

## A Simple Guide to Big Words

**Text:** 1 Thessalonians 4:1–5

**Topic:** Sanctification

**Big Idea of the Message:** Sanctification is the continual work of the Holy Spirit to transform the believer to be more like Jesus.

**Application Point:** Sanctification is not a goal to be met but an ongoing process. As the believer stays connected to God, he will transform both heart and actions through this process.

### Talking Points:

1. Sanctification deals with our sin. Justification means our declared righteousness before God, made possible by Christ's death and resurrection for us. Sanctification means our gradual, growing righteousness, made possible by the Spirit's work in us. Justification is a once-for-all event, and sanctification is a continual work of the Holy Spirit.
2. Paul has a real love and affection for the Thessalonian people. He was encouraged by Timothy's report back about them (1 Thessalonians 3:6) and is earnestly asking them to continue to live faithfully. Paul tells them to keep walking with God (4:1). They know of God's good plan for living in obedience. He declares the will of God: it's "your sanctification" (v. 3). Paul goes on to outline some specific ways they can continue to grow in their obedience to God. He tells them to control themselves, mind and body (vv. 4–6). God has called us to holiness (v. 7), and to deny that call is to ignore what the Holy Spirit is working in you (v. 8).
3. Sanctification is the process of growing in holiness and purity, by the power of the Spirit. While there is a tendency to say that certain things are spiritual and certain things are unspiritual, this is not the case. Mind, body, and soul are all interconnected, and God is present in all of it. We can't remove our faith from the way we live. Sanctification is merely the outworking of what God has done internally in us.
4. Sanctification is not a goal to meet but an ongoing process. We all have weaknesses and struggles and there isn't one of us who will attain perfection before the resurrection. We don't immediately lose all our sinful impulses as soon as we meet Jesus, and the rate at which we begin to overcome these temptations can be slow, especially if we are comparing our progress to someone else's. "God calls us to be holy as he is holy—this is the highest imaginable bar. ... Seek to become like him in holiness. Seek his strength to protect you and change you. *His* life purpose is *your* sanctification. However far you've traveled on your journey, what matters most is the direction you're walking.
5. In the movie *Ant-Man*, Scott Lang, newly released from prison, stumbles into becoming a superhero. After stealing a high-tech suit, he inherits a role he has done nothing to earn. "I need you to be the Ant-Man," Pym tells the man who stole from him, choosing Lang to adopt the identity before he has done any heroic work to merit such a gift. Once Lang is given the suit, his own 'sanctification' begins. He must *become* the Ant-Man that he already formally *is*. Lang takes on the identity of a hero first, and only starts to act like a hero afterwards. As believers we have been given a new identity in Christ—one we did not deserve—and sanctification is the process of learning to live according to that new identity.