

## THE PASTOR'S SANCTIFYING ROLE IN THE CHURCH

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“A holy minister is an awesome weapon in the hands of God.”<sup>1</sup>

The most identifying and echoing designation of a spiritual leader from the New Testament is that of a pastor. Though the modern understanding of the term is typically associated with a leader or preacher in the church, the origin of this term comes from the humble profession of caring for sheep.<sup>2</sup> In the Greco-Roman world of aristocracy and religious context of Jewish hierarchy, the title “pastor” was not intuitively complementary. Against the grain of first century models of leadership Jesus Himself, the paradigmatic example of humility (Phil 2:5-11), described His own leadership and care for believers as that of a shepherd (John 10:11, 14).

Shepherding sheep involves constant movement of sheep.<sup>3</sup> Psalm 23 provides a remarkable description of the Lord Himself as the Chief Shepherd—the believer’s personal pastor. He moves the sheep to green pastures, to quiet waters, to the path of righteousness, through the valley of the shadow of death, to a prepared table, and ultimately to Himself forever. According to the author of Hebrews, the path into the presence of the Lord, our Shepherd, is through sanctification: “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Just

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew A. Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne* (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), 282.

<sup>2</sup> The verb ποιμαίνω and the noun ποιμήν refer to herding animals, specifically tending, feeding, and pasturing animals. Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, “ποιμαίνω, ποιμήν” in *Analytical lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000): 4:320. The Hebrew verb הָעֵר carries the same meaning—to feed, graze, and drive to pasture. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm, “הָעֵר,” in *HALOT*, trans. M. E. J. Richardson, electronic ed. (New York: E.J. Brill, 1999): 1258-62.

<sup>3</sup> Laniak notes that “a balanced diet may require moving several times in the course of a given day.” Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After my Own Heart* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006), 54.

as the Lord in Psalm 23 leads His sheep to enjoy His presence forever, this verse establishes the trajectory of pastoral ministry and direction for His under-shepherds. If no one will see the Lord without sanctification, then the pastor's chief responsibility is to serve as a resourceful guide for this path.

Instruction about sanctification, accountability to the process of sanctification, and exemplifying personal sanctification should be among the highest priorities for a pastor. Sanctification is the dimension of salvation that consumes the whole of a believer's life. A survey of the major gospel tracts and evangelistic training programs reveals an accent on justification and glorification. Most overtures to the gospel highlight the blessing of the forgiveness of sin in being right before God (justification) and the hope and promise of Heaven (glorification). Surprisingly, the necessity of sanctification is often absent. Yet, sanctification is an essential component of the gospel of Jesus Christ and occupies the largest concern of a Christian's life on earth.

The Hebrew<sup>4</sup> and Greek<sup>5</sup> semantic domain of sanctification yields a three-fold understanding of the concept. (1) A once-for-all positional separation unto Christ at the point of salvation (1 Cor 1:30, 6:11). (2) Believer's practical holiness which involves repentance from sin and progress toward righteousness (1 Pet 1:15-16, 2:24). (3) Consummate holiness in Heaven where each believer will resemble the likeness of Christ—holy, sanctified, and completely separated from the presence of sin and its consequences (1 Thes 3:13, Heb 12:14, Rev 22:15). Biblical sanctification is three dimensional—positional, progressive, and realized. Each of these dimensions invokes pastoral responsibilities. However, pastoral responsibilities should not be confused with pastoral abilities. Only God can sanctify. Faithful pastors simply participate in the Holy Spirit's desire and work to sanctify Christians. It is no surprise that the Apostle Peter directs an unmistakable imperative to pastors and elders when he writes: "shepherd the flock of God" (1 Pet 5:2). Pastors are called to be undershepherds of the Good Shepherd so the sheep know and love Him. Sanctification is the connective tissue between the sheep and the Savior.

