

Series: 1 Corinthians

Title: The Will of God in our Sanctification

Text: 1 Cor 1: 1-3

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1 Corinthians 1: 1: Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother, 2: Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: 3: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our subject is “The Will of God in Sanctification.” We are sinners. God is holy. Therefore, unless we are sanctified we cannot enter God’s holy presence.

Sanctification, to be “sanctified”, to be a “saint” is to be separated from the power of Satan into the kingdom of God, from darkness into light. It is to be made holy: to be created in holiness in Christ, as well as in our new man by Christ dwelling within us and we in him. To be sanctified is to be consecrated to God for God’s holy use only.

The point for us to get is that by God’s calling, through the will of God, we are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints.

SANCTIFICATION IS BY THE WILL OF GOD

Our sanctification begins, in our experience of it, by the call of God through the will of God. Notice, the apostle Paul writes, “Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother, Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints.” The apostle Paul, Sosthenes, and the church at Corinth, together with every sanctified child of God, first experiences our sanctification by the call of God through the will of God.

Our will is not the cause of God calling us to be saints. By nature, we are willing to be religious. But our natural will is to hate Christ. The apostle Paul, while Saul of Tarsus, was willing to be religious but he was not willing to become an apostle of Jesus Christ. He loved his religion and was zealous for his religion. But he hated Christ and hated Christ’s people. That is the will of every unregenerate, spiritually dead, lost sinner. If left to his will, Paul would have remained a vainly religious God-hater and would you and I. It was only through the will of God that our Lord Jesus Christ called Paul to be an apostle. Let’s read Paul’s own testimony concerning his will as a dead, religious, Christ-hater. Notice, in Paul’s description of himself, how that his natural will was to “many things contrary to the name of Jesus.” He lists those things in the following passage:

Acts 26: 9: I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10: Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*. 11: And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities. 12: Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13: At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. 14: And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 15: And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16: But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17: Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18: To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and

inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. 19: Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:...

The only way Paul was sanctified, he was delivered, his eyes opened, he was turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, to receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified was the faithfulness and power of Christ who called him by Christ's will. Paul says it was for this reason alone that he was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.

Scriptures are abundantly clear, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." (Jas 1:18) Each child who is sanctified is "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (Joh 1:13) It is the very glory of God to give life to whom God will, "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (Ro 9:15-16)

The distinguishing mark differentiating the true child of God from the religious Christ-hater is "Who gets the glory?" (Eph 2:8-9) If we say we performed any aspect of our salvation then we can glory. God will not allow it! True believers are called and sanctified through the will of God "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1Co 1:31)

SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST JESUS BY GOD THE FATHER

Next, notice in our text, the will of God sanctified his people in Christ Jesus. Take out a few words in our text and read these important words, "through the will of God...the church of God...[is] sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be saints*."

Again, to be "sanctified", to be a "saint" is to be separated from the power of Satan into the kingdom of God, from darkness into light. This was first done in eternity in Christ then it is done in time in Christ. To be sanctified is to be made holy in Christ. We are first made holy in Christ by God putting us in Christ in eternity. Then we are made holy by Christ's work on this earth. At last, we are made holy in Christ when Christ is formed within us. To be sanctified is to be consecrated for God's holy use only. We were consecrated in Christ in eternity, in his work and then when Christ is formed in us. Paul said, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1Co 6:19-20) So we see true sanctification is by the will of the triune God in Christ Jesus, not by the work of the sinner.

First, God the Father before making the world sanctified his people—separated us, made us holy and consecrated us for his holy use—by choosing us in Christ Jesus. The apostle wrote, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Eph 1: 4) From eternity, from before the foundation of the world, God's elect have been holy and without blame—holy and righteous—in the love of God in Christ the Beloved. In eternity, God blessed us with all spiritual blessings. He foreknew us in Christ, predestinated us to be conformed to the image of Christ, called us in Christ, justified us in Christ and glorified us in Christ, all when he chose us in Christ. (Eph 1:4; Rom 8: 29-30; Jude 1) All God's elect were glorified in Christ with the glory which Christ had with the Father before the world was made. (Jn 17: 2-5)

SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST JESUS BY CHRIST JESUS

The Son of God, Christ Jesus, sanctified us by Christ's own separate, holy, consecration to God as he fulfilled the will of God as the Representative Head of all those God chose in in eternity.

