



MISSION POSSIBLE | WEEK FIVE
APRIL 2, 2017



PREPARATION

+ **MONDAY - WEDNESDAY**

Read through Romans 8:29-30, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, and 1 John 3:2. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truths of this text.

+ **THURSDAY - SATURDAY**

Many questions have been included, so read through and determine which of those questions will work well to encourage, push, and grow your group in the best way.

+ **DAILY**

As you prepare, pray for the preaching of God's Word this coming week at the corporate church gathering. Pray also for your time in this week's study.



THIS WEEK

+ **KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH**

God gives us clear assurance that our sanctification is truly working and will one day be completed.

+ **THEOLOGY APPLIED**

As we look to God's past, present, and future assurances regarding our sanctification, we see that God is fully committed to making us more like Christ. He has planned it in the past, is working it in our present, and will complete it in our future.



GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Q: How does it feel when you know a certain plan will definitely succeed?

Q: How can you tell if a person is uncertain about something?

Q: What's the difference between a guarantee and a gamble?

| THE DESIRE FOR SUCCESS

Whether it's the labor we put into our jobs, raising our kids, stewarding our gifts and possessions, or investing in our church, everyone wants to feel certain that their experience and effort will be worthwhile. No one enjoys going after something that may flop in the end. Everyone wants assurance that things will turn out.

When it comes to our mission of sanctification, God is committed to assuring us that the process of becoming like Jesus is not a gamble for us. The Lord does not want us to wonder if pursuing Christlikeness will actually turn out in the end. Instead, he wants us to know with certainty that the work of sanctification in us can actually change us and will eventually come to completion, guaranteed. In fact, the entire reason Jesus gave himself up for us was for the explicit purpose of sanctifying us to become like him (Eph. 5:25-27). As we will see in this lesson, Jesus always accomplishes his purpose, and our sanctification is not an exception.

Q: Why would God want us to be certain of our sanctification?

Q: How do you think you'd live differently if you really believed God was committed to making you more like Jesus?



Understanding the Text

Becoming more like Christ takes a lifetime, and to make it over the long haul God knows that we need assurance to keep going. The passages in this lesson help us understand that becoming like Christ is not a gamble or a risk; it's a guarantee. While many things in life are not certain, the work God is doing to make us more like his Son is incredibly sure. The Lord promises us that our sanctification experience is not a useless or vain one using these three assurances:

1. Past Assurance

2. Present Assurance

3. Future Assurance



GOING DEEPER

+ *This next section will help to show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Walk through the Scripture passages, connecting the text to this week's biblical truth.*

| PAST ASSURANCE



Read Romans 8:29-30, Ephesians 1:4-5, 2 Timothy 1:8-9

Q: God predestines us to become what, according to Rom. 8:29?

*Q: When did God decide that we would become “holy and blameless” before him?
[Eph. 1:4]*

Q: God saved us to become holy through Christ at what point in time, according to 2 Tim. 1:9?

Becoming like Jesus is the mission of every current Christian, yes. However, the mission itself is not a current one; it's an ancient one. According to Scripture, our mission to become sanctified was laid out for us before God even created the world! Before time began, he predestined us to become like Christ. Our mission was on God's mind long before it was on ours, long before we were born, long before we even came to Christ! While we know sanctification is a current call on our lives, we take great encouragement in the reality that God has already planned every step of our Christian growth beforehand. These verses show us that God has been committed to our maturity long before we were ever committed to him. He is the one who has the power to plan out our sanctification in advance, and we have great assurance knowing that everything God plans—including our growth—always comes to fruition (Prov. 19:21; Ps. 33:11; Is. 46:8-11).

Q: Does God ever call someone to be saved, but not sanctified, according to 2 Tim. 1:9?

Q: Those who God predestines to become like Jesus go through what steps of progression [Rom. 8:29-30]?

