

Saved for a Purpose

Not redeemed to freely sin/for Impurities
Redeemed for Sanctification

I'd like to begin with a statement made by St Augustine of Hippo. He said "O Lord, help me to be pure, but not yet." This statement all too often represents the mindset of believers. All too often we have this mindset of "forgiveness in the morning so I can live by the flesh tonight." And when you examine the popular teachings of today, it is no wonder that this is the mindset of believers. I mean, when you have a verse like 1 John 1:9 to bank on so to speak, when push comes to shove in the life of a believer, what motivation do we have to pursue righteousness? Ronald Rolheiser, president of a small theology school in Texas said:

We want to be a saint, but we also want to feel every sensation experienced by sinners; we want to be innocent and pure, but we also want to be experienced and taste all of life; we want to serve the poor and have a simple lifestyle, but we also want all the comforts of the rich; we want to have the depth afforded by solitude, but we also do not want to miss anything; we want to pray, but we also want to watch television, read, talk to friends, and go out.

It's a small wonder that life is often a trying enterprise, and that we are often tired and pathologically overextended.

I firmly believe that we were not saved to freely sin; we were not saved for impurities. Galatians 5:13 reads, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

Rather, we were saved for a purpose, and as Mrs. Zeigler spoke Thursday she explained the future inheritance that is offered to those who believe in the name of the Lord. But in order to receive our inheritance, we must not use our freedom in a "forgiveness in the morning" type manner.

Rather, we were saved to live the remainder of our lives on this earth enduring the process of sanctification.

I love the Gospel of the Grace of God. I mean, it is remarkable in every aspect. As Pastor Crawford spoke Thursday night, it is the ultimate love story, is it not? God so loving his creation that He gave us a choice to love Him back. God providing the means for our reconciliation if we would just believe on the blood sacrifice of Christ which took place some 2000 years ago. I was so happy to hear Mrs. Zeigler explain Ephesians 2:8-10 because I see it over and over today in churches all over, we tend to stop after verse 9. We don't continue through v 10. We all want to hear and talk about the grace of God and that is was nothing that we've done or could do to be saved. But nobody wants to hear about the good works we are to walk in.

And as we've heard Pastor Herbert say, God is a God of order and He has had things figured since before the foundation of the world. He set up all of the types that proceeded and pointed to the coming fulfillment in Christ. And Christ came as a perfect sacrifice for our atonement and redemption.

But today, I want to look at another Gospel and that is the Gospel of the glories of Christ. I want to look at what Christ's death as well as His Resurrection has done for us, and how these events furthered the plan of God as well as how we who believe are to respond to our calling.

Do we have any responsibility once we become Christians? In a period during Christendom when we are so afraid to even utter the word “work” or “deed” it would seem as if the popular answer is a resounding NO. In fact, it seems as if most people overcompensate and emphasize the free gift of God and the forgiveness that comes through believing and they downplay living the life of a Christian. This is why we struggle with questions such as “Is a person who professes to be a Christian who “shows no fruit” saved or not?”

It’s not until we know the answer to this question and understand the answer that we realize we have a purpose post-salvation. And the proper response to this question would be “what salvation are you asking about?” Bearing fruit has nothing to do with our spirit salvation. It has everything to do with the salvation of our soul.

Pastor Caldwell at a Willow Creek Conference said the following:

"There are two great moments in a person's life: the moment you were born and the moment you realize why you were born." And I would only clarify that statement as referring to spiritual matters.

The question I have wondered in relation to our spirit salvation is if God’s entire plan was to save us for eternity, why are we still living after we are saved?

-I mean, as I said, God is a God of order.

-He doesn’t do things that are insignificant.

-Anything He does, He has purpose to.

-So what is our point on earth if we have been saved

and what motivation to do good/live a righteous life do I have?

-God could take us away if there was no more reason for us to be on earth couldn’t He?

-But it seems to me you have two ways to look at our lives post-salvation (and that salvation being of the spirit by grace through faith).

Option #1 We are saved and our remaining lives are to serve as an example for others in hopes that God will use us to bring others to the point where they accept Christ.

-This is the typical “we are saved to worship God and live a good life as a way of saying thank-you to God” response.

Option #2 Our spirits are saved and our remaining lives are to be lived out in fear and trembling anxiously awaiting the return of the Lord so that we may be found faithful and be rewarded for our obedience to God post-salvation, and by so-living, being a witness to the grace of God and helping others accept the blood of Christ.

And thankfully, we have the Scriptures to turn to in order to find our answer.

-I want to turn to 1 Corinthians 10.

-Just to give context, the verses we will read follow Paul’s analogy where he encourages believers to run in such a way that they might win the prize.

