

## Salvation—Sanctification (15<sup>th</sup>)

(Today we continue studying the *experimental* aspect of sanctification in the life of the believer as he lives on earth. Today's podcast continues the discussion of the inwards holiness of the heart and spirit together with the superiority of the New Covenant.)

In our previous podcast we were discussing somewhat II Corinthians 7:1 in connection with I Peter 3:15 with the expressions “to sanctify the Lord God in” our “hearts,” and to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,” and to perfect “holiness in the fear of God.” I would like to direct our attention to the expressions “cleanse ourselves” and “perfecting holiness” as found in II Corinthians 7:1. Though the Greek word for cleanse is not directly related to the Greek word for holiness, it does have much in common. The Greek word for cleanse is καθαρίζω (*katharízō*, *kath-ar-id'-zo*) and simply means *to cleanse*. This word is used to denote the cleansing of one of leprosy, Luke 4:27; 5:12-13; 7:22; 17:14, 17. It is interesting that at the conference in Jerusalem as recording in Acts chapter fifteen, Peter testified regarding Gentiles who were saved, that they equally were saved as the Jews by saying that God “put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith,” Acts 15:9. In other words, whether Jew or Gentile, God, by the Holy Spirit, purifies (cleanses) the heart of those who are saved, and this cleansing is by the faith given to them in regeneration. (See Galatians 5:22; James 2:17-26.) This same word is used in Titus 2:14 which declares that Jesus Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (The word is purify.) Likewise, Hebrews 9:14 bears witness to this same sanctifying (cleansing) as a result of the shed blood of Christ: “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (The word here is purge.) Many other such like passages could be supplied to support and maintain that sanctification is worked in the life of the believer in this life as the results of the finished work of Christ and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. In these verses alone we see that not only “the flesh” is sanctified but also the “heart,” “spirit,” and “conscience” are transformed. Yes, we are to not only “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh” but we are perfect “holiness in the fear of God.”

The Greek word for “perfecting” is, too, an interesting word. It is ἐπιτελέω (*epitéléō*, *ep-ee-tel-eh'-o*) and means basically “to bring to an end, accomplish, perfect, execute, complete.” Like the word for cleansing, it is not something done for us or done to us; it is something that the born again child of grace is to do. This particular Greek word is used only eleven times in ten verses: Luke 13:32 (do); Romans 15:28 (performed); II Corinthians 7:1 (perfecting); 8:6 (finish), 11 (perform; performance); Galatians 3:3 (made perfect); Philippians 1:6 (perform); Hebrews 8:5 (make); 9:6 (accomplishing); I Peter 5:9 (accomplished). While studying each of these would be profitable, I will direct our attention to the verse that is in connection with our subject. It is Philippians 1:6 and it is translated *perform*: “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.” In other words, God not only begins the work in us by the new birth, but He performs, perfects, finishes, or accomplishes it “until the day of Jesus Christ.” In order to attain a more comprehensive understanding of II Corinthians 7:1, allow me to supply a few quotations from some of the various commentators.

A. T. Robertson wrote regarding cleansing “ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh,” “It includes all sorts of filthiness, physical, moral, mental, ceremonial, ‘of flesh and spirit.’” And commenting on “perfecting holiness,” he said, “Not merely negative goodness (cleansing), but aggressive and progressive (present tense of *epiteleō*) holiness, not a sudden attainment of complete holiness, but a continuous process (I Thessalonians 3:13; Romans 1:4, 6).” Robertson’s reference to I Thessalonians 3:13 is apropos to the subject at hand: “To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even

our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” Notice that the heart of the elect of God is established “unblameable in holiness” “at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” Vivaly joined to this passage is I Thessalonians 5:23: “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.” Many other such like scriptures could be supplied to confirm that we are not only commanded to be sanctified outwardly but also inwardly in this life, and that the Lord also works sanctification in the redeemed while living in this world. Again, let us be clear. We do not mean to imply that any child of grace will be perfectly holy and without sin in this life. We have before stated that we are all sinners and that all of the children of God will not reach the same degree or level of holiness. Also we must not become judges by seeking to evaluate just how much one should or should not be sanctified. That is the business of the Lord. Nevertheless, the Scriptures plainly declares that “by their fruits ye shall know them,” Matthew 7:20. Equally, the Lord exhorts the congregation to exhort, warn, and, if necessary, discipline the members that laps into sin. (See I Corinthians 5:3-13; I Peter 4:17; et al.) Needless to say, the fear of the Lord is lacking where these things are not found in an individual or a congregation.

