

The Deeper Life [1 Thessalonians 5:23-24]

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Big Idea: *The Christian life isn't one filling, and you're done; it's a daily coming back to the Spirit and saying, "fill me again."*

5.24.26

// INTRODUCTION

Have you ever felt like you were a better Christian back when you got saved than you are right now?

Maybe back then your faith seemed more alive, more real. You could feel it. But then life happened, and the old habits came back. You started out strong and on fire, but somewhere along the way, it got complicated. Maybe you find yourself wondering now... ***is this what following Jesus is really supposed to be like?***

Or maybe you're on the other side of the spectrum. You've been following Jesus for 20, 30, 40 years, and you've made progress. But all these years later, you're still deeply aware of all your shortcomings. You see all the areas that aren't like Jesus, and it eats at you.

To those in both categories... ***If you feel that way today, it doesn't mean something is wrong. It means there's something still going on.*** God hasn't abandoned you. He's still at work. What He started in you, He intends to finish.

// PRAY

Last week, Pastor Spencer walked us through the doctrine of justification. What it means to be saved through Jesus. ***Justification is the declaration that we are not guilty before God and that we are in right standing with Him the moment we put our faith in Jesus.*** You are now declared righteous because Jesus was righteous in your place.

This is the most important legal transaction in the history of the universe, and it happened for you. Today, we're going to talk about something different. Something that flows FROM that moment. Something that begins where justification lands.

I'm talking about **sanctification**.

// WHAT IS SANCTIFICATION

Let me define what sanctification is before I go any further.

Sanctification is the ongoing work of God in your life to make you more like Jesus.
**** Leave up while talking about this. ****

One of our DNA markers here at ACAC is "We strive to become more like Jesus."
Sanctification is the process of that happening.

- Justification is what God declares about you in a moment.
 - **Sanctification is what God does in you over a lifetime.**
- Justification is your status before God... settled, secure, and unchanging.
 - **Sanctification is your transformation into the image of Jesus... real, active, and still in the works.**
- Justification says you've been forgiven.

- **Sanctification says you're being changed.**

One is a verdict. The other is a renovation of your life.

// **PRIMARY TEXT** [1 Thessalonians 5:23-24]

²³May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. [1 Thessalonians 5:23-24]

** All on one slide and leave up. **

Paul is writing here to a church. People who have already placed their faith in Jesus. He's not writing to unbelievers. **He's writing to people who have already been justified, and he's praying that God would sanctify them.**

This tells us something really important. That salvation doesn't complete sanctification; it begins it. The phrase "through and through" there means entirely and to the very end. **God's not interested in just cleaning up the outside (what everyone sees) and leaving the inside (what everyone doesn't see) alone.**

God is after all of you... your thought life, your motivations, the things you do and say when no one is there. Paul is saying that God intends to touch every part of your life.

Look closely at verse 24... *"The one who calls you is faithful, and HE will do it."*

Sanctification — your transformation into the likeness of Jesus isn't something He expects you to handle on your own. You are a work HE is doing. [He is the potter; we are the clay.]

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. [Galatians 2:20]

The old Paul, the one driven by pride and religious performance, has been put to death. Jesus is now living in him. ***The Spirit of God, who is alive and active, is doing the work that Paul could never do on his own.***

That's sanctification. Not self-improvement or behavior modification. It's the life of Jesus being formed in you by the power of the Holy Spirit.

// HOLY SPIRIT: THE AGENT OF THE WORK

Here's where I need to go back to what I talked about in week 3 of this series when we looked at the Holy Spirit. If you were here that week, you heard this... The Holy Spirit is a person, not a force. ***A person who comforts, empowers, convicts, and has a will for your life. And He desires to make you look more like Jesus every single day.***

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit.

¹³For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. [Romans 8:13]

¹⁸So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image. [2 Corinthians 3:18]

The Spirit is the one doing this, not you.

So, what is our role? Are we to just sit and wait?