-And Ive preached on this before where He disciplines his body so that He will not be disqualified from the prize.

Then we read beginning in verse 1:

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.

So, taking that passage into account, particularly verse 6, we see that the Exodus and the following events have purpose for us as Christians.

We are going to briefly go over the Exodus as it presents for us a clear picture and a full picture in one story.

-The neat thing with Scripture is that there are so many layers.

-The Exodus tells us much about the future of Israel and what will take place for them in the end-times when they are redeemed.

-But as Paul just told us, what happened in the Exodus also happened as types for Christians

-(the word example comes from the greek word tupos meaning a model for imitation or an instance for warning).

-So, in Exodus 12, we see the Passover lamb.

-is a type of redemption for us, it's spirit salvation.

-Christ had to come to be our perfect sacrifice.

-Exodus 13 on through the writings of Moses present the reason God redeemed man.

-What we read in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua is a picture of post-salvation life.

-Christ sacrificed Himself for our sins so we would be re-united with God.

-And the reason He did this was to make an inheritance in another land available.

In the type, we see it is only those who sacrificed a lamb for their household that were delivered from Egypt

and it is only this group that was extended the offer to inhabit another land,

Exodus 3:8

(God speaking) So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey...

-We are not going to tackle this whole issue today.

I mean, there are numerous aspects to what we just read.

-We have studied this Inheritance before

and we have studied that it is the right of the firstborn son to receive the inheritance and how we have become firstborn sons...

these are all parts of that future distant land that God has intended for us to inherit.

But, let it be noted, that we have a heavenly calling.

Hebrews 3:1

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession”

While this is what God had in mind for us when He sent His Son to save our spirits,
that we would take possession of our inheritance and inhabit a heavenly city
today I want to look at what He expects from us in this life,
 how He has planned for us to live the remainder of our lives on this earth
 because it is the way in which we live
 that decides whether we will realize our inheritance
 or whether God will be displeased with us,
 as He was with the first generation of Israel in Exodus...
 today I want to discuss the process of Sanctification.

But before we examine anything, it has been told that when Queen Victoria was a child, she didn't know she was in line for the throne of England. Her instructors, trying to prepare her for the future, were frustrated because they couldn't motivate her. She just didn't take her studies seriously. Finally, her teachers decided to tell her that one day she would become the queen of England. Upon hearing this, Victoria quietly said, "Then I will be good." The realization that she had inherited this high calling gave her a sense of responsibility that profoundly affected her conduct from then on.

We too, just as we heard in Hebrews 3:1, are partakers of a heavenly calling. God has big plans for us, IF we are willing to die to our flesh, take up our cross and follow Him. So as we study today, keep that in the back of your mind... And, as we attempt to tackle this uncomfortable topic, one that we will all butt heads with at something revealed to us by the Spirit, because that is the nature of being convicted and conviction and sanctification are closer than brothers, let us be open to what the Spirit would tell us so that we may grow closer to Him and we may become holy as God is holy.

Charles Swindoll tells of a time when he was at a breakfast with Tom Landry, legendary coach of the Dallas Cowboys. Someone asked Coach Landry how he was able to forge a team out of individuals so that they would win, something he managed to do every year for 29 years. The table grew silent as he paused for a moment, and then said, "My job is to get men to do what they don't want to do in order to achieve what they've always wanted to achieve."

1 Corinthians 11:1 reads, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” Paul and really Christ, is our Tom Landry, getting us to do that which at times we just don't want to do, even though we still want the results.

The main passage I want to spring board from is in Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica. To give a little background of the church...the city was the capital of Macedonia during the time of the Romans. Greeks were the primary dwellers there, but Romans and a good Jewish population lived there as well.

Paul began this church on his second missionary journey and he was there for 3 weeks teaching the new converts from the beginning, as most of them had no knowledge of the Old Testament. After three weeks, Paul had to leave in a hurry as some began to threaten him and accuse him of being a false teacher. Paul wrote this letter once he returned to Corinth. He wanted to encourage this new church to continue in the face of persecution as well as develop a deeper understanding of end-times. I mean, they had three weeks with Paul, three weeks to listen to his teachings and to ask questions.

This is probably something similar to someone or comes to the conference and then has to leave or the pastors in Africa who when we went over there or they have come here and learned and soaked up as much as they can, they go home and are faced with this new perspective and it makes sense that things might get a little confusing.

So Paul writes to them and it is no surprise that Paul's theme in his first letter to this church is the Second Coming of Christ.

-Listen as I read through different verses throughout this rather short book and take note of Paul's focus:

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What do we see here?

