

Series: Acts

Lesson: 48

Title: Sanctification Illustrated

Scripture: Acts 14: 5-10

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Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Princeton, New Jersey

Sanctification is the work of the triune God. Sanctification means to be separated from unbelief into that faith which believes Christ alone--that faith which trusts that all spiritual blessings from God are freely ours and we are complete in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

In the season of God's love, God the Holy Spirit separates each of his children from unbelief to the belief of the truth with the divine conception called, the new birth. Through the gospel of Christ, he converts his children from unbelief to faith in Christ Jesus the Son of God. The gospel by which his children are sanctified declares that our separation from our sin and unbelief is totally in and by the Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord. Faith believes that God the Father separated his children from all others by his sovereign will when he chose them and entrusted them to his Son before time began. Faith believes that we were perfected forever by the one offering of Christ Jesus when he was made sin for us and paid the wages of death on our behalf thus fully satisfying the justice of God for us. That gospel--that truth—which all believe who have been sanctified and are being kept from the evil is this, "Christ Jesus is All my salvation." It is not God-given faith if it does not believe that Christ Jesus is ALL. Faith believes that ALL the requirements we need to enter into God's presence are now ours in Christ our Savior. Faith believes that in Christ we are holy—there are not degrees of holiness, you either are holy or you are not holy—in Christ the believer is holy. Faith believes that in Christ we are justified before God—there are not degrees of justification, you either are justified or you are under the condemnation of God—**there is therefore, now, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit** (Ro 8: 1.) This is the belief of the truth, through which the Holy Spirit sanctifies us, so that we rest in God who separated us by sovereign election and in Christ his Son who perfected forever them that are being sanctified.

Being sanctified? What does that mean? It means two things. It means that there are yet children whom God chose, whom Christ perfected by his one offering, that are now being called out, separated through the Holy Spirit unto belief of the truth. And it means that those who have already been separated through the Holy Spirit unto belief of the truth are continually being kept from the evil of unbelief and sin through the Holy Spirit by Christ's continually testifying of his word of grace in our inner man. When the gospel is proclaimed by the messenger whom Christ has sent, it is in reality, Christ rehearsing in our hearts what he has done for us. Thereby, he keeps the believer from turning from him back to the filth of unbelief—that filth of imagining that we ourselves make ourselves gradually more sanctified by obedience to the Ten Commandments and that filth of enjoying the sins we so easily commit. By God, by Christ, by the Holy Spirit, through the word of grace all God's children are set apart to trust him alone, and by his continual abiding in our hearts through the word of his grace we are kept separated in Christ our Sanctuary.

We saw this in the last message from the passage in Acts 14 verses 1-4. Let's read it together and I will make a few comments to remind you. The key to the passage, you remember, is in verse 3:

Acts 14: 3: Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord...

Paul calls it, "great plainness of speech." They spoke with unmistakable clarity when they declared that in Christ Jesus the Lord dwells all fullness—all fullness of God and all fullness of what holy God requires of all who he accepts. Not only this, but the Lord Jesus Christ spoke boldly through Paul and Barnabas into the hearts of those who heard. That's what the next phrase declares) **which** (the word is "Who". Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly in the Lord and through them the Lord) **gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.** It was by the Lord witnessing of his word of grace in Paul and Barnabas that Paul and Barnabas "so spake" the word of his grace. And it was because the Lord testified of his word of grace in the hearts of those present "that a great multitude both of Jews and Greeks believed." That is why we read in verse 1:

Acts 14: 1: And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. They could not do otherwise, and by the new heart given them through the Spirit of Christ they willingly had no desire to do otherwise, than to believe on Christ their Lord.

Acts 14: 2: But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

The Lord Jesus had to do nothing in these folks to bring about this result. In fact, this was the same heart *from which* those Jews and Greeks who believed were sanctified. The unbelieving Jews and Gentiles refused to stop attempting to establish a righteousness by their own works of the law. This reaction—unbelief, stirring up the unbelieving Gentiles, making their minds evil affected against those who believed—is simply the natural, governing, dominating spirit of all unregenerate sinners, especially those who are religious.

So you see it was God's election of this multitude, it was Christ having perfected them forever by his one offering, and it was the Holy Spirit's work within them which sanctified them—put a difference between them—separated them—from their own unbelief to the belief of the truth.