¹²Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to *work out your salvation with fear and trembling*, ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. [Philippians 2:12-13]

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling because God is working in you to accomplish His purposes.

Because God is working in you, you need to work. All the effort and striving are real, but the POWER for change belongs to Him. You are simply cooperating with what He's already doing.

// OUR PROBLEM

I believe many of us are stuck in a pattern we don't even realize. ***We treat the moment of salvation like it was the main event, and everything after that is up to us.***

We got saved, we received God's free gift of salvation, now we're trying to live the Christian life in our own strength. ***It's like we're operating on "conversion fuel."*** We are trying to live off the energy from a single moment that happened years ago, instead of returning to the source of that power every day. Yet we wonder why we're exhausted and falling over and over into the same old patterns. ***It's why following Jesus can feel like a grind, rather than growth.***

That is not what God wants or designed for us.

The denomination we are part of, the Alliance, has always talked about the Spirit-filled life. The deeper life. This posture of daily surrender. Coming back to God every morning, every hour, saying, ***"I can't do this on my own. I need you. Fill me again."***

The Holy Spirit doesn't fill our lives once and walk away. He fills a life that keeps returning to Him. It's not a one-time event; it's an ongoing relationship. And like any healthy relationship, it requires you to show up consistently.

// PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

**** Stack each point. ****

1. **Stop performing and start surrendering.**

So many of us work really hard to be good Christians. There's nothing wrong with effort. But effort that isn't rooted in dependence on the Spirit is just religion. It's exhausting work, and it won't last. **Sanctification isn't about being better; it's about being surrendered.** Stop white-knuckling it and just open your hands.

Tell God you can't do this without Him, because you can't. Watch what He does with a life that is totally surrendered to Him.

2. **Practice the practices.**

I've talked before about what it looks like to actually follow Jesus. To not just believe in Him, but to do the things He did. To follow His ways, His practices: prayer, Bible intake, solitude, worship, generosity, community, etc. These are the practices of a follower of Jesus. Some call them spiritual disciplines. **They are important because this is where the Spirit tends to move.**

Remember what we looked at a few weeks ago when I talked about the Bible. Scripture is to teach you, rebuke you, correct you, and equip you. **That is the Spirit using God's Word to actively shape you from the inside out.** The Bible isn't just something you read to check a box. It's one of the primary tools the Spirit uses to do the work of sanctification in your life.

Position yourself to be transformed by practicing the practices.

3. Repent

When you feel conviction or the heaviness of sin in your life, don't minimize it or run from it. Repent. Own it. Ask God for forgiveness and make a 180-degree turn.

Conviction isn't rejection from God or the Spirit leaving you. It's the Spirit pursuing you and challenging you to be transformed. The fact that you feel the weight of the sin means He's still at work inside you. The person who feels nothing, who is never convicted, should be concerned. When it comes, don't let guilt cause you to hide. Let it drive you to your knees.

4. Be filled every day.

At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit took up permanent residence in you. **But having the Spirit and being filled by the Spirit aren't the same thing.** We looked at this in week 3...

Ephesians 5:18 says we are to be "*filled with the Spirit.*" That word "filled" is present tense. It literally could be translated "*keep on being filled.*" **It's not a one-time event.** It's a continual, daily posture.

The same disciples who had already been filled with the Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 2 gathered and prayed, **and they were filled again.** They didn't say, "*We already had that experience, we're good.*" They kept coming back.

Being indwelt by the Spirit is a one-time reality, but being filled by the Spirit is a daily need. Every morning, go to the source. The deeper life is not a dramatic second experience; it's a daily decision. Come back every single day and say, "fill me again."

// CLOSING

²⁴*The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. [1 Thessalonians 5:24]*

Sanctification is His responsibility. Your job is to keep showing up. To keep practicing the practices. To stay surrendered.

The Christian life isn't one filling, and you're done. It's a daily coming back to the Spirit and saying, "fill me again."

// PRAYER & RESPONSE TIME

// NEXT WEEK: Divine Healing and Prayer for the Sick