We see Paul encouraging them to look forward to the Second Coming of Christ but also, He is encouraging them to prepare themselves,
praying that God will sanctify them completely (spirit, soul and body)
so that when Christ does return,
they will be found without blame in holiness.

So, it is in the midst of this context that we find the verses I want to look at today.

Our passage today is in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8. It reads:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

Ya know, I find it quite interesting.

I mean, we hear Christians, may be these Christians who with good intention go around seeking to know what the will of God is for their life.

The beautiful thing however, is it is right there in God's Word.

What did we just read in verse 3? "For this is the will of God, your sanctification."

Takes the guessing right out of it doesn't it?

The greek word for sanctification is hagiozomenos meaning consecration, purification. From the word hagiozo meaning to make holy, set apart for God, make opposite of koinos, meaning common. Strongs writes, "Sanctification is thus the state predetermined by God for believers, into which in grace He calls them, and in which they begin their Christian course and so pursue it. Hence they are called saints"

I had a professor and I may have shared this with you before but it rings true.

He said something to the effect of "God cares less about what job we have, He cares about HOW we live and do our job."

There is nothing special about being a preacher as opposed to a business man or a construction worker or a tax collector or whatever job you find that you want to do.

God is more concerned with how we are living our life.

Are we enduring the process of sanctification or are we giving into our fleshly desires?

That is what God is concerned about.

I'm not saying don't pray about your decisions

God wants for us to be sanctified

So, it would make sense that our daily activities would in some way encourage that in us.

Our environment should be one that helps us become more like Christ than not.

Our friends should be ones that encourage us in our faith,

not pulling us farther from the faith.

You know, my parents have always prayed that my brothers and I would have good, strong Christian friends that act like Christians.

Never really had that in high school, had a few but no one close.

But once I went to Moody, I gained some friendships that are just plain refreshing.

I mean, to surround yourself with other believers who are pursuing a life of holiness, that will encourage and promote an environment of sanctification.

Being at Moody, we read all sorts of book and one book I read was written by someone who's gifting is without a doubt encouragement. Without getting into any of the content of his book, I wanted to share two paragraphs with you because for one,

when I read it I felt like I was reading something from my own writings, I mean, it sounds just like conversations that I have had.

Secondly, when it comes to the process of sanctification, I think this is a HUGE dilemma for people

and it goes with what I was just speaking about concerning our environment.

He writes, "Another important key to reaching your full potential is putting yourself in an environment where the seed can grow. I know people who are extremely talented. They have incredible potential. But they insist on hanging around the wrong sort of people. If you are close friends with people who are lazy and undisciplined, people who don't have great dreams, people who are negative and critical, they will rub off on you. Moreover, that environment in which you place yourself will prevent you from rising any higher. You cannot hang out with negative people and expect to live a positive life. If all your friends are depressed and defeated and have given up on their dreams, make some changes. Let's be honest: You're probably not going to pull them up; more likely, if you continue to spend too much time in their presence, they will pull you down. Certainly, you love your friends; you can pray for them and try to encourage them to make positive changes in their lives, but sometimes the best thing you can do is break away from negative people and put yourself in a healthy, positive, faith-filled environment. This is extremely critical, because it doesn't matter how great the potential in the seed, if you don't put it in good soil, it will not take root and grow."

I'm not going to get into arguing the proper ratio of Christian friends to non-Christian friends cause there isn't one.

Of course we are going to have relationships with unbelievers,

it is inevitable when you work with them and are bumping arms with them
at the store or a restaurant

and I don't think God wants us to seclude ourselves in some monastery.

But, all I will say is your environment and who you surround yourself with
does impact your sanctification.

When you are in a tough situation and you need someone to knock some truth into you, someone to give you advice,

will your friends encourage you to press on in the Word
knowing that suffering precedes glory,

or will they offer up advice that tickles your ear?

Surround yourself with those who are pursuing holiness

and who encourage you to live a life of holiness.
Your close friends, those who you seek and respect their opinion,
they need to be people of character,
people of integrity
so that when you are wanting to quit and take the easy way out,
they urge you to press on to maturity
and to go through the process of sanctification.

While this process is individual in the sense that I can not sanctify you, it must be something you want to pursue and you do yourself, I firmly believe that this process, being sanctified is extremely difficult to do alone.

God has given us brothers and sisters and we are to encourage each other in the process.

Galatians 6:1-5

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. For each one will bear his own load.

I have seen friends fall on their face because they took the advice that they wanted to hear,
that ultimately satisfied their flesh
and it saddens me to see Christians who have such potential fall like that.

All because they didn't change their environment and their close friends.

