

- Rev. Grant Mangold, www.RiversideChurchIowa.com

THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES YOU HOLY

Ever feel like the Christian life is simply impossible? Many people reject Christianity because they think it asks them to do something they cannot do - be holy. Maybe you are a believer, but often discouraged because it seems so hard to live a life that pleases God. How is this supposed to work, anyway?

God says, "*You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.*" Holy means consecrated, separated, sanctified, set apart for the Lord. God says this several times in the Old Testament. Verse 15 of 1 Peter 1 quotes this as a command, a divine expectation - because verse 2 addresses those who are "*in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ.*" Sanctification means "being made holy."

What is true about you in Christ is the reason you are able to obey God's commands. This is the divine dynamic of the indicative and imperative. How so? These are grammatical terms. In New Testament Greek, the "indicative" refers to words describing what is true of you in Christ, *eternally*. The "imperative" refers to what is commanded and expected of you, *experientially*. The indicative drives the imperative. Imperatives usually follow "therefore" or "so" in Scripture, which follow indicative truths. You have been made holy by Christ through the Spirit, therefore, live a holy life, in Christ, through the Spirit.

What is true about you in Christ is the reason you are able to obey God's commands. His commands become promises to those who are in union with Christ by grace through faith. Christ Himself becomes our sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30) and "*all the promises of God find their 'yes' in Christ*" (2 Corinthians 1:20) as applied by the Holy Spirit. Because you are in Christ, you can obey - by His power within you.

1- God says believers ARE ALREADY HOLY - positionally. Believers are "in Christ" and this is your new identity, your new reality. You are His holy people (1 Peter 1:4-10). You are *new creations in Christ* (2 Corinthians 5:17), *made alive with Christ and raised up with Him* (Colossians 2:12-13; 3:1-3). The "real you" is no longer just an "*in the flesh*" person, but spiritually reborn "*in the Spirit*" (Romans 8:9-13).

This new spiritual life and spiritual identity in Christ is what's pictured in water baptism (Romans 6:4-6), as an outward illustration of the new inward reality that is worked by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. So our salvation in Christ is being worked out "*through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth*" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). That's the spiritual reality of our new "position" and "identity" in Christ.

Theologians refer to this as "positional truth" because while it is eternally and already true of believers, we are in the process of realizing this reality on earth, as God gets us ready for heaven. So in practical terms, we are already holy "positionally" - and we are being made holy "progressively" and "experientially."

2- God says believers ARE BECOMING HOLY - progressively, powerfully, and purposefully.

Theologians speak of three tenses of salvation: you have been saved (*positional*), you are being saved (*progressive*), and you will be saved (*perfect*). All are equally true of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have experienced the "obedience of faith" (1 Peter 1:2, Romans 1:5, 16:26). You have been saved, declared *justified*, legally right with God, and declared *reconciled*, relationally made right with God.

Scripture also says believers "are being saved" in the sense of *experientially* being purified and sanctified, made holy, in the obedience of faith. And one day believers "will be saved" *perfectly*, because what God has started He will complete. Believers will one day be "glorified" and raised up to heaven.

All three tenses of salvation are true of believers. If you have repented of sin and put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are in Christ, "positionally." So if you were to die today you would go to heaven, even though you're not living a perfectly holy life today, "experientially." Salvation is not by your works, but by the work of Christ, as applied to believers by the Holy Spirit, by grace through faith.

At the same time, believers are in Christ "experientially." That is, day by day, believers can become progressively more and more holy, like Christ. That's why you're still on earth, to live out "*the obedience of faith*" just like the Lord Jesus Christ - and He gives you the power of the Holy Spirit to make it so.

Scripture also says becoming holy is "powerful" and "purposeful." We'll look at this next time. Meantime, "*be holy*" - for God is at work in you, giving you the "want to" and the "how to" - by the Holy Spirit.