

LEAD! A.10 Soul's Sanctification

In Which We Are Set Apart For Obedience to Jesus, And Suffer For It -- Becoming Holy in The Process

This week we round out our discussion on [salvation](#) and [conviction](#) by focusing on **sanctification**, or **holiness**, words that include being both "set apart" and "made righteous." The overall idea is forming God's [character](#) in us the way we were originally [created](#) to be, before mankind was [corrupted](#).

The process of sanctification is central to our [calling](#) as disciples and leaders, yet often poorly understood. Let us dig into [God's word](#) to try to find out what all it involves...

Adoration

[Psalm 25](#)

Bible

[1 Peter 1:1-9,13-16,22-25](#)

And now, for a [word](#) from the [apostle Peter](#):

Peter, an [apostle](#) of Jesus Christ, to the [strangers](#) scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

The idea of "strangers" could refer to the Jewish [diaspora](#), but more probably includes all Christians who are in effect "aliens" on earth.

[Elect](#) according to the [foreknowledge](#) of God the Father

The phrase "election" is associated with the doctrine of [predestination](#), which in turn is primarily associated with [Calvinist](#) (or Reformed) theology. It touches on many deep (and [contentious](#)) philosophical and theological issues, but the core concept is that God chooses who will belong to Him, as well as foreknows who will choose to follow Him. This type of [determinism](#) can be difficult to reconcile with free will and moral responsibility -- yet the Bible clearly teaches both.

The best response to this paradox is simply to hold fast to **everything** the Bible teaches, even if our human minds can't quite make sense of it all. Also, keep in mind that this passage is less concerned with *why* we are saved than *for what* we are saved:

through [sanctification](#) of the [Spirit](#), unto [obedience](#) and [sprinkling](#) of the [blood](#) of [Jesus Christ](#):

In [other words](#) -- paralleling our [second lesson](#) -- we have been set apart by the Holy Spirit to a) obey Christ, and b) be "baptized" in His blood.

[Grace](#) unto you, and [peace](#), be multiplied.

Grace is a very [rich concept](#), as is peace -- but here they may just play the role of an opening benediction. Paul's main focus is on what God has done:

[Blessed](#) [be] the God and Father of our [Lord](#) Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant [mercy](#) hath [begotten](#) us again unto a lively [hope](#) by the [resurrection](#) of Jesus Christ from the [dead](#),

Here Peter links our "new birth" to Christ's resurrection. While we don't know the exact mechanism, somehow Christ's death and resurrection opened the door to us experiencing God as our Father. Not that Christ had to somehow contend *against* God the Father to make this happen (as is sometimes claimed); the passage makes it clear that it is the **Father's** mercy that made this all possible.

This new life is intimately tied up with a future hope of absolute, indestructible purity:

To an [inheritance incorruptible](#), and [undefiled](#), and that [fadeth not](#) away, [reserved](#) in [heaven](#) for you,

Though it is already present here and now, while we wait:

Who are [kept](#) by the [power](#) of God through [faith](#) unto [salvation](#) ready to be [revealed](#) in the [last](#) time.

This power is appropriated through faith, which allows us to rejoice even when the going is tough:

Wherein ye greatly [rejoice](#), though now for a [season](#), if need be, ye are in [heaviness](#) through manifold [temptations](#):

And why might such testing be necessary"

That the [trial](#) of your faith, being much more [precious](#) than of [gold](#) that [perisheth](#), though it be tried with [fire](#), might be found unto [praise](#) and [honour](#) and [glory](#) at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

This is a difficult truth. Many Christians like to think the only reason we are saved is to go to heaven, and would prefer to get there as soon as possible. However, God's primary goal is not our *comfort*, but our *glory* -- and His. As such, He delights in faith that has been tested, like gold refined in a furnace.

And the very fact that we **don't** know all that is going on is what makes our faithfulness so glorious:

Whom having not [seen](#), ye [love](#); in whom, though now ye see [him] not, yet [believing](#), ye rejoice with [joy](#) unspeakable and full of [glory](#):

For salvation is not itself the whole story, but rather the culmination to the story of faith:

Receiving the [end](#) of your faith, [even] the salvation of [your] [souls](#).