And when you enter into the knowledge and depth of the Word of God that we are learning, I think it would be wise to take as many precautions as necessary
because there are some major consequences
that we read in Hebrews for those who "fall away" from the faith.

As we continue in our passage, we read the second part of verse 3, "that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality."

I think it is very intriguing that this verse would follow the statement that the will of God is for us to be sanctified.

And I don't think it's by accident.

You see, again, in this context where Paul is emphasizing the second coming of Christ,
the sin that is listed in contrast to sanctification,
that which is polar opposite to sanctification,
is sexual immorality.

I stumbled across a quote from an unknown author. It read, "It is clear, then, that a man's body belongs to his spouse—whether current or future. This is the principle behind the many warnings against physical promiscuity."

I think this person started to see the picture.

But I'm going to take it a step farther.

Any sin in essence is sexual immorality.

That would obviously include any act of sexual immorality,
but is not limited to those types of actions.
When one has the proper view of Christians potentially being the Bride of Christ,
everything we do that is against God,
is as if we are cheating on our future spouse, who is Christ.
If we hope to be part of those called out by the Spirit,
we must not commit adultery with our future spouse.
We must remain faithful and clean as virgins.

Reading this makes me think of Leviticus and all the chapters describing clean v unclean and how particular God is about one who has become defiled.

We read in 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1

Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

"I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;

AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

"Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord.

"AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;

And I will welcome you.

"And I will be a father to you,

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,"

Says the Lord Almighty.

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

God will be a father to those who do not touch what is unclean, to those who separate themselves from the world and cleanse themselves, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

We continue in 1 Thessalonians 4:4-7

That each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

Once again, we see the purpose God has redeemed us
and the purpose we are still living
is so that we may know how to possess our bodies in sanctification and honor
(living by the Spirit)
and not in lustful passion
(according to the flesh).

God has not called us to be impure but to be sanctified.

Now, we are going to read through several passages where we view this process of sanctification.

I am not including any other passages that explain the works of the flesh

(you can find those in Galatians 5, Colossians 3-4)

as my desire today is not to tell us how we are to live
rather, I want us to realize that we were in fact saved for a reason
and that reason is to be sanctified.

I want to drive home the point that each of us has a higher calling,
we are not to live impure lives
but we are to become sanctified daily,
growing more and more like Christ.

I'm sorry if this part may seem boring to you,
but this is one of those things that I find it difficult to say it better than Scripture
so I figure why not let Scripture say it for itself.
So, without further adieu, let's begin:

Romans 14:7-9

For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

And continuing in 2 Corinthians 5:15

And He (Christ) died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

We see the purpose Christ died and rose
and it was so that He might be Lord of everybody,
so that those who call themselves His would live for Him
or die for Him
but not for themselves.

1 Cor 6:9-11

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

And continuing in verses 18-20:

Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

We see once again, we have been bought with a price,
and as such, we are to glorify God in our bodies,
that is, we are to be sanctified.

Once we become Christians, we are to flee immorality.

We are to press on toward holiness so that God will be approved and not displeased with us.

Romans 6:19, 22

I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification (lit. you have your fruit to sanctification), and the outcome, life eternal/lasting for an age.

-Here it seems as if the fruit of one's sanctification is life lasting for an age.

-the reign of a believer is the outcome of sanctification,

-that is our motivation!

When push comes to shove, you push harder than ever to keep yourself in this race because you know what is at stake if you disqualify yourself and choose to not endure the process of sanctification

Hebrews 3:18-19

And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

-Once again, notice that it is the rest that is at stake here and those who were disobedient did not enter.

Hebrews 4:11-12

Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

We see that we must be diligent in order to enter the rest but we also see that it is the Word of God that is our plumb-line. It is the word that judges us.

And I will conclude with Titus 2 as it does offer a picture of how we are to conduct ourselves but pay particular attention to the last few verses:

“But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”

This chapter offers something for each of us to work on. Older men, older women, young women, young men...no group missing as far as I can tell. But the reason I read this chapter is for the last few verses. Did you catch it? Verses 11-14? We have been saved by the grace of God and have been instructed to deny ungodliness and to live righteously in the present age. Why? Because we are looking forward to the hope and appearing of the glory of Christ who gave Himself to redeem us so that He might purify for Himself a people for His own possession.

So, you've just sat through a message talking about how God sent Christ for a purpose and that purpose was to redeem us so that we may be sanctified.

The question that you should obviously be asking yourself is,
well how do I go about being sanctified?
What does that look like?

And while you may have been able to infer
based on some of the Scriptures we have read thus far,
ya know, we're here at the conference, we've got a lot of thoughts going on in our heads
from the great teaching thus far and well, Im feeling generous
so I'm gonna go ahead and tell you point blank how to be sanctified.
Again, take the guessing out of it.