Not only this, but it was all of the same which *kept* them separated from their unbelief to the belief of the truth. Verse 3 says, Long time therefore abode Paul and Barnabas speaking plainly in the Lord, the Lord continuing to give testimony unto his word of grace in their hearts and the result was this, they continued to be separated. That is what verse 4 declares:

Acts 14: 4: But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to set forth Christ Jesus in whom his children are perfected forever. It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to send forth his Spirit into the hearts of his children and separate them from--everything that separated us from God--to faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. And it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to *keep* us separated

from the evil and stayed on Christ in whom we are complete. That is what is meant by, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor 1: 21.)

Proposition: Now the reason why the gospel of Christ, moreover Christ himself, is all our Sanctification is due to the *power* he exercises when he takes dominion in the hearts of his saints. Therefore, right after this, the Lord Jesus Christ directs Paul and Barnabas to a man whom he uses to illustrate this great power which he performs in sanctifying his people to faith in him and keeping them thereby.

DIVISIONS: We will look at how the power of his grace is manifest in this account in 3 ways:

I. EVERY SINNER GOD SAVES IS INCURABLE BY MAN.

II. THAT WHICH IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH MAN IS ACCOMPLISHED BY GOD ALONE.

III. GOD'S WORK IS ALWAYS SUCCESSFUL.

Acts 14: 5: And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them, 6: They were ware of *it*, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: 7: And there they preached the gospel. 8: And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: 9: The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, 10: Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

Have you ever noticed just how thoroughly incurable the people were in whom Christ, and his apostles, worked a miracle? That is to teach us that:

I. EVERY SINNER GOD SAVES IS INCURABLE BY MAN.

Acts 14: 8: And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

Be sure you understand this man's condition?

- Impotent in his feet—a cripple
- *From* his mother's womb
- Who *never* had walked

Let's consider a few others:

Acts 3:2: And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; None of his friends could do anything to cure him of his lameness. The only thing they could do for this man was carry him to the gate called Beautiful. The only thing he could for himself was to beg. I can not cure you. The only thing I can do for you is carry you to the gate called Beautiful by telling you about him who is altogether lovely. The only thing you can do for yourself is cast yourself on the mercy of God. This man was totally incurable by man.

Mark 5: 25: And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, 26: And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,...You have an issue of blood. We received it from our father, and he from his, and we all received it from our father Adam. There are many religious medicine-men who claim to have the cure but all they will do is cause you to suffer just like she suffered many things of many physicians. She spent all she had and they gladly took it. But she was not bettered, but made worse.

The deception of our own hearts is so incurably evil that after we have jumped through all the hoops in religion, our deceitful hearts fool us into thinking we are healed when we are *nothing bettered, but rather have grown worse*. Through Isaiah, the Lord calls it, “Adding sin to sin. Covering with a covering but not by me,” the Lord said.

John 5: 1: After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2: Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. 3: In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. 4: For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. 5: And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. 6: When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? 7: The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. 8: Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. 9: And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked. There seemed to be a cure in the waters but this man was too lame to put himself into the pool before someone else stepped in before him.

The physical condition of all these is an illustration of the spiritual condition of God’s children prior to his work of grace in our hearts. No man could cure us. We could not cure ourselves. None but the great Physician can cure sinners of our sin, of our spiritual death, and make us whole in him.

The man to whom Paul came was: impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked:

BUT this man—like those others—is set before us to teach us that this is the condition of ALL whom Christ saves. That brings us to our second point.

II. THAT WHICH IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH MAN IS ACCOMPLISHED BY GOD ALONE.

Acts 14: 8: And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked: 9: The same heard Paul speak:

Proof that only Christ alone saves his people from their sins is that God sent him into the world to do just that. **John 9: 1: And as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth. 2: And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? 3: Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the**

works of God should be made manifest in him. 4: I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

This impotent man is set before us as one who heard Paul speak to teach you and I that only the gospel which declares Christ to be All is the gospel whereby Christ saves all whom he saves from their sins. What are our sins? To put it simply, our sins are what separates us from God. Sanctification is God separating his people from the sin which separated us from our God.

Sin is what we are in the heart by virtue of our first birth in Adam. *We do what we are.* We may stop doing on the outside but it does not change what we are on the inside. What we *are within* will have dominion over what we *do without*. That is true whether we are an unregenerate sinner or a regenerated saint, whether we are one with this world or whether we have been separated through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. **Matthew 12:35: A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.** Paul's said the same thing to the brethren in Rome. **Romans 6: 16: Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? 17: But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18: Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.**

It is the sin that we are that separated us from our God. Turn with me if you will to:

Isaiah 59: 1: Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: (The problem does not lie with God) **2: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear.**(hold your place here and listen)

It because of this separation from God because of our sin, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. It is this separation that makes the things of God foolishness to him. It is this separation in sin that makes it so he can not know them. Until God creates a new heart we can not be subject to God, but instead the natural man brings forth the dead fruit just like his dead heart.

