

The Narrow Way: Dying to Self

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” John 12:24

The Way of Christ is so narrow that it is not only hard to walk but even impossible unless we die with Christ. Let us consider the counsel of our wise Lord that makes us fruitful in His service.

Jesus is our greatest example of walking this path of life doing the Father’s will. He modeled it and obeyed it by walking the path of the cross for us. He was indeed, as He Himself said, a grain of wheat that fell, died, and bore much fruit. His life was a message of serving, dying to self, and living the message of love. Let us not take His life of sacrifice lightly nor ignore His path of life. For us Christians, it must be His Way, the narrow way.

“For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is

never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Romans 6:5-11

Nowadays, Christianity is by no means focused on dying to self, serving and loving our neighbor, our families, and the church. I perceive there is a hyper-focus on attending “leadership seminars,” “camps for all ages and all activities,” “self-improvement classes for being your authentic self,” “women’s retreats, men’s retreats for improving self,” and various other activities. Even though these activities activate strong emotions, they leave no deep or lasting effect on the heart.

We live in times where everyone divides into groups according to their ages and goals. It is not only a terrible thing for the church but also for our culture as well. Why? Because it leaves us as broken and confused as ever. It will not satisfy and nourish our souls. We deceive ourselves, looking for the wrong sources or activities to heal us. We forget that Christ died to heal and help us put away the body of sin, that we might no longer be slaves to sin. *Why not turn to Him and Him alone?* In His time, He will do His marvelous work in us, leading us into His paths of righteousness. But we must let Him and turn to Him alone.

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” John 3:30

As Jesus is working in our lives, healing us from sin, He shows us, through His everlasting Word, areas in our lives that need mending. Areas where we must crucify the flesh with Him. Areas where the primary focus must be on Jesus and His kingdom of righteousness, shifting the focus away from the old self. As we do this, we will be more productive and bear much fruit for His kingdom’s sake. There is plenty of work to do for Him. The work that He has for us is selfless and often

difficult. Yet as we die to ourselves and become the wheat that falls to the earth, we begin to bear much fruit for His glory. Our fleshly selfishness dies with it, and Jesus reigns in our hearts as we do only His will. Our actions begin to reflect Christ in us. And the old self of sin with all its sinful habits and thoughts begins to die away. *Is it not marvelous that the Word of God can penetrate our soul and spirit and judge the thoughts and intentions of our hearts, changing me and you into vessels of righteousness for His glory!*

“But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Galatians 6:14

Let us remember that God’s ways are perfect and holy. His ways lead us to a peaceful and righteous way of living. But we must focus on Him alone rather than serving ourselves, our wants, needs, and goals. We must avoid the hyper-focus on our own accomplishments and image. These are the idols that we have made for ourselves. The golden calf must be torn down. Focusing on ourselves leads to our soul’s destruction. It robs us of true fulfillment and peace. It will never satisfy that hunger and thirst for righteousness for which we must strive. It is dangerous to focus on ourselves and not Christ. It renders us weak because we will never be satisfied. It will rob us of joy and peace. We are vulnerable when we build up our idols and make them bigger than before.

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Jesus’ death on the cross is the meaning we are searching for. He is our meaning. He is our model for godliness. He is our counselor, comforter, and our source of life. As we abide in Him, we find the real and lasting meaning for this life, having

the hope of eternity. Dying to self, living in newness of life, learning to serve in His kingdom, and walking the narrow way with Christ involves crucifying and dying to our man, our old self. When we die to self, Jesus becomes Lord of our lives, living only for Him. It is here that we begin to walk the narrow way, walking with Christ as He walked here on earth.

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” John 15:4-5

As we diligently seek and abide in Christ, we learn total surrender, doing the Father’s will. It becomes our primary focus and goal in life. Everything that was of high esteem for us before: power, fame, fortune, and accomplishments start to fade away. We start focusing on Christ more and more, wanting to live, love, and serve. We want God to use us as His instruments of righteousness.