The answer is in John 17:17 as Christ is praying for believers.
And He gives us the answer to my question from the beginning as well,
why does God not take us away from this life once our spirit has been saved.

He prays:

I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

We have been kept in this world post-salvation by grace
so that we may be sanctified
and as Romans 6:22 taught us, by enduring the process of sanctification,
we will reign with Christ.
But as far as how to be sanctified,
it is by the truth.

We are sanctified by being in the Word and letting the Word live in us.
You can't expect to be sanctified if you are not in the Word!!!

Psalms 119:9-16 reads,

How can a young man keep his way pure?
By keeping it according to Your word.
With all my heart I have sought You;
Do not let me wander from Your commandments.
Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.
Blessed are You, O LORD;
Teach me Your statutes.
With my lips I have told of
All the ordinances of Your mouth.
I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies
As much as in all riches.
I will meditate on Your precepts
And regard Your ways.
I shall delight in Your statutes;
I shall not forget Your word.

We must keep our way according to the Word of God, seek God with all our heart, not wonder from his commandments, treasure His Word in our hearts.

We must have the attitude of Job that we see in Job 23:10-12:

"But He knows the way I take;
When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.
"My foot has held fast to His path;
I have kept His way and not turned aside.
"I have not departed from the command of His lips;
I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

Do you treasure the word of God more than food?

It is the Spirit who sanctifies us
and it is when we are in the Word,
reading the words of God that we become in tune with the Spirit
and we can distinguish His voice as we sit in the stillness and listen.
This is where the process begins.

2 Thessalonians 2:13

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

The last verse in our passage, 1 Thessalonians 4:8 reads,
"So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you."

In essence, this verse states clearly, it is our choice to reject God or follow Him. We can choose to reject this process, but by so doing, we are rejecting God, not man. When you look at it that way, it really isn't a choice now is it?

And being that Macedonia was the former kingdom of Alexander the Great I figured that I'd give an illustration from this area to wrap things up. You may have heard me tell this story before but it does a good job depicting this picture:

There was a man in the Army of Alexander the Great who was also named Alexander. During wartime, this man fled when a particular battle began. He was found and brought before Alexander the Great, who asked this man what his name was. The man replied softly, "Alexander." "I can't hear you," the ruler stated. The man again said, a little louder, "Alexander." The process was repeated one more time, after which Alexander the Great scolded the man saying, "Either change your name or change your conduct."

We cannot change our name.

Once we have been redeemed, we bear the name of Christ.

We can't return to Egypt,

we can die in the wilderness, but we can't return to Egypt.

But what a sorrowful thing that would be,

to have so great a salvation extended to us by the grace of God
and then to turn our heads and quit pursuing it.

William Penn wrote, "No pain, no palm; no thorns, no throne; no gall, no glory; no cross, no crown."

Sanctification is by no means easy. The reason it is so difficult is once the Spirit begins working on you, once He begins revealing sin in your life, you begin noticing more sin everywhere in your life. It isn't necessarily new sin, rather, it has been there all along, you just couldn't see that sin due to the other sin you were focusing on.

Gordon MacDonald, in his book Ordering Your Private World, told of an experience in his own life that illustrates this. He writes, "Some years ago, when Gail and I bought the old abandoned New Hampshire farm we now call Peace Ledge, we found the site where we wished to build our country home strewn with rocks and boulders. It was going to take a lot of hard work to clear it all out..."

-The first phase of the clearing process was easy. The big boulders went fast. And when they were gone, we began to see that there were a lot of smaller rocks that had to go too. But when we had cleared the site of the boulders and the rocks, we noticed all of the stones and pebbles we had not seen before. This was much harder, more tedious work. But we stuck to it, and there came the day when the soil was ready for planting grass."

This is the process of sanctification and it is a process that we will be enduring until the day we die.

It isn't easy.

It requires a strong environment that enables one to grow.
It requires being vulnerable with close friends who want to grow in holiness with you.
It requires lifestyle changes.
It requires being in the Word daily.
But above all, it requires discipline, discipline to put all this into action.

And that may in fact be the toughest hurdle for some of us to jump,
that initial hurdle,
the discipline to begin.

But, as Coach Sidney Green, Josh's basketball coach at UNF, who quoted Jim Rohn always said:
"We must all suffer one of two things: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret or
disappointment."

With that, let me encourage you to suffer through the pain of discipline that comes with the
process of sanctification because NONE of us want to suffer the pain of disappointment and
regret living our life for ourselves instead of for our Lord.