In our text, we are shown that by the fact that this impotent man was unable to walk from birth. His not being able to walk illustrate for us why those unbelieving Jews and Gentiles would not and could not, believe the gospel which Paul preached.

Bearing that in mind, as we read these next few verses here in Isaiah 59 think on the outward actions of those unbelieving Jews and Gentiles. It is an exact description of what they did and why they did it (and remember that they were defending the law of Moses, the synagogue, the priest-all things religious) So did we, before the Lord worked his sanctifying work in our hearts. Listen to the description: **Isaiah 59: 3: For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. 4: None calleth for justice, nor *any* pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. 5: They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. 6: Their webs shall not**

become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works *are* works of iniquity, and the act of violence *is* in their hands. 7: Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction *are* in their paths. 8: The way of peace they know not; (you see it goes to the heart, to the understanding, and because it issues from the heart we read next) and *there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.* 13: In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. 14: And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. 15: Yea, truth faileth; and he *that* departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw *it*, and it displeased him that *there was* no judgment.

This is the sin we are and the sins we bring forth because of what we are. Those who believed made themselves a prey simply because they departed--were separated by God's power and grace and cleansed themselves--washed their hands of that former way. In the impotent man we are given an illustration—of the only way sinners are sanctified from the evil of our own flesh. So how are sinners separated from the sin which separates us from our God? (**hold your place here and go back to Acts 14**)

Acts 14: 8: And there sat a certain man at Lystra, (all God's children are certain men because he sanctified them in sovereign election in Christ.) impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: 9: The same heard Paul speak:

There is much more to this word "heard" than just the natural ear, he heard with an ear made new by the Holy Spirit. What did he hear? The word of God's grace. Let me just read the word of God's grace which sinner must hear declared with great plainness of speech, back in **Isaiah 59: 16: And he saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. 17: For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance *for* clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke....21: As for me, this *is* my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that *is* upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.**

All those whom God the Father sanctified in Christ are sanctified by the Spirit of God from that dominating evil heart of unbelief by the creation of a new heart, it is called "sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." And the word whereby we are sanctified in the first hour we believed is the word whereby we are kept separated the rest of our days. **Exodus 33:16: For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? *is it* not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth.**

This impotent man began hearing with an ear that was like his feet—impotent. But by the power of grace working in him he “heard” by the Spirit of Christ. How do you know that? Because the verse says he had faith to be healed. That is the only kind of faith there is.

Just like it happened when Paul spoke in the synagogue, just like it happens every time Christ sends forth his gospel into the hearts of his redeemed through the gospel of his grace, as this impotent man heard Paul speak the word of Christ’s grace, Acts 14: 3:...the Lord **gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.** When the Lord Jesus Christ testifies in the heart he gives faith to believe his testimony--no if’s, and’s or but’s, about it. That is what he did in the impotent man. That is what the Lord gave the apostle Paul eyes to perceive.

The Lord Jesus is illustrating to us what we are in our sin—impotent—and what we are by his grace—whole. So after he had testified in the heart of the impotent man and given him faith, in order to finish the illustration of what he does for the believer in spirit, the Lord told Paul, “Now tell him to stand up and walk.”

Acts 14: 9:...who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed. 10: Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet.

NOW HERE IS THE THIRD POINT: GOD’S WORK IS ALWAYS SUCCESSFUL.

Acts 14: 10:...And he leaped and walked.

We do what we are. What he did on the outside, proved what God made him on the inside. Now, look back up to **Acts 14: 1: And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed....**that what Christ made them on the inside—therefore through the word of his grace which the Lord continued to testify in their hearts, no matter how the unbelieving Jews would have them depart from Christ back to the law, to observing days and months, even threatening them, still, **4:...they held with the apostles** (they did on the outside what they were on the inside.)

Being separated from the sin which separated us from God is by God the Father putting us in Christ, by Christ purging our sin and making us the righteousness of God in him, and through sanctification of the Holy Spirit we believe the word of truth--that to look any where else for justification and sanctification but Christ who Sanctifieth is as filthy a fornication as the physical act itself.

IF HE HAS THEN YOU WILL DO WHAT YOU ARE BY CONTINUING TO LEAP AND WALK WITH JOY IN CHRIST ALONE.