As we walk the narrow way with Christ, following Him, we become more confident in our hope and the joy promised to us. A hope and joy that is lasting and that never fades away. Sadly this kind of joy and hope is mostly hidden and unknown to the world of darkness. The world tells us to seek after everything else that is false and offers fragile happiness. There is so much healing, abundant life, joy, and wisdom when we live and walk the narrow way, God’s way. Don’t forget that this same God set the WAY for us to find life abundantly. *Why search for a path that feels right that even after years and years, you are never able to find?* Let us not be blind! The Way is free and available to anyone who desires it.

“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My command-

ments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."
John 15:9-11

The path to abundant life is the one that abides in Christ, walking the narrow way, listening to His voice, and dying to self. When we walk the narrow path, we learn to serve others and know the fullness of what it is to believe in our Lord. The One, who died to self and arose triumphantly. *Why not purpose to seek Him earnestly and strive to enter the narrow way through the narrow gate? Why not follow God's ways which are wiser no matter the cost?* Jesus never said the "gate is wide" because His ways were not the world's ways. Many do not want to find God's ways. They don't care and don't wish to make an effort. They are foolish! The gate of selfishness is broad, and many enter through it, finding death and decay for eternity. Jesus' WAY leads us to the only true life there is.

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it." Matthew 7:3

May Jesus be the Lord of our life. May we crucify self, sin, selfish desires, and all that is wrong in our lives. May we hunger and thirst for righteousness, the right path of life. May we pray for discernment and wisdom to stay on the right path of life, the narrow way, with only Christ. May we not be swayed by the lies of this world. May He continually show us the narrow way, the lasting one that gives us abundant life so that we may bear much fruit for His glory.

"and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." Romans 8:17

“But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.”
Acts 20:24

The Path of Holiness

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior.” 1 Peter 1:13-15

Our Creator and Lord dwells in unapproachable light. We desperately need His approval and help, but if we are to approach Him, we must understand who He is and what He demands. God is holy, and we may not draw near to Him if we are not holy. Let us talk about what the Scriptures tell us about the holiness of God and how we might become holy to have fellowship with Him.

The Word of God has explicitly instructed that without holiness, i.e., sanctification, no one will see God and enter heaven (Heb. 12:14). Yet, there is a vast body of error that has developed around this doctrine (sanctification, holiness) in the religious world. Some misinterpret “sanctification” as the eradication of man’s sinful nature (original sin, total hereditary depravity). The truth is that man is not born with a sinful nature. They present “sanctification” as the second work of grace (aka entire sanctification). They claim that the second blessing or grace provides a state of absolute and sustained perfection in this life. Based on this mistaken concept, they teach that after man’s past sins are forgiven, the believer in Christ must seek the second work of grace, which is called “entire sanctifica-

tion.” They urge their followers to seek the miraculous baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Christians are called to be sanctified (i.e., separated from the world of darkness and devoted to God).

*“Therefore go out from their midst, and **be separate from them, says the Lord**, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:17-18).*

I. THE CONTINUING WORK OF SANCTIFICATION (HOLINESS):

To “sanctify” means “to set apart” or “to make holy.” It does not imply absolute moral perfection. The type of perfection that the Bible speaks of is maturity. The Gospel calls on men to grow into the image of God in Christ Jesus. We become partakers of the divine nature as we learn to walk in the path of holiness. The “perfection” that we strive for, we will not reach, in the absolute sense, until we are with God in heaven. In the Old Testament, many things such as houses, fields, beasts, altars, people, and other things were sanctified. Today, under the New Testament Law of Christ, all Christians must be sanctified. *Why?* Because they are set apart for the Lord, thus consecrated for God’s purposes, set aside and dedicated to God’s service. In Exodus 29:43, God sanctified a place of worship (set it apart, dedicating it to His service or purposes).

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Cor. 7:1)

When we are baptized (we are saved by obedience to the Gospel of Christ), we are immediately sanctified and begin the

process of sanctification or holiness (being conformed to the image of Christ).

“For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14).

