

1 Peter 1 – Part K

1Pe 1:1 (NKJV) Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

The next major phrase that we want to address is “**in sanctification of the Spirit**”. In actuality, the phrase reads better in the NASB which says “**by sanctification of the Spirit**”. The AMP Bible reads “**consecrated (sanctified, made holy) by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ...**” The NIV reads “**through the sanctifying work of the Spirit**”.

In the unfathomable mind and heart of God, when He chose someone, He also, as a part of His sovereign choice, pre-determined that the Holy Spirit would develop in that individual a deep and sincere desire to live in obedience to the Father’s will. Peter communicates that in the next phrase when he indicates that we have been chosen “**for obedience...**” It was not that the only thing God wanted to do in an individual’s life was to save them, but God also wanted to work in their life in such a way that Christ would be honored and exalted in their life. Actually, it is somewhat of an oxymoron for someone to claim that they are actually saved, but consistently live in a manner that denies the reality of this sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to produce meaningful obedience in their life. In the context of this verse, it needs to be understood that the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life was pre-determined by God. It is often said that “**sanctification**” is the believer’s part, something for which they are totally responsible. However, the process of our being “**sanctified**” is just as much a work of God as is our being “**justified**” or our being “**glorified**”. If God had chosen to leave our being sanctified up to us, we all would fail miserably. **God is the guarantee of our sanctification**, and for that we should all be grateful. It is His sustaining and cleansing work in the life of every believer that matters, and we need that cleansing and forgiveness all the time. If for some reason God was to remove the work of the Holy Spirit from our life today, we would all revert back to the “**works of the flesh**” described in [Galatians 5:19-21](#). In much the same way, if God disciplined us every time that we failed, we would always be in a state of God’s discipline.

At a very personal level, I feel deeply dependent on this sustaining and cleansing work of God in my life, and especially when I may fail in some area of my life. Paul speaks about how easily this can happen in any believer’s life when he writes the following in [Hebrews 12:1](#),

Heb 12:1 (NKJV) Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

This verse seems to clearly indicate that every believer may have an area or areas of their life that the enemy is constantly trying to exploit and manipulate against them. Literally, it could be anything that the enemy uses to create spiritual failure in our life. It could be anger, pride, impatience, having to always speak our mind, saying unkind things to people, or just a simple lack of faithfulness and commitment to the things of God in our life.

That is why the last phrase referring to the “**sprinkling of the blood**” is so important in this passage because it provides another important guarantee that God the Father will provide His gracious forgiveness when we do fail – and we will all fail. This is one of those areas where this particular work of God in the believer’s life is so critical and so vital to their spiritual health and well-being. If this sanctifying and cleansing work of the Holy Spirit was not present in our life, all of our lives would become utterly sinful and demeaning to God. We would quickly become spiritually disgraceful in most all that we did.

Paul expresses this sanctifying work of God in another way in [Romans 8:29](#) when he says,

Ro 8:29 (NKJV) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Anyone that God “foreknew” would become one of His children, so “**He also predestined (them) to be conformed to the image of His Son...**” So, when God chose someone in eternity past, at that moment it was already “predestined” that the Holy Spirit would do a continuous sanctifying work in their life that would constantly be conforming them to the very image of Jesus Christ. This is why when a person’s actual life and lifestyle are not being conformed more and more to the image of Christ that it is reasonable to at least suspect that the individual may not even be saved. Whatever the reality of a person’s salvation may be, it is certainly a spiritually precarious position for someone to consistently maintain.

That is why it is actually a denial of this amazing predetermined work of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in someone’s life for them to always be thinking that they are the exception to obedience. No Christian is an exception to sanctification – not one Christian. When a true believer is constantly rationalizing why they do not have to be obedient to Christ, His Word, and the work of the Holy Spirit in their life, it simply means that they have chosen to live in rebellion and disrespect to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in their life. If the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is a predetermined work of God in the believer’s life (which it is), then what that means is that the Holy Spirit has been working, is working, and will continue to do a sanctifying work in that believer’s life. No matter what excuses, justifications, and rationalizations any believer may develop in their life, this pre-determined sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is always reminding them of God’s expectations for their life and His demands on their life because of His calling them into His kingdom. If a believer is not growing spiritually in their life, it is never because of anything that the Holy Spirit has not done. If someone who claims to be a believer, but consistently lives in sin as a manner of life is not being disciplined by God for their continued spiritual misbehavior, [Hebrews 12:8](#) says they are not one of God’s children.

Heb 12:8 (NKJV) But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

The Holy Spirit is always leading each and every true believer into the kind of life that honors and glorifies Christ. We must appreciate that God predetermined that those He chose would become “conformed” to the very image of Jesus Christ. Obviously, the completion of this conforming is something that will take place when we actually enter into God’s presence, but it is still a present and ongoing process that the Holy Spirit is working into our life. The Holy Spirit is not waiting until we die

to start the sanctification process, but it is something that He began in our life the very moment that He indwelt us and we were adopted into God's kingdom.