When God saves us, he simultaneously calls us to an ever-increasing life of holiness. Scripture shows us in 2 Timothy that there's no such thing as one who is saved but not called to sanctification. It also shows us that he did not give us the dual call of salvation and sanctification because we deserved it, but simply because it was his gracious plan from the beginning of time. Showing us his grace through Jesus and conforming us to his image was the purpose of God before we ever came along—an experience Romans 8 gives us a blueprint for. Paul tells us that God chose our salvation and sanctification beforehand, called us to come, gave us right

standing with himself (justification), and then gave us his very glory so we could fully become like him (glorification). While we haven't experienced this fullness yet in our own time, the verbs in this part of Romans 8 are remarkably in the past tense. Paul is indicating that in God's mind, according to God's predestined plan, the process of our sanctification, though we are still living it out now, is as good as done in his eyes! We have great assurance that when God looks at our progress in the Christian life, he sees it from eternity's perspective, though we are living in the present. He sees our entire progress as a whole, and from his viewpoint, his work is sure to be completed in us.

Q: How have you experienced the steps Romans 8 lays out for our growth in Christ?

Q: Explain how these passages give you assurance in your mission of sanctification.

| PRESENT ASSURANCE



Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Peter 1:3-4

Q: Paul prays that God would currently do what for his readers in 1 Thes. 5:23?

Q: According to 1 Thes. 5:23, does sanctification happen on just the soul-level of a person or does it apply to the entire person?

Q: God will surely do what, according to 1 Thes. 5:24?

Q: What verb tenses do you see in 2 Cor. 3:18? What does that tell you about the timing of our sanctification?

Knowing that God has planned out our sanctification in the past is assuring, but God gives us another level of assurance of his work in our lives in the present. These passages show us that God's plan to make us like Jesus is not just something that happened before us, it's something that's working in us right now.

Paul's desire in 1 Thessalonians is for believers to be as sanctified as possible in the present, ready for the day of Christ's coming. In 2 Corinthians, he uses phrases which indicate that our sanctification is happening to us currently—as we are daily “beholding” God, we are “being transformed” more and more into the image of Christ. It's a process we can be sure is happening right here, right now, in this season of our walk with God. While we take assurance that God planned our sanctification in advance, we can be further assured that the work he had prearranged to do in us is actually being done in our daily lives. Paul also purposefully reminds us again that this presently “comes” from God's Spirit; His work is not something that only came or is coming, but that it comes to help us in our mission of sanctification right now.

Q: God's divine power has granted us what, according to 2 Pet. 1:3?

Q: Living by God's promises today results in us becoming what? [2 Pet. 1:4]

Q: On what basis can we be assured that God is working out our sanctification presently? [1 Thes. 5:24]

Peter also offers us assurance that we do not have to worry about the resources we need to become more like Jesus—they are not things that are only available in the past or the future, but they have already been granted to us for our present life. As we pursue ongoing Christlikeness, Peter assures us that we have everything we need right now. He even goes so far as to say that when we trust in the promise that God has given us all the equipment needed for sanctification, we become “partakers” (or sharers) of Christ's character. This is how the past and the present dimensions of sanctification work according to Peter: we presently become sanctified as we trust in God's assurance that he has already done everything necessary for us to do so! In both past and in the present, God assures us that he will make us like Jesus both, basing all his promises on his very own faithfulness (1 Thes. 5:24).

| FUTURE ASSURANCE



Read Romans 6:22; 1 John 3:2; Col. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:50-52; Phil. 3:20-21.

Q: As we follow God with everything we have, what kind of fruit do we receive, according to Rom. 6:22?

Q: What is the future result of lifelong sanctification for us [Rom 6:22]?

Q: When will we become completely Christlike [1 John 3:2, Col 3:4]?

We know that God has assured us in the past and in the present about his work of sanctification in us. But he has a final assurance for us—the assurance that this lifelong work of becoming like Jesus will have a glorious climax in the future. The promises we trust and the hard work we contribute to our sanctification will one day experience their fulfillment and fruit: being totally transformed into the image of the Son of God. One day in the future, when Christ returns, we will go from becoming “more and more” like Jesus to being completely changed by the glory that he shares with us. We will finally be free of sin, free of the enemy’s attacks, and full of the very character of Christ.

Q: Paul says that earthly bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. How will God make us fit for the Kingdom? [1 Cor. 15:50-52]

Q: Jesus himself completes the last step of transformation in our sanctification, according to Phil. 3:21. What is this last step?