Therefore, sanctification does not stop with forgiveness (when one believes in Jesus, repents of his sins, confesses Jesus as the Son of God, and is baptized for the forgiveness of sins, i.e., one is washed, sanctified, and justified, 1 Cor. 6:11). It is a continuous process in a Christian’s life until the day he dies. A Christian’s life is obedience to Christ. The one that lives by His teachings is consecrated, set apart, for Christ. And though we have been saved, a battle still rages in us. Sanctification is not just a one-time thing. It is a continuous battle, a devoted service to God Almighty. Paul describes this battle in Gal. 5:16-17.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”

Peter also added,

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior.” (1 Peter 1:13-15)

It is indeed a process of sanctification, being set apart from the world as holy, that continues perfecting us in holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1).

The Holy Spirit Works Through the Inspired Word of God In Our Sanctification:

The Bible explicitly teaches that the Holy Spirit sanctifies only through the Word of God in the conviction and conversion of the unbeliever. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Only when we put those words into action in our lives are we sanctified. The source of sanctification is divine Truth embodied in God's Word (John 17:17). This sacred consecration is not some esoteric influence directly from heaven independent of verbal revelation (the Word of God). Nor is sanctification or holiness a distinct bestowal on the "elect," those chosen arbitrarily by God before the creation, as Calvinism asserts. Instead, *sanctification is a choice that mankind must make*. It cannot be forced on man by some irresistible influence (irresistible grace).

The process of sanctification begins in the heart of man. Peter stresses, "*but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts*" (1 Peter 3:15a). Sanctification is a sacred command that demands urgent attention. It declares that man must not be passive about his sanctification. This principle applies to the lost as well. It is an obligation to reverence and glorify God by obedience to His commands (Matt. 6:9).

We must understand that apart from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, there could never be any sanctification (Heb. 10:10). There is no other way to seek pardon for our sins apart from the Gospel of Christ (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). The Holy Spirit (through the revealed Word of God) continues His work in our sanctification. Jesus prayed,

*“Sanctify them in the Truth: Thy Word is Truth”
(John 17:17).*

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all Truth.

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come” (John 16:13).

Through the inspired writers of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). All that we need has been revealed through the Word of God, complete instruction and guidance. The Holy Spirit is God’s agent in the process of sanctification but only through His written Word.

Therefore, as Christians, those who have been redeemed, sanctified, justified, and made righteous by the cleansing blood of Jesus, we are responsible for our own sanctification (1 Peter 1:15). Sanctification is not something that the Holy Spirit imposes on us apart from our obedience to the Gospel of Christ. God commands all Christians to:

1. Set themselves apart from sin, be holy, and present themselves approved unto God with all diligence (2 Tim. 2:15).
2. Be doers of the Word of God and not just hearers (James 1:22).
3. Put away all filthiness and malice with all meekness that we might receive the implanted Word, which can save our souls (James 1:21).

No Scripture anywhere in the Bible affirms that the Holy Spirit does the work of sanctification through direct interven-

tion or indwelling. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us through the Word of God and nothing else. Period!

Christians are saints (sanctified):

The Old Testament, the Law of Moses, serves as our teacher about holiness in the New Covenant we have with God. All Christians are saints or sanctified.

“To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours” (1 Cor. 1:2).

Notice that Paul called them sanctified and saints, despite their failings in their walk with Christ. In this letter to the Corinthians, Paul admonishes them since they were set apart as holy for God’s service and because they were not walking worthy of their calling. So all Christians are special people. We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His (God’s) own special people that we may proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

Therefore, our obligation to holiness (sanctification) is even greater than that of the Old Testament. Consider Hebrew’s admonition to Christians given by Jesus, the Founder, and Perfector of our Faith, about not neglecting our salvation.

“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it

was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will” (Heb. 2:1-4).

Sanctification in the New Testament Law of Christ means to be set apart from sin. Obedience to God’s Word purifies or sanctifies our hearts from the defilement of sin and sets us apart for God’s service. The Truth helps us to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is our spiritual worship to Him. The Word of God transforms us by the renewal of our mind, proving what is good, acceptable, and God’s perfect will (Romans 12:1-2).

God is holy and demands that His children be holy. God hates sin and has done something about it at a significant cost. The remedy for sin was His Son’s sacrifice. His holiness is active and alive. Everything about God is holy: His wisdom, His power, His judgments, and His love. Holiness in our lives glorifies and pleases God. There is a big difference between the view of holiness in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the New Testament, the definition is more narrow. It is only a spiritual covenant rather than a national one. Notice what Jesus said about defilement because of sin, purification of the heart, and sanctification.

