

# GRACE GAZETTE

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*Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.* *Hebrews 12:12-13*

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## THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE

*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. I Corinthians 1:30*

There are certain terms and concepts that are used frequently among those who would consider themselves as students of the Holy Scriptures. If one should depart from the commonly received understanding of these terms and concepts, he (or she) is usually considered to be on the fringe, a blatant heretic, or at the least quite out of the mainstream regardless of whether or not these terms and concepts are completely congruous with the context and usage of these terms in the Bible. One of these concepts which is ingrained in the thought process of the vast majority of Bible students, and even many who care nothing for the scriptures or the AUTHOR of them, is that of men having an "immortal soul" which cannot die. For many years I accepted this concept without question, because it was just "understood" that way, yet no one ever proved it to me from the scriptures, except by innuendo.

One day I read in the scriptures of JESUS CHRIST, "*Who **only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.***" (1Tim 6:16) and I began to question this matter. The more I looked the less I saw any sort of "proof" of this immortal soul business. Paul writes to the Corinthians about "*putting on immortality*", which does not fit well with the notion of already possessing it. We don't have time; space, or the inclination, at the present, to pursue this subject but suffice it to say that not all the things which we may have been "taught" that the scriptures "say" can necessarily be found there.

Another concept which goes hand in hand with that one is the notion of "hell" being a place where the non-elect shall fry like a French fry in hot grease forever, with unrelenting terror and agony. To say that all men do not deserve such a fate, is to underestimate the sinfulness of sin and the eternal justice of a holy GOD. But to go to the scriptures and "prove" such a thing, is quite a difficult task. The scriptures have much more to say about the destruction of the wicked than it does their ongoing torture. "*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to **destroy both soul and body in hell.***" (Mat 10:28) May we learn to be as the noble Bereans who "*searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*" (Acts 17:11) A private interpretation is one which does not rely solely on the word of the testimony which is delivered to us as holy men of GOD "*spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*" (2Pet 1:21)

With these things in mind I would like to examine the use of the terms, "*sanctify, sanctified, and sanctification*", as they appear in the scriptures and not in the tattered volumes written by very able men from a bygone era. We desire to jettison any notion which does not rest on a "thus sayeth the LORD." The Hebrew word(s) which is translated into the English word "*sanctify*", appears sixty four times in the OT. The Greek word which is translated the same appears six times in the NT. The English word "*sanctification*" appears six times in the NT and none in the OT. "*Sanctified*" appears forty six times in the OT and sixteen times in the NT. We make no claim of

being a linguist, but we can get a pretty good idea of the meaning of this terminology as we examine the context in which these words are used.

The very first time that “sanctify” appears in the KJV is found in Exodus, “Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.” (Exo 13:2) It seems pretty clear that the LORD means for them to “dedicate, or set aside” these “firstborn”, as special in the sight of GOD. Each time the word is used after that, the underlying meaning is to “set apart from the profane, that which is to be given to the LORD.”

This term is also used in a measure to describe the “cleansing” of the vessels and priests which are to be used in the tabernacle worship and offering. Even though this “cleansing” is attached to this “sanctifying”, the reason and ultimate purpose of the use of this term is to manifest the separation or setting apart of those things which are considered holy unto to the LORD. This is seen most clearly in the institution of the Sabbath under the Law given to Moses, “Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee.” (Deut 5:12) This was a day which was to be set apart for no other use than to rest before the LORD from their labors.

The common concept of sanctification is centered on the “cleansing” aspect rather than the scriptural emphasis which is “setting apart.” This is an important distinction which strikes at the root of the notion that “*sanctification*” is primarily a description of a work of moral improvement or that of “fitting” the sons of GOD for an eternal stay in the courts of heaven.

When we look at the use of these terms in the NT, the emphasis is always the same. These terms appear 27 times in the NT and I cannot discover any of those instances which would contextually support the commonly received notion. I hope to examine some of them.

The first appearance of the term in the NT is “Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?”(John 10:36) It is quite obvious that the LORD is talking about being “set apart” unto a particular work. HE needed no ceremonial cleansing nor any of a moral or spiritual nature either. Then we read the prayer of the LORD where HE says, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.” (John 17:17-22)

The main purpose of the LORD in coming into the world to redeem HIS people, is that HE might “sanctify” them, (i.e.; manifest them as the sons of GOD through a belief of the truth). Peter in quoting Lev.11:44; “For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy,” supports this notion which the LORD sets forth in HIS prayer. HE will bring it to pass according to the work which HE has undertaken. It is most certainly not a work which is undertaken to improve their standing with HIM either positionally or morally. Any man who is acquainted with his own innate corruption will certainly despair of any “*sanctification*” which could be undertaken or accomplished by his own effort, prayers, or obedience and must cling to that which alone to be found in CHRIST.

To this end we come to Paul’s manifesto of the standing of the sons of GOD in CHRIST, who is made unto us “*SANCTIFICATION*”. What other sanctification would we desire than that wherein we stand separated unto GOD, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation? It is the LORD’s doing and we will worship HIM. Sanctification is that PLACE where the sons of GOD do live and move and have our being, it cannot be improved by any means nor amended by any measure. We are complete in HIM. HE also doth presently work in us both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure, because we are “*sanctified*” and not in order to be “*sanctified*”. “But we are bound to give thanks alway 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.” (2Th 2:13)

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