

MODERN THEOLOGY VS SANCTIFICATION

BY KEVIN WASHINGTON

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The definition of *sanctification* is the process of becoming Christ-like or holy. This means that as a Christian grows in their walk with the Lord, that whatever they may have been struggling with at the start of their conversion should no longer be a struggle for them later. This does not mean that a Christian becomes perfect as they grow in God. However, their walk in salvation becomes easier as they put the Word of God into practice in their life.

We must understand that sanctification or holiness is not a name of a denomination or church organization. However, it is the way of life for the Christian. Nevertheless, it appears that sanctification is not taken as seriously today as it was in the 1960's and 70's. There are now many things that we considered violations of sanctification when I was growing up that are no longer a concern for the church. Women were told that they could not wear pants and that they had to wear a certain type of stocking.

People were told that they could not go to the movies and women had to wear something on their head when they entered the church. We now understand that some of these things were a little extreme. However, it seems during that time that sanctification was a high priority for the church. The line that separated the church from the world was clearly seen. You could look at people and tell who was on the Lord's side and who was not. There was a distinct difference between those who were confessing Christ and those who were not.

Today, the line that separates the church from the world at best has been blurred and at worst has been erased. The church and the world, sadly, are becoming mirror images of each other. There is no distinct difference between them.

THERE MUST BE A DIFFERENCE

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is found in the book of Daniel. This is the story of four Hebrew boys who were taken captive from their home land of Judah to Babylon. These four young men had to face untold pressures to conform to the Babylonian culture.

Their names were changed to reflect the culture in which they were now a part. They were told that they had to change their diet to include foods which were contrary to their dietary law.

They were told that they would face punishment of a fiery furnace or a lion's den if they did not acquiesce and follow the religious rule of the day. However, these four young men continued to stand on the truth of the Word of God. They could have compromised or given up. Nevertheless, they continued to do what they knew was right.

There are not many Hebrew boys in the church today. If a person took the same stand as the Hebrew boys, they would be considered old fashioned, a "holy roller", or too heavenly minded that they were no earthly good. Sanctification is no longer the goal of the believer. Consequently, the word *holiness* is no longer a term that reflects the lifestyle of the believer.

The church has become a reflection of the culture instead of being a reflection of Jesus Christ. The church is now influenced by the culture instead of being influenced by God and in return influencing the culture. Furthermore, we see the influence of the culture in the church's music, dress, lifestyles, and in the messages that are being preached. The church has become affected by the world's culture instead of affecting the culture of the world.

The same things that are going on in the world are going on in the church. There is divorce in the world and there is divorce in the church. There is teen pregnancy in the world and there is teen pregnancy in the church. There is unforgiveness and bitterness in the world and there is unforgiveness and bitterness in the church. The church has hid its light and its salt has lost its flavor. The church's Hebrew boys have eaten the King's meat; have danced to the King's music; and have stopped praying.

MODERN THEOLOGY VS BIBLICAL TRUTH

So what has happened? Why has sanctification lost its priority in the church? The answer to that question lies in the battle between modern theology and biblical truth.

Modernism is the term used to describe the period in which we are living in. It is marked by a rejection of tradition and a distrust of truth and ethics. It also rejects religion, conventional philosophy and gender. Modern theology is the teaching of the Word of God with a humanistic view and the influence of the current culture. As a result, biblical truths are no longer being taught to believers and there is no application in the lives of many followers.

One example of modern theology is the acceptance of sin in the church. We understand that no one is perfect for the Bible tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is a compromising of the Word of God towards sin that has caused the message of sanctification and holiness not to be taught as some other Bible doctrines are. Consequently, the believer's lifestyle outside the church and character in the church are not as important today as in the past. The attitude is you can live the way you want to live, just come to church and share your gifts, talents and offerings. We will overlook your sins. You don't have to worry about hearing a message preached about your sins, holiness, sanctification, or growing in God. As a result, churches are filled with people that understand salvation with no understanding of walking in holiness; the sanctification process; and the renewing of one's thought life.

Another example of modern theology is the preaching of prosperity as the gospel message instead of it being just one of many doctrines of the Bible. A person's salvation and walk with God is not tied to the kind of car they drive, house they live in or the size of their bank account. Our walk with God is tied to the change of character on the inside which will ultimately manifest itself on the outside.

Jesus did not die for us to accumulate things. He died so that we can have an intimate relationship with him and be conformed to his image. Biblical truth tells us to be holy (I Peter 1:15, 16); different (Rom. 12:1, 2); and unspotted from the world (James 1:27). Furthermore, we are told that without holiness no man will see God (Heb. 12:14).

Jesus, himself, says in St. John 17:17, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*". It is through the truth of the Word of God that a believer begins to change into what God wants them to be. It is the Word of God that washes the believer and sets them apart for the Master's use. Remember God must do something in you before He does something through you.

Jesus states in John 8:31-32, "*...if ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*". It is the responsibility of the believer to continue in the truth of the Word of God. Once the truth of the Word of God is applied, the believer will be set free from the things that once had them bound. Consistent application of the truth will transform the Christian from a follower to a disciplined believer. The believer is now disciplined to follow the truth of the Word of God instead of the capriciousness of man.

CONCLUSION

The church must return to preaching, teaching, applying, and living biblical truth. We have compromised too long. Modern theology has been our mode of operation; as a result, we look and act no different from the world. It is now time for the unadulterated Word of God to be the church's guide. I believe there are some Hebrew boys - people who refuse to eat the King's meat, drink the King's drink and dance to the King's music - left in the church. There are people who want the truth of God's word to become alive in their lives until change takes place.

Are you one of them? If yes, then you continue to stand on biblical truth! If no, then strive to become one. †