

Antibacterial Wipes

By Pastor Greg
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John 17:19

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Just about every week day I eat my lunch while watching a fascinating program on the Discovery channel called “How It’s Made”; learning and watching how some of the most fascinating things are manufactured. They show us huge pieces of equipment that press down on something with like a kagillion tons of pressure, or show how an object is purified at a temperature that makes the sun seem cold. It seems that no matter what is being made, it must always be bent, shaped, or baked. No matter what you are trying to make, the raw materials need to be sanctified.

Some of you who are students of the Bible are quite familiar with the word Sanctify. But it’s just not a common word used in the street any more. I mean you just don’t hear people saying “Sanctify thyself when thou comest out from going aside”. No, today we would say “Clean your hands after going to the bathroom”.

The word “Sanctify” basically means to be “holy”, “Purified”, or “set apart”. It gives the impression that something has gone through a process that has made it different from all the rest. Oh, it may look like an ordinary object, but there is something different and special about it (like the good dishes that are used only on certain special circumstances; I mean, they’re still dishes, mind you).

In the Old Testament, this is what God was trying to do with the nation of Israel. He desired to sanctify them; to make them holy and set apart from all the other nations (so He gave them the Laws of Moses). He “Sanctified” certain foods; declaring some as holy and others as unclean (my favorite is God’s declaration against shellfish found in Leviticus 11:10 – “**But you must never eat animals from the sea or from rivers that do not have both fins and scales. They are detestable to you. This applies both to little creatures that live in shallow water and to all creatures that live in deep water.**¹”). He “Sanctified” certain days, instructing the nation to set them aside as “Holy” (like the Passover or the Sabbath). The problem with this is that even though God desired these people to remain pure and holy (sanctified) they would constantly embrace those things and beliefs that destroyed that holiness. They

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

would worship false God's and they would do the very things that God had commanded them not to do. In other words, no longer were they set apart, no longer were they holy; no longer were they sanctified.

The list of things that caused a person to be unclean is quite extensive, and keeping one's self clean and holy would have taken a lot of work. Just the other day I found a dead mouse on the back steps. As I picked it up by its tail to dispose of it, I walked through the yard realizing that I should be calling out "unclean, unclean!" (A command found in Leviticus 11:25). With as easy as it was to become unclean, what chance did a person living back then have to remain "Sanctified"? Un-cleanliness was crouched behind the corner just waiting to pounce and attack.

In contrast to all this, there is an interesting statement made by God found in Exodus 29:37. As part of an extensive purification ritual to establish Aaron as High Priest, God says, "Purify the altar, and consecrate it every day for seven days. After that, the altar will be absolutely holy, and whatever touches it will become holy."² Most of the time when something that was clean (sanctified) touched something that was unclean, that which was pure and holy became defiled. I mean, it makes perfect sense. If I scrub my hands with antibacterial soap and touch a germ-ridden door knob, the knob does not become clean. So this statement by God really strikes me as unusual. After an extensive purification (or sanctification ritual) the holiness of this altar transfers to everything that touches it.

Throughout this season of Lent we have been looking closely at this prayer by Jesus found in John 17. When I first read this statement by Christ in verse 19, I thought to myself, wait a minute, why would Christ need to be sanctified? "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."³ Is He not holy and set apart already? What kind of purification does He need? You and I do, for sure. Every day and in every way we work faithfully to become more and more holy. We surrender things in our life that would defile. We give up practices and beliefs that are not grounded in truth. We study the life of Christ and try with all

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

³*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (Jn 17:19). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

our strength to live the kind of life He did. We are Christians, after all. And as people who are “Christ-like” it is important for our deeds, our love, and our lifestyle to mirror that of Jesus. Even the Holy Spirit will take who we are and, through periods of shaping, baking, and bending, work us into someone who lives a life that is holy and set apart; we become sanctified. Or do we?

When Jesus makes His statement found in John 17:19, He is in fact making the same declaration God made in Exodus 29. Is it not true that no matter how hard we try to live a holy and sanctified life we will never measure up to Gods standard of holiness. Our righteousness is but a filthy rag (Isaiah 64:6). But because Christ has set Himself apart from this world and because Christ offered the sacrifice that made Him holy, all who embrace Him become Holy and sanctified. And I believe this is a lasting holiness. When we reach out to Christ and touch Him, His holiness becomes our holiness; His sanctification becomes our sanctification.

It is essential that we learn this truth; you cannot attain a sanctification on your own. With our own power and our own strength we will never be sanctified. But Christ has endured this purification process for us. He has been bent, shaped, and baked on our behalf. Our sanctification begins by learning this truth; all who touch this man become clean. But all who try to become clean on their own will fail.

This is where our life of holiness begins (where the sanctification of Jesus is transferred to us), and where our life as Christians begins. Everything that happens from that point on is in response to seeing ourselves as sanctified; holy and set apart. I allow the Holy Spirit to work in me not so I become holy and sanctified but because I am holy and sanctified. I’ve laid hold of the Lamb upon the altar and am now set apart. In response to that, I give up those things in my life that do not honor that holiness. I embrace a theology that honors what Christ has done. I love and serve others in a way that testifies to that holiness. But I never forget that it is not what I have given up that makes me holy but it is because of the holiness of Christ.