“And he called the people to him and said to them, ‘Hear and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.’ Then the disciples came and said to him, ‘Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?’ He answered, ‘Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.’ But Peter said to him, ‘Explain the parable to us.’ And he said, “Are

you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone” (Matt. 15:10-20).

Remember God’s admonition to Peter in Acts 10:15.

“And the voice came to him again a second time, ‘What God has made clean, do not call common.’”

The realm of holiness in the New Testament is connected to morality and obedience to the Doctrine of Christ, not the ritualistic purity and impurity of the Old Testament. Thus, sanctification under the new covenant is of a much higher order. Notice what Hebrews says about this high order between the blood of Christ and the blood of bulls and goats under the old covenant.

“For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant” (Hebrews 9:13-15).

Thus, God's demand for holy living is also of a much higher order.

1. God calls us to be holy in our conduct or behavior since He is holy (1 Peter 1:14-16).
2. As those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, we are called to be holy, without blame before Him (Eph. 1:4).
3. We must not walk any longer according to the flesh but the Spirit (Rom. 8:1).
4. We must lift holy hands without anger and quarreling (1 Tim. 2:8).
5. We must cleanse ourselves from all defilement, filthiness of the flesh and heart, perfecting our holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1).
6. Finally, we must present our whole bodies (members) as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification or holiness (Rom. 6:19).

II. HOLY LIVING IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN:

Christians must be holy. God's holiness is our standard for conduct for our personal holiness.

"Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

1. The blood of Jesus sanctifies (purifies) us (Heb. 9:14; 10:10, 29; 13:12).
2. The Spirit sanctifies us (1 Peter 1:2; Rom. 15:16).
3. The Truth sanctifies us (John 17:17-19; 2 Thess. 2:13).
4. We are sanctified (cleansed) by the washing of water with the Word *"so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any*

such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27).

5. We have been washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11).

Those who walk in newness of life walk in holiness or sanctification. Consider how we must walk God’s path of holiness.

Morally:

Social Drinking:

The recreational use of alcohol, social drinking, and the abuse of other drugs is sin. When the Bible speaks of wine, it is often referring to fermented alcoholic drinks (Prov. 20:1; 23:29-32; 1 Sam. 1:13-16; Gen. 9:21-27; Isa. 16:10; Jer. 48:33; Isa. 65:8; Gen. 40:9-11; Rev. 19:15; Jn. 2:1-11; Rev. 14:10). There is no New Testament Scripture that supports drinking fermented wine undiluted, though wine in the Bible sometimes indicates unfermented grape juice. The word “cider” (“wine” in the Bible) could be fermented or unfermented. The wine found in John 2:1-11 was clearly not alcoholic like modern alcoholic drinks. The blessing that the Bible speaks of was unfermented grape juice.

Ancient people knew how to preserve unfermented wine. They would boil the grape juice to kill bacteria and seal the juice in a jar or boil it until it turned into syrup. Then they would filter it to remove yeast. Next, they would cool it (there can be no fermentation below 45 degrees because yeast settles out). Finally, preservatives (such as sulfur) were added. These methods of preserving unfermented wine are confirmed and can be found in any good encyclopedia. Take notice that when grape juice is fermented naturally, it will most likely turn into vinegar and not alcohol.

Modern alcoholic beverages (distilled drinks) were unknown in Bible times. Modern wines have more alcohol than the wines of the Middle East since our grapes produce higher alcohol content, and often distilled alcohol is added.

So, should a Christian drink a shot of rum, whiskey, beer, or wine? No! Because God explicitly condemns intoxication (drunkenness). Consider some Scriptures in the New Testament that speak against social drinking: Eph. 5:18; 1 Thess. 5:6-8; Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:10; 1 Peter 4:3.