Though being in a sinless state is a staggering enough future for us, God does not stop there! Our experience of full sanctification will find its climax in what the Bible calls glorification—the full transformation of our bodies as well as our souls. As Jesus was resurrected in incredible glory, we will be too. Our bodies will be “changed” by Jesus himself as Paul says, so that we are fit to live in a glorified Kingdom. No more sickness, disease, or death. All the effects of sin reversed—even the physical ones. Though we are new creations now on a spiritual level, we will one day be totally new and glorified on a holistic level—body and soul! These passages assure us that God’s work and our cooperation in the mission of our sanctification will have a glorious end—we will be like Jesus in mind, body, and character. How gracious of God to assure us of our future state: fully sanctified and completely glorified with Christ.

Q: How does understanding our future glorification increase your desire to become more like Jesus today?

Q: Summarize how assurance in the Past, Present, and Future has encouraged your pursuit of Christlikeness.



NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God’s Word to your daily life. Process how what you’ve learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

Q: Which of these assurances has taught you the most about sanctification?

Q: How can you use these truths to encourage your fellow brothers and sisters who are fighting to be more like Jesus today?

Q: What are some practical ways you can use the precious promises of God to become more like Jesus this week?



PRAY

+ Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.

- *God, thank you for your assurance that you will accomplish all that's necessary for me to be like Christ.*
- *God, please remind me that you have already planned all the steps of my growth in this season of my life.*
- *God, give me the power to make holy decisions in the present, trusting that you are currently working inside me to make me more like your Son.*
- *God, continually motivate my pursuit of Christlikeness with the vision of the future glorification that you promise you will do in me.*



COMMENTARY

+ Use these commentary resources to help explain the passages and facilitate discussion.

Romans 8:29-30 The chain that begins with the word “foreknew” cannot be broken. Those who are predestined by God are also called effectively to faith through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). And all those who are called are also promised to be justified (declared right before God). All those who are justified will also be glorified (i.e, they will receive perfected resurrection bodies) on the last day. While this process happens over time in the life of the believer, Paul speaks of glorification as if it were already completed, since God will certainly finish the good work he started (Phil. 1:6).

Ephesians 1:4-5 God’s initiative in saving those he chooses from sin and death was not an arbitrary or whimsical decision but something which was planned all along. Since God chose us in his love alone, we can take no credit for our salvation. God was determined to have believers as his own, and in calling them to salvation he calls them to be holy, meaning that God chose them with the clear goal that they be holy and blameless before him. Therefore, sanctification is not an optional goal for a Christian—it’s the very purpose of election.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-34 It’s important to note that the God who sanctifies us is not frustrated or at war with us. Paul purposefully mentions that the “God of peace” is the one who changes us into the image of Christ. He is at peace with us now, not at war, and we can trust that his molding hands are now not hands of wrath and mutilation, but of love and transformation. Also, Paul makes clear here that sanctification should work on the entirety of our human nature (mind, body, spirit), not just in our hearts/souls.

2 Peter 1:3-4 When Peter says that God has called us into his own “glory and excellence,” he means that believers are called to live in harmony with God’s own moral character. The word “excellence” was used by Greek writers to describe the sum of all desirable character qualities. This passage is a clear call to ongoing sanctification: we are to become more and more like the sum of all Jesus’ character qualities.

1 John 3:2 When John says “we shall be like him,” this means that in eternity, Christians will be morally without sin, intellectually without falsehood or error, physically without weakness or imperfections, and filled continually with the Holy Spirit. But we must take note that “like him” does not mean “identical to him.” While we will be like him in character (sinless) and physicality

(resurrected), believers will never be God in the sense of being omniscient or omnipotent as Christ is, since he is both man and God.

1 Corinthians 15:50-52 When Paul says “corruptible bodies,” he means that bodies still affected by the Fall are not fit to live in a glorified Kingdom, hence the need for resurrected, glorified bodies. The body of the resurrected Christian will be spiritual and immortal, but this does not mean that they will not be physical. Our resurrected bodies will be physical, too, but not beholden to the curses that our current physical bodies are now. Since our bodies will be like Jesus’ resurrected body, we must maintain that they will be both physical and powerfully spiritual since his was both of these things (John 20:19-20,27).

**All commentary resourcing for Lesson 1 was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes and the NIV Compact Bible Commentary.*