### **Biblical Foundations for Sanctification**

Our understanding of holiness is based on the holiness of God. In 1 Samuel 2:2 Hannah declared, "There is no one holy like the Lord," because, as Moses affirms, He alone "is majestic in holiness" (Exod 15:11). The roots of understanding God's holiness go back to the Book of Leviticus. God directs Moses to command the people, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev 19:2). Peter repeats this truth by mandating New Testament believers to be holy as God is holy

<sup>4</sup> שְׁרָרָה is defined as consecrated, singled out, and holy. HALOT, 1066קְרָרָה שְׁרָרָה carries the idea of being treated with special care for cultic use. Jackie A. Naudé, "שְׁרָרָה," in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1997), 3:877-887.

<sup>5</sup> ἅγιός refers to things set apart for God's purpose dedicated, sacred, and holy. Friberg, *Analytical Lexicon*, 32.

(1 Pet 1:15). The believer is set aside for God and is to be transformed into His character. God's holiness is the foundation for all thinking on holiness. But this is no casual holiness. A.W. Tozer writes,

We cannot grasp the true meaning of the divine holiness by thinking of something or someone very pure and then raising the concept to the highest degree we are capable of. God's holiness is not simply the best we know infinitely bettered. We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable. The natural man is blind to it. He may fear God's power, and admire His wisdom, but His holiness he cannot even imagine.<sup>6</sup>

Arthur W. Pink reiterates Tozer's observation when he says, "An ineffably holy God, who has the utmost abhorrence of all sin, was never invented by any of Adam's fallen descendants."<sup>7</sup> The holiness of God might be the best apologetic for Scripture. Would any sinful human invent a God who hates the sin the flesh so loves?

Isaiah heard the seraphim's refrain, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord" (Isa 6:3). The simple repetition highlights the emphasis on God's holiness in heaven. Eight hundred years later the apostle John envisions the same scene in Revelation 4:8, "And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME." God's distance from an unholy creation is punctuated as these angels honor his moral perfection and uniqueness. Correspondingly, an understanding and pursuit of a believer's sanctification begins with seeing the distance between man's sin and God's holiness. In 2 Corinthians Paul confronts the church in Corinth for intermingling with the world, stressing that righteousness and lawlessness, light and darkness, and Belial and Christ, have nothing in common (2 Cor 6:14-18). The climax of this polemic is in chapter 7 verse 1 where Paul says, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The promises he refers us are mentioned in chapter 6 verse 18, "I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me." Sanctification is rooted in the believers' understanding of God's holiness and His expectation for His children's holiness which is ingrained in their sacred relationship with God the Father.

There is no imperative for a pastor/elder/overseer to sanctify believers. Every part of a Christian's holiness—past, present, and future—results from God Himself and His power. The commands to be holy are given to the individuals who will give a personal account to God. However, every part of a pastor's ministry connects with

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<sup>6</sup> A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1961), 111.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur W. Pink, *The Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House, 1990), 44.

sanctification. He preaches the gospel and calls sinners to repentance (positional sanctification). He admonishes ungodliness and encourages righteousness in the saints (progressive sanctification). He motivates by exciting hope with thoughts of Heaven (realized sanctification). Therefore, the sanctifying role of the pastor in the New Testament is seen by inference and implication.

There are at least six dimensions of the pastor's sanctifying role that are implied biblically and which will be examined in this article.

### 1. The Pastor's Desire

In Galatians 4:19 Paul expresses his intense desire for Galatians' sanctification when he says, "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you." He uses the same root as in 2 Corinthians 3:18, ἰσμοῦ, (form) to refer to the process by which a sinner changes into Christ likeness. This is Paul's concentrated and deep desire. It is so all encompassing that the verb he borrows to communicate his feelings refers to the intense pains of childbirth (ὠδῖν).<sup>8</sup> A pastor's desire should be to see his congregation resemble Christ. Pastors are the intermediary agents in the business of creating replicas of Jesus.