When a person is under the influence of alcohol, he loses the clarity of intellect and self-control that he would otherwise have. God expects us to avoid, at all costs, these practices of sinful pleasure and self-indulgence. They hinder one's ability to think clearly, and they inhibit one from recognizing and resisting temptation. Alcoholic beverages weaken one's mental judgment, self-control, willpower, and inhibitions. That's the reason why the Bible explicitly warns Christians to avoid the lure of alcoholic drinking. Christians must avoid alcohol altogether. Why? Because it tempts one to sin and weakens one's self-control.

Modern social drinking is condemned. Notice what the Bible says about it,

“For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry” (1 Peter 4:3).

God demands that we avoid them all (excess of wine, extravagant indulgence, long drawn out, reveling, wild parties with sexual looseness and drunkenness, banqueting, drinking parties, social drinking). *Drinking is a terribly bad example to others!* So, if you drink, please consider how bad your influence is toward others. It is a bad influence on the young, former ad-

dicts, those whom we seek to teach the Gospel of Christ and leads us to sin. *How on earth can a drunk convert another drunk or those who know that Christians must not drink?! How do you convince someone that you are serious about your faith with a drink in your hand?!*

No Christian can be justified, in light of God's call to holiness, supporting and using a substance that has destroyed the lives of so many. Social drinking destroys a Christian's influence entirely. It is sinful and violates God's call to sanctification and righteousness.

Alcohol is a gift from Satan. It is a tool in Satan's hands to cause us to stumble and sin. And though some find temporary relief and joy to a difficult life, the consequences are devastating. Alcohol mocks humans, carrying them into irrationality and foolishness (Prov. 20:1). It is not wise to be ruled by alcohol, and whoever allows it to control him is a fool (Isa. 5:11). One who drinks alcohol is a slave to sin. Sin will lead him to lose his soul eternally. Christians must never consider social drinking as acceptable, even though our society practices and accepts it. *Take heed!*

Immoral Dress (Immodesty):

As Christians, we cannot allow ourselves to be swayed by fashion. Short hems, short shorts, tight-fitting, sensual, and slinky clothing is sinful and does not demonstrate holiness and godliness. Any clothing that has "sexual attractiveness" or allure, often worn by many Christians, is downright ungodly and worldly. It does not reflect holiness at all. Christians must not be ruled by the gods of fashion or because it makes them look "good," brings society's approval or the approval of the opposite sex, or even if we ourselves are pleased by what we see. God dictates what is holy and acceptable before Him and not society. *Take heed!*

Wearing bathing suits in public is immoral, ungodly, and worldly and is not acceptable to God. Bathing suits do not cover the body enough to be considered godly attire. Nothing can justify a Christian wearing and being seen in public or semi-private situations in such immoral and ungodly attires. And though many Christians may not swim at a public pool with such immoral attires, they nevertheless dress this way in each other's presence, leading others to sin. Sadly, some of these Christians are married and are committing adultery because of their sinful, unholy behavior. We cannot justify indecent clothing and consider ourselves holy before God Almighty.

We live in a culture where nudity or the "clothing-optional" lifestyle is becoming a big business. Nobody is blushing anymore! There was a time when our people would be embarrassed by public indecency. A culture that worships nature and sensuality is prone to dress immodestly. People have been carried away by the course of this world, surrendering to the prince of darkness rather than God, walking in rebellious disobedience. They deliver themselves captive to culture's inclinations and ignore the admonition that we take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Christians who obey their Lord must honor the rules of our Lawmaker concerning our clothing. Otherwise, we are refusing the Lordship of Jesus.

Alas, today, more and more professing Christians have come to think of nakedness as normal and acceptable, even preferable! Somehow, they believe they have permission to remove the "restraints" of modest dress. The trendy pagan fashions are physically revealing. As a terrible consequence of all this, otherwise sober-minded people have been publicly undressed. NO! Genuine Christians must speak the Truth against this modern trend toward nakedness and its consequences. We must start raising sons and daughters to remain morally pure in an idolatrous culture that worships the flesh.

As Christians who profess godliness, let us not forget that the church is “*the pillar and ground of the Truth*” (I Tim. 3:15). Let us allow those divine principles taught by the revealed Word of God to guide our daily living into holiness to glorify God. Let us not forget that we must dress modestly and discreetly in the presence of men and God. When the heart is right with God, it will govern itself in purity and humility, expressing itself modestly. Christian modesty will in no way expose itself publicly in sinful nakedness.

