

International Bible Lessons
“Teaching the Truth in Love”
Sending International Sunday School Lessons and Bible Studies Around the World
L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

What Is Sanctification?

The *International Sunday School Lesson* for Sunday, July 18, 2010
2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

“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” (2 Thessalonians 2:13—NASB-U).

“But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13—NRSV).

“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13—KJV).

Paul called the Thessalonian Christians “first fruits,” because God had harvested them into His family in the early days of the church. However, instead of taking God’s forgiveness for granted, they needed to remember that salvation begins with a life-changing process called “sanctification” and involves following Jesus Christ daily.

In the process of sanctification, the Holy Spirit gives new life to every true believer. He enables Christ’s followers to serve God and others effectively with the highest moral standards. No longer enslaved to sin and disgraceful behavior, believers “obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” and manifest His loving character before the watching world (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Sanctification usually begins at the point of believing the truth about Jesus Christ and trusting in Him as Lord and Savior. In sanctification, the Holy Spirit applies Biblical truths to our motives, choices, and actions. He inspires us to study the Bible with the intention of understanding and obeying God’s word. He gives new insights and helps believers conform their thoughts, purposes, and decisions to the will of God in their cultural situation. He will not contradict the Bible’s teachings or lead Christians to conform their lives to the world. If believers become confused, they can prayerfully read the Bible, and the Holy Spirit will use the scriptures to show them how to keep following Christ. By believing the truth and relying on the Holy Spirit’s work, believers will grow spiritually and mature morally, and find joy and peace in the world. — Copyright 2010 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Questions for Further Thought or Class Discussion

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2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

1. Jesus declared that He is the Truth and His word is Truth and we can belong to the Truth. Why is Truth so important to God? What difference can Truth make in the world and in people's lives?

2. Why are belief in the Truth and sanctification by the Spirit both necessary for salvation? How can belief in the Truth and sanctification by the Spirit make a difference in the way we lead our lives?

3. When believers "obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," how are they different? What does it mean if a "believer" is not different?

4. What is the difference between "the traditions" Paul wrote about and "the traditions" of church history? Why must believers especially "hold fast to the traditions" today? What "traditions" are especially under attack in our day? What can believers do if "the traditions" are changed or ignored?

5. How can "good works" and "good words" give our hearts comfort and strength? Why does Paul seem to think both "good works" and "good words" are important instead of just one or the other?