Here is the problem. Pastors simultaneously maintain expectations that are too high and too low of their flock. Theologically, this refers to an over-realized eschatology and under-realized eschatology.<sup>9</sup> Eschatology affects every dimension of a person's faith in Christ. Often the eschatology is over-realized, that is, there is an expectation that this earth will be like Heaven in ways that it can never be. Heaven will be a place with no sin, no struggles, no doubt, no hurt, no tears, unmitigated joy, unending happiness, and a place where faith is replaced by sight. The thought and hope of Heaven are intended by God to pull believers like a magnet toward Him. However, often Christians reverse the polarity and pull the characteristics of Heaven into this world. Legalism is the likely result. Rules are created to force resistant wills to conform to Heavenly perfection. When this fails, pastors become frustrated, unhappy, and even surprised by the difficulty their congregation is having to live as strangers and aliens in this world (1 Pet 2:11). This over-realized eschatology led to the Wesleyan error of perfectionism.<sup>10</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum is under-realized eschatology. The world is a comfortable place and heaven is a distant thought. Instead of living the abundant life Jesus promised, believers lose heart and wonder if there is anything satisfying in

<sup>8</sup>Friberg defines it as being in travail during childbirth. Friberg, "ὠδῖν," *Analytical Lexicon*, 4:415.

<sup>9</sup>This concept was adapted from Thomas R. Schreiner's *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 23.

<sup>10</sup>Perfectionism entered main stream Protestantism through the teaching of John Wesley. The doctrine affirms that the "Christian may, in this life, become perfectly free from sin." Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1954), 877; Benjamin Warfield, *Works*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House, 2003), 7:3.

Christianity. The challenges of practical Christianity dominate. There is an increasing distrust of Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7)—that there could be kingdom living here and now. This results in a defeatist mentality that leads to giving into the fight with sin and succumbing to temptation.

The paradox is that many times both dominate a person's thinking. The balance is maintained by desiring to see Christ formed in God's people. Every pastor's desire and purpose should be what Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:11-13, "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; *until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ*" (emphasis mine).

### 1. The Pastor's Example

Robert Murray M'Cheyne reportedly said, "The greatest need of my people is my personal holiness." John Calvin echoed, "The calling of God brings holiness with it."<sup>11</sup> The importance of a pastor's exemplary life on his people cannot be overstated. Paul connects theology with life when he tells Timothy, "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you" (1 Tim 4:16). To Titus Paul writes, "In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified" (Tit 2:7). Paul's message to each of his disciples was clear: maintain purity in life. It could not be clearer than Paul's words to the Corinthians and Thessalonians to whom he says: imitate me as I imitate Christ (1 Cor 11:1, 4:16; 1 Thess 1:6). The parallelism is undeniable—the people of God are to imitate their pastors *and* imitate the Lord. In Hebrews 13:7 the author repeats the mandate, "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." As laymen imitate their spiritual leaders, the most worthy characteristic to imitate is his desire to know Jesus and be conformed to His likeness. Andrew Murray said, "The knowledge of the greatness and the glory of Jesus is the secret of a strong and holy life."<sup>12</sup>

Pastors are involved in their own fight for sanctification and holiness. Paul provides an extended confession to the Philippians of his battle with sin and his pursuit of total knowledge of Christ. He says,

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on

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<sup>11</sup>John Calvin, *Hosea*, in Calvin's Commentaries in 22 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) 13:255.

<sup>12</sup>Andrew Murray, *Holiest of All* (New Kensington, Pa.: Whitaker House, 2004), 176.

toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things (Phil 3:12-19).

Paul is clear; his personal holiness is driven by a desire to attain God's intention for his salvation and to lead an exemplary life for those under his spiritual care.<sup>13</sup>

Even more pointedly in 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 Paul expresses the sacrifices he makes and the intensity with which he runs the Christian life. "Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."<sup>14</sup> Impure living disqualifies the man of God from the ministry. The point is not loss of eternal life, rather disqualification from involvement in the work of the eternal Gospel.