Another passage that is vital to the growth of a Christian is II Corinthians 3:18. It says, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.” This verse is set in the context of the comparison of the Old Covenant to that of the New. The saints at Corinth were reminded that under the New they were described as “the epistle of Christ ... written ... with the Spirit of the living God ... in ... the heart,” II Corinthians 3:3. Furthermore, in showing that the New Testament economy was more glorious than that of the Old, the Old was identified as “the ministration of condemnation,” verse nine. Yes, the Old dispensation, though called “the ministration of condemnation” was glorious, but in comparison to the New Testament it “had no glory ... by reason of the glory that excelleth,” verse ten. Additionally, we are told that the Old is “abolished,” verse thirteen. When we come to our text, God tells us that the born again child of grace not only has an “open face” whereby he knows and understands “the glory of the Lord,” but he is “changed into the same image” of the glory of the Lord “by the Spirit of the Lord.” In other words, it is not a matter of “if” the regenerated child of grace is “changed”; it is positively affirmed that the Spirit does “change” him “into the same image” of the Lord. Romans 8:29 plainly tells us that those foreknown (foreloved) by God before the foundation of the world were predestinated “to be conformed to the image of his Son.” However, II Corinthians 3:18 declares that we do not have to wait until the resurrection for that to begin but that change begins in this life. It is true that the final transformation is realized at the resurrection and we will be living in the glory world in the new heaven and earth, but we are “changed into the same image” now.

This Greek word translated “changed” is μεταμορφόω (metamorphōō, *met-am-or-fo'-o*) and our English word “metamorphosis” comes from this. A common definition of this word in the science of zoology (for example) for an insect, or amphibian, is the process of transformation from an immature form to an adult form in two or more distinct stages. The metamorphosis of a butterfly is the change from an egg, to a larva, to a cocoon, to an adult. In our verse, from the time of our regeneration we are changed from one glory to another as we live our out lives here below; that is, “from glory to glory.” And while this change is by “the Spirit of the Lord,” it is not without “beholding as in a glass” or by the truth of the Scriptures. James, in his epistle, refers to the Scriptures (“the perfect law of liberty”) as “a glass,” James 1:23-24. Equally, Paul speaks of this transformation or change in Romans 12:2: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” The word “transformed” in this verse is the same Greek word for “change” in II Corinthians 3:18. In other words, it is not an either by the Spirit or by the Word of God; it is both working together by the power of God. As we have previously seen in previous podcasts, thankfully, the Lord does not leave it up to His children to be sanctified or not, but He works in them “to will and to do of *his* good pleasure,” Philippians 2:12-13. The reason some are not changed or

transformed into the image of the Lord is revealed in the verses following in chapter four, especially in verses three and four: “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,” II Corinthians 4:3-4.

Obviously many good quotes could be supplied by various commentators regarding II Corinthians 3:18, but I will close by selecting a few choice comments by John Gill concerning this verse. They are as follows:

**beholding as in a glass;** not of the law, but of the Gospel, and the ordinances of it; not with the eyes of their bodies, but with the eyes of their understandings, with the eye of faith; which sight is spiritual, delightful, and very endearing; throws a veil over all other objects, and makes souls long to be with Christ: the object beheld is

**the glory of the Lord;** ... Though the glory of Christ as Mediator, being full of grace and truth, seems to be chiefly designed; this he has from God, and had it from everlasting; this he gives to his people, and is what makes him so glorious, lovely, and desirable in their eye: and whilst this delightful object is beheld by them, they are

**changed into the same image;** ... now in regeneration ... this is the image of Christ; he himself is formed in the soul, his grace is wrought there; so that it is no wonder there is a likeness between them; which lies in righteousness and holiness, and shows itself in acts of grace, and a discharge of duty. The gradual motion of the change into this image is expressed by this phrase, **from glory to glory:** ... from the glory that is in Christ, to a glory derived in believers from him; or which seems most agreeable, from one degree of grace to another, grace here being signified by glory; or from glory begun here to glory perfect hereafter; when this image will be completed, both in soul and body; and the saints will be as perfectly like to Christ, as they are capable of, and see him as he is: now the efficient cause of all this, “is the Spirit of the Lord”. It is he that takes off the veil from the heart, that we may, with open face unveiled, behold all this glory; it is he that regenerates, stamps the image of Christ, and conforms the soul to his likeness; it is he that gradually carries on the work of grace upon the soul, increases faith, enlarges the views of the glory of Christ, and the spiritual light, knowledge, and experience of the saints, and will perfect all that which concerns them; will quicken their mortal bodies, and make them like to Christ; and will for ever rest as a spirit of glory on them, both in soul and body ....

However, our time is exhausted for today. Farewell.