**WORDS OF SALVATION (#6)**

***Sanctification***

The Book of Psalms. What kind of feelings do you get when you hear the preacher say, “Today’s text will be taken from the book of Psalms?” Some folks get a warm, happy feeling. Some get a sentimental feeling, thinking of some comforting passage that was read at the funeral of their loved one. Most think of comforting, inspiring, or beautiful quotes like:
“*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want* …” (Psa. 23)
“*Blessed is the man who walks… He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that
 brings forth its fruit in its season … whatever he does shall prosper*” (Psa. 1)
“*The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork*” (Psa. 19)
*“I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And
 that my soul knows very well.”* (Psa. 139)

But if you were to sit and read all 150 Psalms in one sitting you would likely be shocked, maybe a bit confused, and without doubt frustrated. But one thing you would feel for sure is sympathetic. The reality is that the vast majority of the Psalms are the honest doubts, distresses, discouragements and depressions of men who are struggling mightily with problems in life. Personally, I think Psalms is about the process of God’s *SANCTIFICATION* of men who live in a broken world but are trying to live holy lives before a holy God.Throughout these many Psalms we find the writer desperately trying to find God, understand God, or appeal to God to help in his earthly struggles. I’ve grown to love the book, not for its beautiful poetry, or comforting edification, but more for its revelation of my desperate desire to find God, and please God, through all my trials and tribulations. Brethren, that is the idea of God’s sanctification of me.

Of all the *Words of Salvation* we have studied together (salvation, reconciliation, redemption, justification, propitiation) it this one, sanctification, that challenges me the most. Read these verses and perhaps you will see (and agree) why I say that:

Eph. 1:4 “*just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”*

Eph. 5:25-26 *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might* ***sanctify*** *and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”*

I Thess. 4:3-8 “*For this is the will of God, your* ***sanctification****: … that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in* ***sanctification*** *and honor, … For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness*.”

2 Thess. 2:13-14 *”But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through* ***sanctification*** *by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

2 Tim. 2:20-21 “*But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor,* ***sanctified*** *and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work*.”

These, and other scriptures like them, are the most challenging statements of my ever evolving relationship with God. Every last one of us are likely wondering when we are ever going to finally “arrive” at our God-given goal of being sanctified, holy people. We sure don’t “feel” holy, sanctified (saint-i-fied), cleansed, blameless, and without spot, wrinkle or blemish. We don’t “feel” we are “*vessels of honor… useful for the Master*” ready “*for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord*.”

All we really “feel” like is struggling children who keep messing up, taking three steps forward followed by two steps back. Personally, too often I “feel” like Sisyphus, the mythical ancient king of Greece who was confined by Zeus to Hades where his punishment was to roll a boulder up a steep hill, only to have it roll back to the bottom, repeating this struggle for eternity. Some days I feel like I’ve made progress, only to soon feel like that boulder ran over me (again), and I have to start over. Do you relate?

Sanctification is God’s lifelong process for us “*to be conformed to the image of His Son*” (Rom. 8:29). It is His method for us to “*be transformed*” (Rom. 12:2). It was what Paul described about his lifelong goal, “*that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead*” (Phil. 3:10-11). He immediately followed that process of sanctification with this caveat: *“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me”* (Phil. 3:12). Like Paul, I’m not there (yet), so I must “*press on*.” Jesus laid hold of me to change me. I must let him.

At your baptism you were “*washed… sanctified… justified*” (I Cor. 6:11). But your future included God’s plan to “***sanctify*** *you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it”* (I Thess. 5:23-24). Right this second God is at work, slowly, but surely, sanctifying you “*completely*!” Did you hear Paul? God “*is faithful, who also will do it*!”

All of us need a billboard hung around our chest which reads, “Under construction. God at work. He’s not through with me yet.” Like a beautiful architectural rendering of an ugly present day in-process restoration, I need to know one day this mess will be cleaned up and I will be conformed to the image of Jesus.

That’s sanctification.

Until tomorrow… If you don’t give up on yourself, God won’t. – Rick

*P.S.* more thoughts on sanctification tomorrow.