Conversely, in 2 Peter 2 the Apostle describes false teachers. Both the life and ministry of a false teacher are characterized by a lack of holiness. Their influence is described as "entangling" their people in the defilements of the world (v. 20). In other words, they have an un-sanctifying ministry and this is a result of comprising with the world. Christian leaders can sacrifice their leadership by attempting to relate, befriend, and please their people instead of influencing them with a life of unswerving holiness. A holy life demands rejection and ridicule, or admiration and imitation. Alfred E. Garvie said it this way,

If the preacher is to preach holiness, he must himself desire holiness, and must impress his hearers as one who is seeking after holiness. Not only does a reputation inconsistent with the sacred functions of the preacher rob his message of its life and power, but a man's character will, in spite of himself, affect the tone and content of his preaching. A consummate hypocrite may possibly give the impression of the holiness he does not possess.<sup>15</sup>

The Bible never calls the pastor to preach something he does not practice. In fact, Jesus condemns the religious leaders of his day for teaching one way but living

<sup>13</sup>Cf. 1 Tim 4:12.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. 1 Tim 6:11-12 where Paul writes about the positive pursuit of a pastor after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.

<sup>15</sup>A. E. Garvie, *The Christian Preacher* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920) 310.

another (Matt 23: 3). Jesus promises hell to those who permit hypocrisy to take root in their hearts which leads to self deception and damnation (Matt 7:21-23). A pastor is to sanctify his people by example.

### 3. The Pastor's Preaching

Preaching is the means God uses to sanctify his people. In John 17:17 Jesus prays that God would "sanctify them [disciples] in the truth" and he defines truth to be God's Word. This then becomes the fundamental reason to preach the Word of God—progressive holiness of God's people. Isaiah's response to God's holiness was to preach! (Isaiah 6:8). It is the Word that is the means for the Spirit of God to sanctify believers.

Paul's charge to Timothy is a timely reminder of Scripture's role in sanctification. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). Sanctification of believers is a byproduct from pastors seeing a holy God in their studies and preaching a holy God from their pulpits. Preachers are to preach the holy nature of God and holy expectations of God. Thomas Scott said,

Leave out the holy character of God, the holy excellence of his law, the holy condemnation to which transgressors are doomed, the holy loveliness of the Saviour's character, the holy nature of redemption, the holy tendency of Christ's doctrine, and the holy tempers and conduct of all true believers: then dress up a scheme of religion of this unholy sort: represent mankind in a pitiable condition, rather through misfortune than crime: speak much of Christ's bleeding love to them, of his agonies in the garden and on the cross; without showing the need or the nature of satisfaction for sin: speak of his present glory, and of his compassion for poor sinners; of the freeness with which he dispenses pardons; of the privileges which believers enjoy here, and of the happiness and glory reserved for them hereafter: clog this with nothing about regeneration and sanctification, or represent holiness as somewhat else than conformity to the holy character and law of God: and you make up a plausible gospel, calculated to humour the pride, soothe the consciences, engage the hearts, and raise the affections of natural men, who love nobody but themselves.<sup>16</sup>

If the purpose of preaching is to provide the Spirit words with which to resurrect dead souls, then the holiness of God must be preached. George Marsden evaluates the content of the preaching during the Great Awakening and the effect it had on listeners. He writes the following:

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<sup>16</sup> John Scott, *Letters and Papers of the Late Revered Thomas Scott* (New York: John P. Haven, 1825) 289.