We now jump ahead to verse 13 to get a better idea of what the faithful life looks like:

Wherefore [gird](#) up the loins of your [mind](#), be [sober](#), and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Even though our salvation may have been predestined, that doesn't mean we can simply wait passively for God to take care of everything. We must have [prepared minds](#) and calm spirits. Not so we can win salvation by our own efforts, but so we can hold fast to the hope of God's grace being revealed to us.

For it is that hope (and grace) which enables us to obey:

As [obedient children](#), not [fashioning](#) yourselves according to the former [lusts](#) in your [ignorance](#):

This is a profound claim. He contrasts the obedient life -- the hope of Christ's glorious character being revealed in us through our faith and His grace -- with our past life of being conformed to our sinful desires; Moreover, Peter attributes that conformity to "ignorance" -- i.e., lack of a true heart understanding of who God is and what He wants for us.

The implication is that if we had a clear-sighted understanding of God's purpose, we would naturally obey Him; and thus our sinful follies reflect a deficiency in either our minds or our spirits.

Which is why it is essential to understand that God Himself is holy:

But as he which hath called you is [holy](#), so be ye holy in all manner of [conversation](#);

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

[Holiness](#) is one of those concepts we could spend a lifetime studying and still barely scratch the surface. The core concept is "set apart", meaning reserved for special use as opposed to our everyday human purposes. God is not something we "use", He is something we value for who He is. The flip side is that God does not need to "use" us to make up some deficiency within Himself. Rather, He is complete and self-sufficient in Himself. However, He chose to create us -- and chooses to interact with His -- to manifest His glory in our lives. And as we submit to that purpose, we too become holy.

Which is where we end up down in verse 22:

Seeing ye have [purified](#) your souls in obeying the [truth](#) through the Spirit unto [unfeigned love](#) of the brethren, [see that ye] [love](#) one another with a [pure heart fervently](#):

There appears to be a well-defined progression:

1. submitting to the Spirit

2. obeying truth
3. purifying our souls
4. loving sincerely in human terms ([philos](#))
5. loving fervently with divine purity ([agapao](#))

That is, love is both a means and a measure of our sanctification. The move from merely human love to divine love is the ultimate evidence that we have been "born from above":

Being [born again](#), not of [corruptible seed](#), but of incorruptible, by the [word](#) of God, which [liveth](#) and [abideth](#) for ever.

That incorruptible seed is Christ, the Word ("[logos](#)") of God. Our love is a sign (cf. [John 13:34-35](#)) that we have been loved by Him and born of Him. For that is the only thing that will endure:

For all [flesh](#) [is] as [grass](#), and all the glory of man as the [flower](#) of grass. The grass [withereth](#), and the flower thereof [falleth](#) away:

Any time we submit ourselves to the lusts of flesh -- or any merely human glory -- we are merely hastening our own destruction. The pleasures of this world grow less satisfying each time we partake, even as they dim our minds and confuse our spirits.

In contrast to being conformed to the "Word of God", where every investment pays dividends for eternity:

But the [word](#) of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the [gospel](#) is preached unto you.

Good news indeed!

Conversation

1. How do you feel about the fact that God chose you to be saved? Does it diminish or enhance your sense of choosing to follow Him?
2. Do you tend to think of eternal life as a "present" or "future" experience? How and why?
3. Are you in a season of testing? How can the promises in this passage help you rejoice?
4. What difference does it make whether we see salvation as a "get out of jail free" card from hell, versus a lifelong journey of faith?
5. What do you think holiness looks like?

Decision

- Repentance: Where are you still in bondage to "former lusts"?
- Action: How can you clear your mind and calm your spirit to hope in God?
- Worship: What does it mean for us to be reborn in God's image?

Explore More

- [Predestination vs. Free Will – Is It One or the Other?](#)
- [Salvation – A Past, Present & Future Reality :: :: A Reformed, Christian Blog](#)
- [Bible Alive – The Trying Of Your Faith](#)
- [Between Two Worlds: Justification vs. Sanctification](#)
- [Holiness and the Way of Christ](#)

For Next Week

Read [Ephesians 4](#). What is God's purpose for the body of Christ? How will He accomplish it?