Be sure to get this. God's will which Christ accomplished for God and his people was two-fold. One, God willed for Christ to fulfill the old covenant law and redeem his elect from the curse of the law. Two, God willed for Christ to establish the everlasting covenant of grace so that all God's spiritual blessings can be given to us freely and fully

accomplished for us by God. This was the two-fold will for Christ to accomplish. God works all things in time “after the counsel of his own will.” (Turn to Heb 2)

So the Son of God, Christ Jesus sanctified us in perfect holy consecration to God by Christ’s own perfect holy consecration to God, as he fulfilled that two-fold will of God, as the representative Head of God’s elect.

Hebrews 2: 10: It became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Through sufferings as the GodMan, Christ became the Author of perfect holy consecration to God and God’s elect perfected holy consecration to God in Christ. We are so one in Christ, that Christ is the one Man who represented all God’s elect in his holy consecration.

Hebrews 2: 11: For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12: Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. 13: And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. 14: Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15: And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Hebrews 5: 9: And being made perfect,...

It means being perfectly holy in perfect consecration to God.

Hebrews 5: 9:...he became the author [same word as Captain] of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Those who shall obey Christ are those God shall call by his will in regeneration. When of God Christ is made unto us Sanctification then we obey by repenting from trying to make ourselves holy and by resting in Christ who is all things in our eternal salvation—including our sanctification. (Heb 5:9) Then we obey him because we see that by Christ perfecting holy consecration to God, Christ became the Author of eternal salvation to all who rest in him by faith.

Hebrews 7: 26: For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

When Christ “became us”, Christ became the one Man that God looked to for all things for his people. Therefore, every elect child of God is exactly what Christ our High Priest is declared to be here: holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens. This good news is true of sinners like us because God put us in Christ so that we were in Christ when he became us and perfected holy consecration as he fulfilled that two-fold will of God for us.

Hebrews 10: 9: Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.

Remember, God’s will was two-fold. One, God willed for Christ to fulfill the old covenant law. Two, God willed for Christ to establish the covenant of grace.

Hebrews 10: 9:...He taketh away the first,...

In order of time, the old covenant came first. Christ fulfilled that old covenant law, the covenant of works, by which we came under the curse by our disobedience in Adam. When Christ fulfilled the law, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. (Gal 3: 13)

Hebrews 10: 9...that he may establish the second...

The second part of God's will was for Christ to establish the everlasting covenant of grace. Christ did so. Christ fulfilled the first—the covenant of works—that he might establish the second—the everlasting covenant of grace. Now, God is just to give all his spiritual blessing to his elect. He blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ according as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. But now, because Christ fulfilled this two-fold will of God now God can give us those spiritual blessings and be just in doing so. This was the will of God which Christ accomplished. Now, be sure to get this good news.

Hebrews 10: 10: By the which will, we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

By Christ willingly accomplishing the will of God being perfectly sanctified unto God—separated, holy and consecrated unto God—therefore every chosen child of God were also perfectly sanctified through the offering of Jesus Christ Christ. It was by one offering for all time. It does not need to be done again. By Christ's finished work, all those God put in Christ, are sanctified. Drop down to verse 14 and rejoice in this good news:

Hebrews 10: 14: For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

By one offering, Christ has perfected forever, them that God the Father sanctified by choosing us in Christ. They are those who shall be called and sanctified in Christ the Holy Spirit in regeneration. We, who have been called through the will of God, are perfectly holy and consecrated to God because Christ was perfectly holy and consecrated to God.

We did what Christ did when Christ did it. We are what he is “perfected forever!”

SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST BY GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

As we saw in our first point, at the appointed time, God the Holy Spirit sanctifies us in our personal experience by forming Christ in us when he regenerates us. Continuing in Hebrews 10, we see what the Holy Spirit does when he sanctifies us in regeneration:

Hebrews 10: 15: *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16: *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;*

The laws which God writes on the new heart are more than the Ten Commandments, though when we are regenerated, for the first time the Holy Spirit does teach us that the law declares us guilty and unable to fulfill the law by our obedience. But the Holy Spirit writes on our hearts the law of faith (Rom 3: 27), the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom 8: 2), the law of Christ which is the law of love (Gal 6: 2), and the law of liberty (Ja 1: 25; 2: 12) He writes these laws on our hearts by teaching us that the old covenant of works and the new everlasting covenant of grace, have both been fulfilled and established by Christ Jesus on our behalf. Teaching us this, through the Holy Spirit, God declares in our hearts,

Hebrews 10: 17: And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18: Now where remission of these *is, there is no more offering for sin.* 19: Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,...

Since Christ has made us “perfected forever” we are holy so that we may enter the holiest. The holiest is God's holy presence. The one Way we enter is because Christ consecrated us by his holy consecration. Our Way into the holiest is:

Hebrews 10: 20: By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

That is what we saw in those earlier verses in Hebrews. Through his flesh, as the GodMan represented his people, with all God's elect in Christ, Christ perfected holy consecration to God for us by his holy obedience so that we did what he did in perfect holy consecration to God. If we were not holy then we could not enter the holiest into holy God's presence. But we are:

Hebrews 10: 21: And *having* an high priest over the house of God; 22: Let us draw near with a true heart...

A sanctified heart created by God the Holy Spirit, in which Christ our Sanctification dwells, is a true heart. A true heart is heart who confesses Christ is my holiness, my boldness, my fitness to enter God's holy presence and Christ alone! Therefore, we enter

Hebrews 10: 21:...in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Sanctification of the Spirit is the purging of our evil conscience so that we cease trying to make ourselves holy by our works and we rest in Christ as our Holiness. By accomplishing God the Father's will, Christ has given us a new heart and washed us holy so that we can enter God's holy presence.

BLESSINGS OF SANCTIFICATION

So what are the blessing God gives by sanctifying and calling us to be saints in Christ Jesus his Son?

God "hath made us partakers of his holiness." (Heb 12: 10) We have that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb 12: 14) It is because "Of [God] are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us...Sanctification." (1 Cor 1: 30) We now cease glorying in a pretense of holiness which we thought was by our fleshly law obedience. Now we glory in Christ in whom the believer truly is holy and consecrated to God, "Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." (Ps 30: 4)

It means we have been made fit, right now, to inherit glory with the saints who are already there, "Give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son:" (Col 1:12-13)

Be sure to get this. Holiness is not by degrees. Either God has made us meet so that we are holy or we are not holy. Religious folks speak of growing holier so that they are holier than other saints. The only place scripture speaks of sinners having a greater and lesser degree of holiness is in Isaiah 65: 5. In that passage, God says this is what such self-sanctified men are saying who claim to have grown so that they have a greater holiness than others,

"Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These *are* a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." (Isa 65:5)

God declares such men are as foul to God as the stinking fire which burned the dung in the public sewer.

Once God in Christ has made us holy, indeed, we grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ according to the scriptures. But we do not grow more holy than our triune God in Christ has made us. Every saint is made meet by the work of our triune God. We saw it clearly in two separate scriptures—right now, we are meet so that we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

This is why the apostle Paul called the Galatians foolish and bewitched for believing the will-working, legalists who told them that now that they were sanctified by the Holy Spirit then they must make themselves holier by their

fleshly obedience to the law. Paul said, “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Ga 3:3) Such unholy darkness is the power of darkness that God has sanctified his saints from!

Hear this clearly, if any part of our salvation is of us then we have room to glory. Sanctification, like wisdom, righteousness and redemption—like every aspect of our salvation—is of God in Christ, not of us.

May God be pleased to shed grace on those reading this to call and sanctify us in Christ by his will so that we truly rest in Christ who is the Sanctifier and Sanctification of every true believer.

Amen!