In the midst of debates over the Great Awakening, Edwards, made a revealing comment about the effects of preaching. During intense periods of awakenings, evangelists often preached to the same audience daily, or even more frequently. Opponents of the awakening argued that people could not possibly remember what they heard in all these sermons. [Jonathan] Edwards, responded that 'The main benefit that is obtained by preaching is by impression made upon the mind in the time of it, and not by the effect that arises afterwards by a remembrance of what was delivered.' Preaching, in other words, should be designed primarily to awaken, to shake people out of their blind slumbers in the addictive comforts of their sins. Though only God can give them new eyes to see, preaching should be designed to jolt the unconverted or the converted who doze back into their sins (as all do) into recognizing their true estate.<sup>17</sup>

This is quite a statement from Edwards about preaching. His point is that the effect of a sermon should be an exercise of the reason during the preaching of the sermon more than by the exercise of memory afterwards. This insight should change the preacher's thoughts about moments of preaching. Preaching that brings listeners face to face with the truth of a Holy God drenches souls in sanctifying grace. And for the unbeliever, the preacher is God's tool to resurrect the dead heart.

#### 4. The Pastor's Discipleship

The pastor's mandate for discipleship originates with the Great Commission. Jesus left the church, especially its leaders with the task of disciplining and making disciples. In Matthew 28:18-20 the disciples proceed to Galilee to testify to Jesus' ascension. But before they watch him depart they hear the famous words instructing them to "go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Disciple making is the means to effective sanctification. Preaching, counseling, and comforting are all segments of discipleship, the purpose of which is holiness.

Jesus' command involves initiation and follow up. Evangelism is making disciples while equipping is the process of maturing the disciples. The leading verb in this passage is "make disciples" (*manthano*). The aorist tense indicates urgency and the comprehensive nature of the command.<sup>18</sup> This command is modified by three participles "go" (*poreuthentes*), "teach" (*didaskowntes*), and "baptize" (*baptizontes*). The participle "go" is best interpreted as being contemporaneous with the imperative to "make disciples" as it precedes the finite verb (make disciples) and has the aorist

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<sup>17</sup>George M. Marsden, *Salvation of Souls* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2002) 11-12.

<sup>18</sup>Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 554, 557.

tense similar to the finite verb.<sup>19</sup> The latter two participles should be seen as “participles of means,” indicating the means by which the imperative will be accomplished.<sup>20</sup> In other words, Jesus is saying: as you are going, make disciples through your teaching and identify them through baptism. The goal of all discipleship is to create independent dependence on Christ. Everyone who comes to Christ is instantly a kind of new born baby believer. They don't know what to do or think or say, but they have a wonderful amount of enthusiasm for the Lord. The pastor's role is to move the believer from this state of infancy to a place of visible imitation of Jesus, which is most evident in a sanctified life.

This is why believers are called “saints” in the NT. The term “saints” itself is the noun form of the verb *hagiazō*, which is the main NT verb that is translated as “holy.” Paul addresses the Romans (1:7), Corinthians (1 Cor 1:2, 2 Cor 1:1), Colossians (1:1), Ephesians (1:1), and Philippians (1:1) as saints. Believers are saved and called with a “holy calling” (2 Tim 1:9) by the grace of God. The pastor is to explain to his disciples what this “holy calling” is. The holy calling is God's goal for every believer. He predestined saints to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29). Ephesians 2:10 says, “[W]e are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” Peter reinforces believers' holiness as God's plan for our salvation, “He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (1 Pet 2:24). Paul explicitly tells the Thessalonians that anyone who is not living sanctified lives is out of God's will (1 Thes 4:3) because “God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification” (4:7). This purpose is rooted in the authority of Jesus, knowledge of God, and empowerment by the Holy Spirit.

Not only must a pastor preach the value God places on holiness but the extent to which God is willing to go to accomplish that holiness. God disciplines His children “so that we may share His holiness” (Heb 12:10) and the reason behind it is because without sanctification “no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). The significance the preacher places on holiness in his people is a glimpse into his understanding of God's character and how seriously he wants his flock to see God.