This is probably why the Holy Spirit chose the word “**sanctification**” to address this particular work that God will accomplish in a believer's life. The actual Greek word for “**sanctification**” is “*hagiasmos*”. It comes from the Greek word “*hagiazō*” which is generally translated as to make holy, to purify, to hallow, or to sanctify.¹ However, what we do not want to do with this word in this context is to somehow casually divorce it from the phrase “**of the Spirit**”. In the broad sense of the word, the ongoing process of “**sanctification**” is a work in which the believer cooperates with the Holy Spirit for their entire life, and the result of that cooperation is an increasing Christlikeness being developed in the believer's life. However, in the sense that Peter uses the word in this context, “**sanctification**” is referring to the specific work of the Holy Spirit in separating the believer from their sin which separates them from God and then as their Christian life develops, He helps separate them from the world. Initially, the first separation is what happens to the believer when they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and they believe. At that moment they are separated unto God for His purposes to be accomplished in their life. Notice how Paul states this initial work in [1 Corinthians 6:11](#),

1Co 6:11 (NKJV) And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

We believed, our sins were forgiven (“**washed**”), and Paul says that at that moment that we “**were sanctified**” and that we “**were justified**”. Justification only occurs at the moment of salvation, but he includes being “**sanctified**” as a part of that moment. So, at the moment that we came to Christ, the first aspect of sanctification is that we were **separated unto God** for His use and for His glory. This is really quite incredible, because too often we only associate “**sanctification**” with a lifetime process – which it certainly is. However, it was not just that we were saved so that we could go to heaven. If that had been the only purpose in salvation, then God could just have taken us then to be with Him. However, God's purposes in salvation are much greater. So, the second aspect of the Holy Spirit's “**sanctification**” is related to the ongoing work that actually brings glory to God the Father and to Jesus Christ. It is the specific and ongoing work that the Holy Spirit will constantly be performing to bring about obedience in the believer's life. If we can think of it this way, the Holy Spirit separated us initially so that we could glorify God, and now progressively He is constantly refining and separating our life from sin so that we can truly glorify God in our life. He is constantly producing that separation in our life, continuously and persistently working towards convincing us of the great need to allow our entire life to be separated unto God for His use and especially for His glory. Through the Word of God, the Holy Spirit desires to relentlessly be reminding us of who we really are in Christ and that God in and through Christ has completely broken the power of sin that literally dominated and controlled our life before we were saved. The believer is no longer under the dominion and reign of sin over their life. Listen to [Romans 6:11](#), [Romans 6:14](#), and [Romans 6:18](#).

Ro 6:11 (NKJV) Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ro 6:14 (NKJV) For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Ro 6:18 (NKJV) And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

This idea of the predetermined and ongoing sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life is that of convincing them and persuading them that God has removed their former bondage to sin and has given them the power to overcome the various acts and patterns of sinful behavior that previously controlled and characterized their life. Every believer now has resident within them through the virtue of the power of the Holy Spirit and the resurrected life of Christ which indwells them, the spiritual ability to be able to overcome all of the enticements and temptations to sin that previously ruled their life.² There is not one single sin in the life of a true believer where they should say that they do not have the power to overcome that sin – not one single sin no matter how grievous it may be or how difficult it may seem at times. Why? It is because **“sin shall not have dominion over YOU.”** This is the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in separating us to God. We should be so thankful and so grateful and so humbled by this ongoing work in our life. We should be able to see this sanctifying, purifying, and spiritually refining work in our own life and to look back on where we were and see where God has brought us. This is not some kind of “pie in the sky” kind of Christianity, but this is the Christian life. This is what the Holy Spirit did initially at salvation and this is what He is doing continuously in salvation – separating us unto God, separating us for His use and for His glory. Whatever we are doing with our life, whatever our life goals and objectives may be, and whatever our perspective on life, it should always be that of glorifying God in all that we do. Every area of our life is to be brought under God's control and God's influence.

Very often when the word **“spiritual”** is used in the Scriptures, it generally means that which is **“of the Spirit”**. So, when Peter uses the phrase **“in sanctification of the Spirit”**, obviously it is referring to the spiritual attributes that the Holy Spirit develops in the believer's life. If I can say it this way, we are involved in a spiritual sanctification. It is not just cleaning up some negative area of our life. Lost people often are able to do that. Rather, the sanctifying work is a deeply spiritual work, a deep and abiding work **“of the Spirit”**.

Many of those virtues and characteristics are clearly defined in [Galatians 5:22-23](#) which is the contrast provided against the work of the flesh in someone's life.

Gal 5:22 (NKJV) **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.**

This is a great list by which to evaluate our life and to see where we may truly be in relation to God's sanctifying work operating in us. The more mature we become as true followers of Christ, the more these character qualities should become evident in us. Not one of these nine (9) characteristics listed have anything to do with personal skills, intelligence, spiritual gifts, level of education, or spiritual works, but they are all related to a person's character. Does the individual demonstrate love in their life? Are they patient with people? Are they kind to people? Are they consistently doing good things in their life? Do they have a meaningful measure of faithfulness in their life? Do they exercise self-control in the different areas of their life? The nine (9) characteristics of [Galatians 5:22-23](#) are really the greatest biblical tests of whether we as believers are truly yielding ourselves to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our life. We know that He is at work in our life, so the penetrating question is whether or not we are allowing our life to come under His control and influence. Are we allowing His deeply spiritual work in our life to impact us, or are we consistently finding excuses and rationalizations as to why we are the exception? When these attributes are present in someone's life, what it means is that they have truly been yielded and committed to the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work in their life. They are being

sanctified and conformed to the very image of Jesus Christ, and their life is able to both honor and glorify God the Father and Jesus Christ on a consistent basis. May we truly thank God for the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our life.

ENDNOTES:

¹ Strong, 909.

² Grudem, 747.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Strong, James. *The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001.