirit empowers us to live transformed lives.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will be filled with the Spirit and walk in newness of life.



FOCUS VERSES: I Thessalonians 5:23-24

²³ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁴ Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

LESSON TEXT: Acts 15:7-11; Romans 6:4; I Thessalonians 5:23-24



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Acts 15:7-11; Romans 6:4; I Thessalonians 5:23-24

The salvation God offers and its resulting holiness and sanctification cannot be divorced. Throughout Scripture, relationship with God always resulted in transformed living and thinking. The two concepts go hand in hand. Conversely, lack of transformation indicated lack of relationship with God.

One reason these concepts are inextricably linked is the power of God's Holy Spirit. God's Spirit is transformative. When we receive His Spirit, we will experience transformation as God's Holy Spirit molds us into the new creatures He has called us to be.

Moreover, God's Holy Spirit is saturating. When He fills us, we are filled entirely. Every thought, action, activity, mindset, habit, relationship, and belief system will be affected by the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, being completely filled is to be completely transformed.

In Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council (a meeting of the highest apostles and church leaders) met to discuss holiness as it related to the Gentiles. They reached an important conclusion that day: the Holy Spirit within each person both saves and purifies. Moreover, the Council concluded in Acts 15:11 that just as the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit and were cleansed (past tense), so also "through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (future tense). In other words, the salvation God offers saves at the moment of the new-birth experience, and the work of salvation continues. This continued work of salvation results in fruit: holiness reflecting a transformed life.

Our prayer should be consistent with Paul's prayer in I Thessalonians 5:23-24 that God would sanctify each of us completely, right now and in the future, as we are preserved in holiness until God returns for His church.

THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE, RELATIONSHIP
WITH GOD ALWAYS RESULTED IN
TRANSFORMED LIVING AND THINKING.

DAY 1

Acts 15:7

And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

Biblical Insight

In this verse Peter was referencing the conversion of Cornelius and his household in Acts 10, when God directed Peter to visit them and preach the gospel unto them. However, Peter made it clear: although their conversion happened by Peter's mouth, it ultimately happened by God's choice. Regardless of the vessel, Peter recognized God's decision extends salvation to all humanity. This assertion would form a basis for Peter's later argument. If God chooses who and how to save, how could any human be so arrogant as to place earthly stipulations on that salvation?

Daily Devotion

Much like Peter's story, argument surrounded the account of the man who hung beside Jesus on the cross. The man had lived an unholy, destructive lifestyle. Yet when he cried out for mercy, he received it.

Although elements of how to live are laid out clearly, it is ultimately up to Christ as to who will receive a crown. It is not our place to decide who is worthy of the gospel. It is, however, in our job description to live a life pleasing to God and to share His saving message. He is the author and the finisher of our faith and the faith of others. Do your part; God's got the rest. He is still in the business of writing beautifully redemptive stories.

What are some ways God has redeemed your story? In what ways can you help others along as God writes their story?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

Acts 15:8-9

⁸ And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

⁹ And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

Biblical Insight

The infilling of the Holy Spirit and resulting purification of holiness through faith is an ultimate spiritual equalizer. All humanity must have this experience, regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, or any other demographic. This fact served as proof that Gentiles and Jews were equal in God's eyes: equally needing salvation and equally able to receive salvation. In Peter's eyes, this truth was the equivalent of God coming to their legal defense ("And God . . . bare them witness"). How could anyone argue against God's perfect witness?

Daily Devotion

The meeting room was overflowing with conversations of well-esteemed guests and dignitaries. In walked a man, shambled at best. The crowd instantly turned their gaze toward him.

"Who let him in here?"

"He does not belong."

"What is he wearing?"

Hearing the hurtful murmuring, he kept his head down and continued to walk, dodging hateful stares the whole way. After making his way to the microphone, he began to speak. He revealed himself as the CEO of their company and began his keynote address. He reminded the attendees that people are more than what they appear to be on the outside. How we treat those who look different from us matters a great deal.