Paul went from house to house (Acts 20: 20, 31) teaching the whole counsel of God so that he might present that church “complete in Christ” (Col 1:28). Spiritual maturity is the goal which Paul defines as participating in the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13). William. G.T. Shedd notes, “[The clergyman] is not only a preacher, whose function it is to impart public instruction before an audience, but he is also a *pastor*, whose office it is, to give private and personal advice from house to house, and to

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<sup>19</sup>Wallace, *Greek Grammar* 645. In addition to being aorist and preceding the aorist imperative, both of which are characteristic of a participle of attendant circumstance, the Gospel of Matthew is narrative which is the primary genre where such participles appear in the NT.

<sup>20</sup>Wallace, *Greek Grammar* 628-30.

make his influence felt in the social and domestic life of his congregation.”<sup>21</sup> Effective discipleship is solidified by an investment of one life into another. Paul was not intimate solely with the Ephesians; the Thessalonians experienced the same commitment and love. Paul compares his devotion to the Thessalonians as a nursing mother’s care (1 Thes 2:7) in that the affection was so strong that he was “well-pleased to impart to [them] not only the gospel of God but also [his] own [life], because [they] had become very dear to [him]” (2:8). The end result of these efforts is a sanctified and holy people of God.

### 5. The Pastor’s Prayer

If sanctification is a work of God, then a pastor should intercede for his people for God’s sanctifying grace. Samuel is a premier example of intercessory prayer. When Israel asked for a king, God was displeased with their request (1 Sam 8:7-8). Samuel knew this and informed Israel of God’s response (1 Samuel 12), but since it was impossible to reverse their desire to reject God as their king, he urged Israel to prove their loyalty through wholehearted service (1 Sam 12:20). He encouraged them not to vacillate from their commitment to God in favor of other sources of security. While listening to their repentance, Samuel encouraged Israel to remain faithful to God, and pronounced the famous word, “Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way” (1 Sam 12:23). Samuel’s commitment to his responsibility of shepherding God’s people is to pray for them lest *he* sin.

Daniel functioned as the pastor of exiled Judah and offered a prayer of repentance on behalf of his nation (Daniel 9). He said, “We have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances, moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our king, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land . . . open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You . . . indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him . . . we have sinned, we have been wicked” (Dan 9:3-15). Daniel admits corporate iniquity, waywardness, rebellion, rejection of prophetic warnings, disobedience, and wickedness. But he does not stop with mere confession; he repents on behalf of the nation. He seeks corporate forgiveness, “so now, our God listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for your sake, O Lord, let your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary . . . O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive!” (Dan 9:17, 19). Pastors would do well to follow Daniel’s example and pray for their people; pray for their holiness, for their separation from the world, and appeal for

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<sup>21</sup>William G. T. Shedd, *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, Co., 1875) 320.

God to send His Spirit to move on the hearts of His children and produce Christ likeness in their lives.

This was Paul's prayer for the churches he planted. In Eph 6:18 Paul offers such a prayer. In the context of spiritual warfare, he closed the section with four references to prayer in a single verse, highlighting the necessary role of prayer for holy living. Although Paul incorporates all believers in intercessory prayer for the purpose of communal sanctification, it is self evident that the pastor is included.

To the Colossians Paul confessed that he regularly thought of them and prayed that they would be filled with God's wisdom and understanding. He pled with God to empower the Colossians to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord (Col 1:10a) and that they would have a single ambition, "to please Him in all respects" (Col 1:10b).

Paul's desire and prayer for the Philippians was similar to that of the Ephesians and Colossians. The most personal and tender letter from Paul to his flock is to the church in Philippi. He opened his letter with the following words: "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Phil 1:9-11). The goal of abounding love in knowledge and discernment is sincerity and blamelessness on the day of Christ.<sup>22</sup> He appealed to them to "conduct [themselves] in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil 1:27). Even his reminder about humility has its goal of proving to be "blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15). There is to be a distinction between the life of the believer and the life of the unbeliever. Unbelievers should sense this moral chasm between their actions and those of believers, which should create evangelistic opportunities in a world headed to hell.

