Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

The Gospel of John

Chapter 17:17-19
"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You have sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."

"Sanctify them by Your truth..." When we look at this process of growing into holiness, whose work is it to do? Our work or God's work? It is both. We know that sanctification is the work of God because Jesus prays specifically to the Father saying "You sanctify them." It is God's work. He is the one who sanctifies. Not only so but Jesus also says "It is for this reason that I sanctify Myself." If it were not for the work of Christ on the cross, we would not be sanctified. No amount of work on our part could ever bring us to holiness or even any growth in holiness.

But this work is also our work to carry out. We can know this by asking another question. What is the means of this sanctifying? How are we sanctified? It is through the truth, the word of God – "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth..." It is as we know the truth of God's word that we are made more and more holy.

The perfect statement, or commentary on this verse, is Philippians 2:12,13. Paul says we work - "Work out your own salvation..." He also says God works - "It is God who works in you both to will and to do..." Both these sides are a part of the same coin. We can't sit back and relax and wait for God to make us holy. But neither can we make ourselves holy without complete reliance upon His almighty power.

The important question to look at is how God sanctifies us by the truth. If we are sanctified by the truth, then what is this truth? Where do we find it? It is the totality of the Scriptures - the truth about God, the teachings of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, in His parables and instructions. It is the teaching of God through the apostles in their letters. It is both the doctrine and the application.

So where do we begin? Do we begin with doctrine or with application? Look at the apostle Paul's method in Romans 6:1-14. Paul writes 10 verses before he gives his first application. It is all doctrine for the first 10 verses and then Paul says "Reckon yourselves to be dead to sin..." in verse 11. We begin by knowing God and then our correct application of the truth to our lives will prove if we've understood what we've learned or not.

The truth about God is where sanctification begins. We do not begin by saying "Do this and that" but with "This is who God is, this is your relationship to God, this is your position in Christ." Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes "The first thing is not getting rid of this particular sin that is in my life. No! The first thing must be God and my relationship to Him... It starts by holding us face to face with God and it tells us the truth about Him."[1]

So begin with God as our Creator, Genesis 1:1. God has ownership of us. He made us in His image, He set us in His garden and gave us instruction to carry out. This is where we begin, not just as believers but also for unbelievers. Everyone who doesn't already know the truth about God must start with knowing God as Creator.

Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:9,10 that we have been called out of the darkness to proclaim the praises of God. We once were not a people, but now we are a people. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that we are in Christ, a new creation. God is both our Creator and our re-Creator. In knowing this God as He is presented to us in Scripture we will be changed. How can it not? How can it not have a sanctifying power upon our lives? To consistently give our lives to sin and the world's pleasures is to deny that we know this all-glorious, majestic God.

TableTalk

Look up these other verses that tell us true and glorious things about our God: Hebrews 12:29, Titus 2:14 and Romans 6:14.

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[1] The Assurance of our Salvation, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, pg. 433