People we encounter may look disheveled, unkempt, and unworthy by the world's standards, but they have a place in God's church. Outlaws, outliers, and outcasts all belong in God's kingdom. God is in the business of rebuilding beautiful.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

Acts 15:10-11

¹⁰ Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

¹¹ But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Biblical Insight

Biblical Insight

Peter pointed out the irony of this debate. The Jerusalem Council was discussing whether Gentiles should adhere to the Torah, while the Jews themselves had always been unable to bear the yoke of it. Peter rightly recognized salvation only comes through God's grace, not works. Peter's observation possibly inspired later similar observations by Paul in Romans 8:3 and Ephesians 2:8-9. Hebrews 10:1-4 states the sacrifices mandated by the Torah could not make anyone perfect. The logical conclusion is that even following the Torah perfectly—which no one could do—would not have been enough to save anyone.

Daily Devotion

Humanity was born with a sinful nature—a desire to do what is right but an internal war against our sinful nature (the flesh) to gratify itself. When Jesus walked on earth, He made no mistakes. Even with His inherent goodness, He still bore the sin and shame of all humanity. His goodness did not keep Him from nail scars, change the mockers' tones, or stop betrayal by some of His closest friends. Redemption was required. The cross is a terribly beautiful depiction of grace with skin on. Though Jesus was perfect, He knew all the good deeds in the world would not be an assured ticket to Heaven. Renewing, washing, forgiving, and salvation were necessary. A price had to be paid. Thank God He was willing to pay it.

Our well-intending good deeds cannot save us. We must take up our crosses and die to the flesh daily. It is not salvific until we do.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

Romans 6:4

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Biblical Insight

To submit to baptism is to identify with Christ's burial. This connection by Paul is important for Apostolic believers for multiple reasons. First, the connection to burial indicates baptism by full immersion. Second, the connection to Christ is consistent with baptism performed "in the name of Jesus," the only pattern shown throughout the Book of Acts.

Submission to burial is also important because burial is the only way to achieve a resurrection. This truth has a double fulfillment: we receive a resurrection into a new, holy, transformed lifestyle, but we also have the confidence of being raised again with Jesus Christ in eternity.

Daily Devotion

Jesus' resurrection has mesmerized people for generations. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead is astounding, but what about what happened just before? What happened in those in-between moments?

Jesus was buried. His body was washed, prepared, placed in a tomb, and a stone sealed the tomb. Though Jesus was perfect in all His ways, He displayed the death, burial, and resurrection as a template for us.

We cannot experience new life until we bury the old one. We bury the old life through baptism. Baptism is vital to salvation because without being buried, we have no hope of being raised to glory.

Have you been buried in baptism? If not, why not make today the day? If you have, reflect on how you felt that day.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

I Thessalonians 5:23–24

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Biblical Insight

The sanctification God offers is performed wholly, completely. Partial holiness is nonsensical and impossible. God intends for His holiness to permeate every aspect of our being. Every thought and action, the essence that makes each individual unique, should be affected by God's holiness. Furthermore, holiness is not a one-time activity; we must allow ourselves to be preserved holy until Jesus returns. Fortunately, we have Jesus on our side. If He called us to holiness, He will be faithful to make us holy as well.

Daily Devotion

God never does anything halfway. When it comes to our relationship with Him, we have the choice to be all in or all out. No middle ground exists when it comes to salvation. God has a strong distaste for lukewarmness.

The good news is that holiness is a process, a daily decision that helps us become who we are. Holiness is not a one-time act or an expectation of instant perfection. God does not expect us to get it right every time, but He does require steadfastness and commitment. Once we dedicate our lives to Him, the progression begins.

He walks with us step by step, day by day. He knows we will take wrong turns and need bandages when we fall. He is faithfully present and exceptionally forgiving. If we stay the course and commit to full consecration, we will one day be whole and holy.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*
