

“SEARCH ME, O GOD—I WANT TO BE LIKE JESUS!”

GFA Family Conference 2025, Message #3

Example of Jonathan Edwards and his 70 Resolutions; Book of Titus

Ps 139:23-24 VV1-6 God’s omniscience; VV7-12 God’s omnipresence; VV13-18 God’s omnipotence. David wants God to do a daily TRANSFORMATIVE work in his life! “Search me”—perhaps in English we could say “ransack.” “Try me” —put the fire to me and burn off my impurities.” See if there is anything in my life that “pains” the holy heart of God, and lead me in the way of everlasting things! This is what sanctification is all about.

Sanctification is a process whereby the Holy Spirit is at work in the life of a believer on a daily basis to conform him to the image of Jesus Christ.

- **Process:** “The destiny which a young Christian carves out for himself or herself under the hand of God is almost invariably determined by the ability that he or she gains to tell the difference between what brings momentary excitement and stimulation and the less spectacular day-after-day exercises of the Spirit which build Christian character and form [believers] into the men and women whose lives make lasting impressions on society and in the fellowship of the church, because [they] bear fruit that remains” [Sinclair Ferguson, *Taking The Christian Life Seriously*, 22-23].
- **Holy Spirit:** This is a divine work; but there is a human component as we are co-laborers with the Spirit.
- **Believer:** Someone who is saved, not unsaved people.
- **Daily:** The devil works “25/8” and never takes a day of vacation.
- **Conform, Image of Christ:** There is transformation (change) and there is conformation into the very image of Jesus Christ as the Spirit works to get [a Christian] to “bear the Family Name!”
REMEMBER NOBLESSE OBLIGE! Sanctification is NOT moralism or a version of legalism or simply behavior modification or a better version of myself.

Historical Example: Jonathan Edwards (October 5, 1703–March 22, 1758)

One of the greatest theologians and philosophers America has ever produced, long-time pastor, missionary to Indians, author, third president of Princeton University. **The 70 Resolutions** were penned when he was 19-21 years old; had his undergrad and MA degree; not some kind of “law-works”—he desired a right standing with God; not public rules he published so people would be impressed with his “goody-goody” spirituality, but a genuine desire to be changed within! He wanted “to curb his appetites” and “refine what he perceived as undesirable aspects of his personality” [A *Jonathan Edwards Reader*, eds. John Smith, Harry Stout, Kenneth Minkema, xxxii-xxxiii]. Here are three “threads” that I think run through them: (1) Living in the light of eternity; i.e., learning to see everything in time against the backdrop of the eternal. Beware of “the tyranny of the urgent!” (2) The importance of speech. (3) The Good—The Better—The Best.

Personal Sanctification is Character development. **“You can borrow brains, but you cannot borrow character.” “A man may be saved in a second, but it takes time to build a Christian character that will stand the test of years and the storms of life.” “Back of every tragedy in human character there is a process of wicked thinking.”** [Quotes from Bob Jones, Sr.]

The Book of TITUS: The second shortest Pauline letter; probably the second to last letter Paul wrote that we have; 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are “the Pastoral Epistles”; this Book doesn’t seem to fit the chronology of the Book of Acts, so it probably occurred between Paul’s first and second Roman imprisonments. 1:5 Paul moved on from Crete but wanted Titus to remain there “to set in order the things that are wanting” [lacking things/remaining things/falling short things] “to ordain elders” [appoint] in every city. Where a local church is established, there is a need for godly leaders, and the basis for godly leadership is **CHARACTER, “the stuffing of the person!”**

Non-Christian		Sanctification; lifelong process	Glorification
3:3; 2:12,14; 1:12	2:14 redeem	2:14 a special, chosen people	2:13; 3:7
Unsaved character	3:5 saved	2:12 live soberly, righteously, godly in now age	blessed hope, heirs
Ungodliness, worldly lusts	3:7 justified	2:7,14; 3:1,8,14 zealous, eager to do good works	
Lawlessness, environment			

WHY is there a need for Personal Sanctification?

1. We are born with a sinful nature, “the old man.” We were foolish, disobedient, deceived, captives of various passions and pleasures, a lifestyle of malice, envy, hateful/loathsome, and hating others. We were godless, living in worldly lusts, and lawless.
2. The culture/environment in which we live is ungodly, dead set against the Christian worldview. The Cretans are always LIARS, EVIL BEASTS [like wild animals, inhumane], SLOW BELLIES [lazy gluttons; a desire to fulfil their bodily pleasures and appetites]. These were the words of Epimenides, a favorite philosopher/prophet speaking of his own people! Thankfully, GOD SAVES SINNERS and thus begins the lifelong PROCESS of SANCTIFICATION. As God’s special, chosen people, we should live “in the now age” soberly, righteously, godly, known for our GOOD WORKS.

Titus 1:6-8 Paul lists generic, foundational points; negatives, positives. 1:6 blameless: not morally perfect, but not liable to be charged with something [not a “teflon man”]; husband of one wife; faithful children, not accused of reckless living or undisciplined [showing the importance of family leadership]. 1:7 blameless again—did Paul stutter, or ... !; NOT self-willed [arrogant, full of himself]; NOT soon angry [not quick-tempered, doesn’t react at the drop of a hat]; NOT given to wine; NOT a striker [combative, bully, pugnacious]; NOT greedy for \$\$. 1:8 lover of hospitality; loving what is good [delights in good things and people]; self-controlled, HEAD SCREWED ON PROPERLY; a life according to God’s standard; an inward and outward God-pleasingness; self-controlled, disciplined.

Titus 2:1-6 Paul addresses four categories of people [basically everyone in the Church] and lists some of the qualities of Christian CHARACTER that should be produced in them, “gospel transformation,” “the civilizing function of Christianity” [*Introducing the NT*, D.A Carson, Douglas Moo, ed. Andrew Naselli, 126]. 2:2 old men: self-controlled or clear-headed; worthy of respect; HEAD SCREWED ON PROPERLY; sound in faith, love, patience. 2:3 old women: behavior as becometh holiness; not false accusers/slanderous; not a slave to wine; teachers of good things. 2:4-5 young women: HEAD SCREWED ON PROPERLY; love husbands and children; self-controlled; chaste, pure; working at home, domestic; good; obedient to husbands. 2:6 young men: HEAD SCREWED ON PROPERLY!

If we would allow the Holy Spirit to weave these things into our lives, do you think we would be counter-cultural? Remember Paul’s words to the Church at Rome in 12:2 (as paraphrased by J.B. Phillips, *The NT in Modern English*), “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your lives from within.” **Christian fidelity will always be at odds with the spirit of the age!**

It is easy for a local church—and a believer—to think that a little give-and-take here, a few accommodations there, a “correction of God’s old-fashioned Book, is no big deal. Here are two illustrations to demonstrate how easy, logical, and subtle “the slide” occurs. If you need clearer illustrations, consult the OT or ask an Israelite!!

WHITE

WHILE

WHOLE

WHORE

SHORE

SHIRE

SPIRE

SPICE

SLICE

SLICK

SLACK

BLACK

MORAL The Church started as a MORAL reflection of God, until some people
MODAL thought it was too “old-fashioned” and MODAL,
MODEL so they left the Bible to follow the world’s MODEL.
MODES They justified these MODES of change, saying,
MOPES “No one likes a Christian who MOPES around like a stick-in-the-mud.”
HOPES So in spite of the HOPES of many good Christians,
HOMES the media brought the worldly filth right into their HOMES.
HOMOS Now there is a denomination full of HOMOS. [James Steinbach]

SONG: “Cleanse Me” [J. Edwin Orr] based on Psalm 139:23-24