Today, it is disgusting and discouraging to see this problem permeating the Lord’s church, which He purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). Men and women post pictures of themselves dressed (or undressed) with indecent clothing, men themselves in shorts and shirtless. They exhibit themselves in public arenas such as Facebook, Instagram, etc. I refuse to hit the “like” button! I will not partake in such fruits of darkness.

Dancing:

Dancing is another serious problem among some Christians. They think that the sensuality of dancing is acceptable to God. They refuse to recognize that it is sinful and immoral to move their bodies in lascivious motions (modern dance). Holding closely to the opposite sex while dancing is sinful and immoral. It does not portray holiness and godliness but impurity.

Some dare to justify dancing by rationalizing it. They say that it is just exercise or that they do not have any problems with impure thoughts when they dance. Others might say that it is just a fun activity to get to know our partner better.

I could never fathom why so many professing holiness enjoyed the movie “*Dirty Dancing*” some years ago. They denied there was anything immoral or indecent about the movie when, in fact, it was full of sensual dancing. *They rejected God’s*

call to holiness! Dancing is sinful and is not acceptable in the life of a Christian. *Period!* So, if you advocate the sensual dance, it is time to repent that you may not fall under condemnation.

Gambling:

The Bible constantly warns against greed and covetousness (Eph. 5:5-7; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rom. 1:29-32; 1 Cor. 5:11; Deut. 5:21; Mk. 7:20-23; 1 Tim. 6:6-10; 2 Tim. 3:2; Heb. 13:5). Theft is taking someone else's property in a way that God does not authorize. Gambling is mutual attempted theft like dueling is mutual attempted murder. In dueling, each agrees to let the other one attempt to kill him. But killing is still unauthorized regardless of the agreement (Romans 13:8-10). So, a gambler agrees to do the same when he lets someone try to take his possessions in exchange for a chance to take the other person's possessions. *The agreement makes both guilty of sin!*

Let us not forget that Christians are stewards of God's possessions (1 Pet. 4:10-11; Lk. 12:42-56; 2 Chr. 28:1; 1 Cor. 4:1-2). So, the gambler is an unfaithful steward (Lk. 16:1-2). The gambler seeks personal gain and profit by taking from others who agree to the scam. It is self-seeking and selfish. The gambler violates the law of love since he tries to do to others what he does not want others to do to him (1 Cor. 13:5; Phil. 2:4). It is the root of evil, love of money, greed.

Do you know that drinking alcohol, drugs, lying, crime, prostitution, lasciviousness, sexual immorality, and corruption abound where gambling occurs? The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil!

Sadly, gambling is becoming a scourge in our society, and it works its evil among many professing Christians. And though the world accepts the sin or evil of gambling, reveling in it, it is still a vice or sin that leads to addiction, broken

homes, and ruined lives. Eventually, it will destroy their soul eternally. It is not godly but worldly. *Children of God must abstain from it at all costs!* Gamblers not only sin but tempt others to sin. Many Christians will be lost eternally because of gambling.

So why submit yourself to such a danger? Does gambling harmonize with Jesus' example and His teaching of His Word? Honestly, what would you think if Jesus would have played a slot machine or roulette wheel, betting on a dice or poker game?

Man and Woman Relationships:

This is a serious one! Men and women (both married and unmarried) must be completely virtuous and chaste in their behavior and relationships with one another. Anything that falls under familiarity, flirting, and coarseness (vulgarity, crudeness, smuttiness), unwise close friendships with the opposite sex separate from your spouse, even simply being "alone" in various situations is not godly and holy. All these reckless practices can lead to lasciviousness and fornication (sexual immorality).

Remember, we must not allow this to happen under any circumstance. God calls us to sanctification, holiness. He demands that we flee temptation and all appearance of evil doing. Sadly, this is one of the most permissive dangers of our society. All these unwise practices or situations lead to affairs, lascivious actions, premarital pregnancies, and apostasies. Be aware that no Christian is exempt, even if they think they can handle it! The truth is, you can't! Therefore, flee these dangerous situations and be faithful to your God!!

