

Progressive Sanctification

You can't go very far in Scripture before it becomes apparent that God has used certain individuals, such as Abraham and Moses, for specific ministries.

Yes, they were special vessels set aside for a special purpose.

And yet, even though their calling had been determined by God Himself, it would be many years before their *practical* sanctification caught up with their *positional* sanctification.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And, certainly, Jesus' disciples were no exception.

Yes, they were *chosen* vessels.

Jesus had spent all night in prayer before
He carefully selected them from among His
many followers.

And yet there would be times of
disappointment during those 3-½ years of
public ministry.

Oh, there were bright spots along the way.
For instance, there was that time when Jesus
asked them---"**who do you say that I am?**"
This was an important question, as it was a
prime indicator of their spiritual
understanding.

And Peter gave Him an excellent answer---
**"You are the Christ, the Son of the
living God."**

To which Jesus responded enthusiastically---
**"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for
flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to
you, but My Father who is in heaven."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And yet Peter was the only disciple who thought it necessary to correct his Lord, and on a couple of occasions.

There was the time when **"Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."**

Well, Peter wouldn't hear such talk!

In fact, he **"---took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, (Can you imagine that?) saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"**

That's when Jesus traded one rebuke for another.

"Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

And then there was the evening in the Upper Room when Jesus took the place of a servant.

Once again, Peter would have no part of it!
"You shall never wash my feet!"

And again he was soundly rebuked---**"If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."**

Now there's no doubt in our mind that Peter had the best of intentions, but you don't tell your Lord how to do things.

And yet, in spite of those ups and downs, Peter became one of Jesus' most useful disciples.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And the other disciples were no exception to the rule.

Their progress was often slow and disappointing.

For instance, there was that aggravating incident when a Samaritan village snubbed

them, refusing to offer them accommodations.

The account is found in Luke 9:52-56.

Well, when James and John found out, they were fit to be tied.

With religious fervor, they said **"Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?"**

No wonder Jesus had surnamed them the **"Sons of Thunder."**

But, in response to this suggestion, He **"turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. "For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save *them*."** **And they went to another village."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And then, after 3-½ years of spending nearly every day with Jesus, Phillip made what

he considered was a reasonable request---

"Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

You might say that that was the last straw.

"Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And so, at the end of this 3-½ year journey, there didn't seem to be a lot that could be said for the disciples' progress.

Would *they* be the men who would turn the world upside down?

Well, yes, they would, but only after the coming of the Holy Spirit.

You see, after Jesus' resurrection, He assured them **"---you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in**

Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the end of the earth."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And, you know, that still holds true.

It is only as the Church of Jesus Christ is empowered
by the Holy Spirit that the *good news* will reach
the ends of the earth.