

The Secret of Sanctification

"The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him; He makes His covenant known to them." Psalm 25:14

The Hebrew word for "secret" is *sod*, which can also be translated as "friendship." Its root meaning is "intimate and confidential counsel." God promises to share His intimate and secret knowledge with those who fear Him. This secret knowledge contains the keys to understanding the full provision of His new covenant. When the disciples asked Jesus why He spoke to others in parables, He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them (Matthew 13:11)." Jesus gave Peter the keys of the knowledge of the kingdom so that, by his apostolic ministry, many of God's elect would enter the kingdom of heaven through the new covenant established by Christ's death on the cross (Matthew 16:19; Luke 22:20). The apostle Paul called these keys to understanding the new covenant and entering the kingdom of heaven the "mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:19).

There are two keys of knowledge we must possess to understand the mystery of the gospel and enter the kingdom of heaven. The first key is to know *Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8). The second key is to know *we died with Christ* (Romans 6:8). These two keys are inseparable: without the first there would be no second and without the second no one could enter the kingdom of heaven. This is the whole gospel of Christ that makes up the complete message of the cross. For when Christ died on the cross, He died not only to forgive us from the penalty of sin, He also died to deliver us from the power of sin. Forgiveness of sins is only the beginning and not the end of God's eternal purpose for His elect (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8). The aim of Christ's death on the cross and the goal of the gospel is to produce a people who walk in *sanctification*, wholly submitted to Christ's sovereignty (Titus 2:14). Both these keys of the kingdom (*forgiveness and sanctification*) are evident in God's apostolic commission to Paul: "I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may

turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive *forgiveness of sins* and an inheritance among those who have been *sanctified by faith* in Me (Acts 26:20)."

Many people think that just having forgiveness of sins is enough to enter the kingdom of heaven. This is not true. Jesus said that if you continue to practice sin, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:23). The apostle John warned, "No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has seen Him or knows Him (1 John 3:6)." All Christians face this dilemma: after they are saved, how can they live in this sin-sick world without being compromised by sin? Many Christians mistakenly try to overcome sin by the best of their ability (Galatians 3:3). If they possess some natural moral ability, they may outwardly appear to succeed, but inwardly they will still remain lawless to God. We cannot use 1 John 1:9 as an excuse to keep on sinning and think we will still enter the kingdom of heaven (Galatians 5:13). As Paul said, "Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not *know* that all of us who have been baptized (*immersed*) into Christ Jesus have been baptized (*immersed*) into His death?... For we *know* that our old man was crucified with Him so that our body of sin (*our sinful nature*) would be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died has been freed from sin (Romans 6:1-7)." This Scripture contains the key of knowledge to overcoming sin. We might call this knowledge the "secret of sanctification" since it remains a mystery to so many professing Christians. Paul wrote, "Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great (1 Timothy 3:16)."

What is the secret of sanctification? The secret to overcoming sin is to *know* that you have died with Christ and that you no longer have a sinful nature (Romans 6:6; Colossians 2:11). When God has revealed this divine truth to you, you will be set free from *every* entangling sin (John 8:31-36). You can count on the fact that you are dead to sin with absolute certainty just as you can count on the fact

that one plus one equals two (Romans 6:11). This is God's way for you to escape *every* temptation to sin (1 Corinthians 10:13). This liberating truth is called the doctrine of co-crucifixion. However, it is not enough to just mentally agree with this doctrine. If God does not personally reveal this truth to you, you will not have the spiritual conviction and understanding to wholeheartedly *believe and act on it* and bear the fruit of sanctification (Romans 6:19-22). Just as you cannot say "Jesus is Lord" and truly *believe and act on it* unless the Holy Spirit reveals this truth to you, you also cannot say that you no longer have a sinful nature and *believe and act on it* unless the Holy Spirit reveals this truth to you (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Only those who have a "good and honest" heart and humble themselves like a little child will *understand* this word of the cross and hold on to it with persevering faith to bear the fruit of sanctification (Matthew 13:23; Luke 8:15; 18:17). The word of the cross will remain veiled to all who are perishing (2 Corinthians 4:3). "For without sanctification no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14)." Many false "Christian" teachers do not walk in sanctification and thwart others from finding this key to enter the kingdom. As Jesus said, "Woe to you... for you have taken away the key of knowledge. You yourselves did not enter and you have hindered those who were entering... therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit (Luke 11:32; Matthew 21:43)." This fruit is the proof that your salvation is real and your faith is enduring (James 2:26). To all those who bear the fruit of sanctification, Jesus will say, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34)." Many know that Christ died for their sins, but few know that their sinful nature died with Christ (Matthew 22:14). God will only reveal the secret of sanctification to those who love Him and fear Him.

"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children." Matthew 11:25-26