Reverence at Worship:

Tardiness:

Tardiness is habitual to many, even though there are times when it is excusable. It shows a lack of reverence and dedication to God. We are called to be set apart as holy for service to God.

Lack of interest and attention to Bible study and Worship:

It shows a lack of care and reverence for the special time that we have chosen to be together as God's called-out people. It does not demonstrate being set apart as holy for service to God.

Dress:

We must be reverent in the way we dress before God and the congregation.

Decorum during the Lord's Supper:

The Lord's Supper is a solemn and special time that must not be marred by irreverent and disruptive behavior but a time of meditation on the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior.

Doctrinal Purity:

We must be blameless in the midst of a perverse generation. We must not tolerate sophistry under any circumstance (deception, false teaching) and be in fellowship with false teachers and those who persist in living in sin. Such tolerance violates God's call to sanctification, holiness. Therefore, we must not accept anything that violates doctrinal purity. *God's people must be pure before Him! Any doctrine that teaches that*

which is contrary to the purity of God's Word or is inherently false must be exposed in the light of God's Truth!

"Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

CONCLUSION:

There is no justification without sanctification. There is no salvation without justification. God's message to sinful men is that they must pursue peace and holiness (sanctification). Without holiness, no one will see God (Heb. 12:14). God expects Christians to live holy lives and cleanse themselves from all defilement, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1). *We cannot be holy while living in sin!* As Christians who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ in baptism (Acts 22:16), we must dedicate ourselves to living holy lives guided by God's holy will. As we do His holy will, we can rest assured that He will count us holy, pleasing, and acceptable before His eyes. As those who have been saved, there is still a battle that rages, and we must win by walking in the Spirit and not fulfilling the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-17). Sanctification or holiness is an unending process motivated by the love of God's Truth.

Christ gave Himself up for the church that He might sanctify it. His death was vital for cleansing and sanctification. Christians can lose their sanctification and be lost eternally. When a Christian regresses into a life of sin (Heb. 10:26), he can expect a fierce judgment of fire that will destroy him. *It will be a terrible punishment, worse than any merciless death! Why? Because he "has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace."* He will fall into the hands of a

judging God who will render well-deserved vengeance (Heb. 10:30-31).

Sanctification (holiness) is vital to be saved and enter the gates of heaven. It would be wise to remember God's admonition when He said,

"For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves..." (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:16).

The Holy Spirit directs and leads Christians to holy living (sanctification) through His teachings found in the New Testament, and we must submit to His instructions to sanctify our lives. *God takes his holiness seriously!* He will not treat lightly those who profane His name. Thus, we must worship Him with total submission and obedience to all His will. *Indeed, God is a consuming fire!*

Therefore, we must walk in holiness. We will be judged based upon our choices and decisions in this matter. God's Word has the power to help us walk worthy of our calling, in holiness and godliness. God does not and will not tolerate sin or anything that is not holy living. We must obey God in all things because He is the Holy Lawgiver. We cannot categorize sin, for we must be holy. God has forbidden the action, and that is the only category that must we must consider. There is no such attitude as "big sins" and "little sins" with God. There is no other way to look at sin. The effects of sin are devastating. Sin destroys our holiness before a Holy God. We must not rationalize our sins or consider our weaknesses tolerable. When we commit sins, God does not find us acceptable until we repent and start bearing fruits of repentance. We must separate ourselves from all sin and dedicate ourselves to God completely. God is the only One who can dictate what is holy and unholy and not us. Sin is an offense to God. Therefore, we

must take responsibility for our sins, for God is holy, and demands that we be holy.

May we leave sin behind to be holy before our Almighty God. May we yield our life to holiness and separate ourselves for service to God. May we pursue and perfect holiness in the fear of God. May we strive to be holy because God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). May we be set apart, obeying the teachings of the Holy Spirit found in God's Word. May we never trample underfoot the Son of God and profane the blood of the covenant by which we were sanctified because of our unholy and irreverent behavior.

"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. 7:1

This is a sample of the material contained in
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Holiness and Walking in a Worthy Manner before the Lord*
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