Paul's prayer was the same for the Thessalonians. Just before he launched a section on sanctification and its relation on moral purity, he admitted to the Thessalonians that he had been earnestly praying day and night so that the Lord "may establish [their] hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints" (1 Thess 3:13). In his second letter to the same church he wrote, "To this end also we pray for you always, that our God

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<sup>22</sup>It is best to translate εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ as "for the day." The emphasis is not on temporal duration, but on the actual event that will happen in the future, compare with Phil 2:16 (Max S. J. Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, unabridged 4th ed., rev. ed. [Roma: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1993] 592; Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, *The New Testament Pillar Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999] 65, 79; Marvin R. Vincent, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985] 14; Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed., rev. and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979] 228).

will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess 1:11-12). Samuel, Daniel, and Paul affirm that a pastor's praying for his people is the litmus test for his theology of sanctification. The pastor who does not pray believes that the work of God can be accomplished in the power of the flesh.

### **6. The Pastor's Leadership in Public Worship**

Spurgeon said, "The church is the dearest place on earth."<sup>23</sup> The corporate meeting of the saints should solicit pure worship from their hearts. But public worship is a reflection of private worship. Nevertheless, it is the pastor's duty to foster an environment where worship is a sanctifying experience.

*Order.* The pastor is to maintain order in the church. To the Corinthians Paul wrote that order must be maintained during the exercise of the gifts because God is a God of order not confusion (1 Cor 14:33). In relation to the Ephesian church, Paul instructs Timothy regarding the role of men, women, deacons, elders, and the pastor in the corporate gathering (1 Tim 2-3, 5). Order is expected during public worship and the pastor is to maintain it. As one of the elders, the pastor is to evaluate other leaders' qualifications for ministry (Tit 1:5-9). Paul informs Titus that order in the church stems from order in each elder's personal life, including his own.

*Communion.* The Lord's Supper is both a corporate and an individual time of repentance for the church. Moses prayed on behalf of Israel's and Aaron's sin, repentance, and holiness (Exo 32-34, Deut 9:18-20). As noted above, Daniel prayed on behalf of exiled Judah, admitting their sin, iniquity, rebellion, and disobedience (Dan 9). Communion functions as a time of self examination (2 Cor 13:5) and confession so that the church would remain pure (1 Cor 11:27-32), experiencing approval from her Lord. It is the pastor's responsibility to lead the church in a time of confession and rejoicing for the forgiveness of the confessed sin.

*Music.* The church's music should reflect and promote the holiness of God. David set apart specific Levites to lead the congregation in holy worship of God (1 Chron 25:1). Since musical taste of the congregants is on a broad spectrum, the pastor has the spiritual responsibility to shepherd this dimension of worship. He in fact is the true worship leader. The content and style of worship music must be regulated by the pastor's spiritual maturity, shepherding influence, wisdom, and sense of the holiness of God.

*Ministerial Effort.* If the pastor desires to know what the men in the church will be like in ten years, he only needs to look in the mirror. Through discipleship he is developing spiritual clones of himself. Jesus said "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). If

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<sup>23</sup>Charles Spurgeon, "The Best Donation: A Sermon Delivered on April 5, 1891," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pasadena, Tex.: Pilgrim, 1975) 37:633.

ministerial excellence is to be expected, excellence must be exemplified. The defining characteristic of Paul's ministry was agony, labor, and effort (Col 1:28). The Greek words behind the English translation imply strenuous effort and dedication.<sup>24</sup> Epaphras was an example of such effort of whom Paul says that he always labored<sup>25</sup> earnestly for the Colossians (Col 4:12). It is the pastor's responsibility to set the pace and fan the members' level of intensity in ministry, encouraging them unto excellence. If it bears His name, it deserves our best.

### Sanctification as Imitation of Jesus

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul lays out one of the most comprehensive and succinct statements on sanctification—without using the term. He explains, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” Progressive sanctification is essentially the process of being conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ. The passive verb μεταμορφούμεθα (“are being transformed”) signifies divine agency behind the entire process of sanctification. The means by which God accomplishes this metamorphosis is the believer's vision of the glory of the Lord (τὴν δόξαν κυρίου). This may be the most imperative verse about sanctification and the term “sanctification” is not even mentioned.

Becoming conformed to the image of the Lord involves both reflection and imitation. “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Paul's pastoral desire for the Corinthians to be more like Jesus drew them to his own example. Volumes could (and have) been written about the countless nuances and applications of sanctification, but the goal and process of a believer's holiness can be reduced to imitating Jesus. Likewise, a pastor's own imitation of the Lord is the summary and capstone of his ministerial responsibility. When a pastor can say, “Imitate me as I imitate Christ,” it is fair to say that his sanctification is worthy of emulation.

### Conclusion

The foundation for the sanctifying role of pastoral oversight is laid in the priests' role in Leviticus. Nadab and Abihu were chosen to represent the holiness of God. They continued in the lineage of their father Aaron who represented God to the people and the people to God (Exod 29:45-46). These two brothers were among the select group who had approached Mount Sinai when Moses went up to speak with God and receive from Him the tablets of stone that contained the Ten Command-

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<sup>24</sup>Paul uses κοπίαω and ἀγωνιζόμενος to describe his commitment to ministry. The former emphasizes toil, labor, struggle, and physical exhaustion, while the latter highlights the process of the struggle and contending for a prize (Friberg, κοπίαω, ἀγωνιζόμενος, *Analytical Lexicon* 4:235, 4:34).

<sup>25</sup>Paul uses ἀγωνίζομαι to indicate Epaphras' commitment. The term means contending for a prize and exerting all effort. Friberg, ἀγωνίζομαι, *Analytical Lexicon* 4:34.

ments. Nadab and Abihu were men with large reputations. As freshly ordained priests, they had spent the week previous to the events of Leviticus 10 in the tabernacle with God preparing for their priestly service. With their own eyes they had seen fire come out from the Holy place and consume the burnt offering in 9:24. But in the middle of the frenzy of Leviticus 9, the two brothers forget the holiness of God and make a deadly mistake. The story is recorded in chapter 10.

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. 2 And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. 3 Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the Lord spoke, saying, '**By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.**' So Aaron, therefore, kept silent. (Lev 10:1-3)

Behind Aaron, Nadab and Abihu were next in experience and familiarity with the things of God in the tabernacle and its worship. However, when they failed to regard the holiness of God, treating Him dishonorably, God took their lives. Priests were holy men of God representing the holiness of God to the people of God. When these first generation priests ceased to fulfill this responsibility, God intervened. Aaron's sons are canonized for all eternity as a horrific example of mistreating, and underestimating, the holiness of God. Similarly, the pastor is a man of God who preaches the holiness of God and motivates God's people to the same standard of holiness.

The foundation of a pastor's role in the sanctification process of his people begins in his own heart. Just as failure in spiritual leadership is rooted in mishandling God's holiness (Nadab and Abihu), success is grounded in taking the holiness of God seriously. To be a faithful aid in sanctification then, the preacher must be pursuing his own holiness in every area of his life. Alfred Garvie's words serve as a fierce reminder for every pastor who cares about personal holiness, the sanctification of our congregants, and our God who is wonderfully holy. Garvie writes,

Life is made up of the sum total of many little things. A preachers' ethics should therefore be of the highest order. He must resolutely refuse to compromise with sin in his own life. Once sin is trifled with, it is tolerated and then practiced. One must therefore rule himself with an iron hand, and not temporize with evil in any shape or form. It is fatally easy to condemn in others what one allows in one's own life. Herein is seen the constant need for a life of individual prayer, devotion, self examination, humility of heart, self judgment, and self sacrifice on behalf of others. This is not easy, but it is the price each must pay for usefulness.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>A. E. Garvie, Citation [Rick, we need the work cited and the page number.]