

Sanctification

Sanctification is defined as follows:

*Act, process, or experience of consecration and purification by which a person is made holy and acceptable to God through the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit. It also involves separation from the impurities and pollution of the world and a renunciation of sins. It is the total process by which the justified are renewed in the spirit. While justification is Christ for us with the Father, sanctification is Christ in us by the Spirit.*¹³

God is holy and His will is to make us into His image and be sanctified, which means to be made holy. When we believe in Jesus Christ, through God's grace our spirit is sanctified and we are seen by Him as being holy (2Thessalonians2vs13). We join all the other believers who throughout time have become sanctified in this way by faith in Jesus Christ (Acts26vs18). As mentioned, our soul and heart do not immediately change and therefore need to go through a transformation process.

God treats believers as though we have the perfection of Jesus and therefore not as we are in the flesh. He treats us not as we are in the soul and heart but as we will become when we go to be with Him in heaven when we shall be perfect not only in our spirit but also in our soul and heart as well. In this way we are considered by God to be perfect, holy and in right standing with Him, even though our inward thoughts and outward words and actions do not yet reflect this. However, from this perspective of grace, God treats us as though we have never sinned (we are justified before Him) and the Holy Spirit is able to come and live inside our spirit to help and guide us on our journey of becoming holy in our daily living. God promises to make the spirit, soul and body of each believer holy (1Thessalonians5vs23).

Because God accepts Jesus Christ as our substitute, we receive the perfect holiness in our spirit that Jesus possesses but He also is able to come near to each believer and work with us to sanctify our soul and heart. We therefore in the New Testament read of a believer being already sanctified in Jesus Christ (1Corinthians1vs2, 1Corinthians6vs11) but we also read of the believer needing to go through the process of being sanctified (Hebrews10vs14, Thessalonians4vs3).

Hebrews10vs 10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

The purpose of God's initial gift of sanctifying a believer's spirit is so that the Holy Spirit can come to live inside each believer making our spirit alive to God and enabling us to be increasingly sanctified in our daily living. The entire process of restoring a believer to God's holy image which starts with becoming spiritually alive to God and then a gradual transformation of our mind, emotions, will and heart by the Holy Spirit, is called sanctification.

Paul makes it clear that our sanctification is the will of God and that we are called by God to become holy. He warns his Christian readers that if they reject God's will for them to be holy, they are rejecting God.

1Thessalonians4vs3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: 7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. 8 Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

There must be a desire within each of us to lay down our old unholy and selfish life and take up the new life that God has for us. The new life is a life of holiness and a life lived for God and it is built by living a spiritual life under the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is a new life where we diligently seek to become Christ-like in our inner person. Charles Spurgeon believed that this work of the Holy Spirit was so important that he said:

I have always believed, and still believe and teach, that the work of the Spirit in us, whereby we are conformed unto Christ's image, is absolutely necessary for our salvation as is the work of Jesus Christ, by which He cleanses us from our sins.¹⁴

God has and continues to reconcile to Himself a group of people (a holy nation) that He is separating out for Himself who will be with Him for eternity. A believer's body is a physical home to the Holy Spirit and we are to glorify God not only in our spiritual life but also in our physical life. We no longer belong to ourselves and we are called to now recognize this and reflect it in the way we live our daily life. In our thoughts, words, emotions and actions we are to now live our life to please God and not others or ourselves. All that we are and all that we own, our time, possessions, family, passions and desires now belong to God. Paul emphasizes that the presence of the Holy Spirit within us bonds us to God spiritually and requires us to treat our physical body with care and respect because it is now the temple of the Holy Spirit.

1Corinthians6vs17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. ... 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

The greatest act of worship towards God is the total surrender of our life to God with the life being lived according to His will. When we live only for God and not ourselves, we effectively live our life in a sacrificial way before God. We do not live for our will to be done but we live so that God's will is done. This form of living ensures that we are daily made into the image of Jesus and we live a life that is progressively sanctified, made holy and acceptable to God. This way of living must not be considered to be anything extraordinary for Christians but should be the ordinary and reasonable expectation.

Romans12vs1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

When God brought the nation of Israel out from Egypt, the firstborn of the nation of Israel were saved by the blood of a lamb placed on the lintel and side door posts of their homes. In saving the firstborn, God claimed them for Himself telling Moses to consecrate them.

Exodus13vs1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 " Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine. "

Later, after the Levites (descendants of Levi) prove their faithfulness to God, He chooses them to replace the firstborn He had claimed earlier. The Levites were chosen by God to be His and He set apart the Levites as people who would serve in the tabernacle (Numbers8vs5 -17).

Under the New Covenant, Jesus Christ is the firstborn in that He is the first person to be made spiritually alive to God. All those that believe in Him and who therefore are seen by God as being "in Him" become partakers of the rights He possesses as firstborn. Believers have been saved by the precious blood of Jesus from spiritual death and we are therefore like the Levites, set aside for God, to sanctify ourselves and serve only Him. All believers who have their names written in the Book of Life in heaven are seen by God as being a part of the church of the firstborn.

Hebrews12vs22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,

There can be no spiritual growth as a Christian without sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Sanctification provides evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit within us and our willingness to live for God and lay aside our old fleshly, sinful life. If there is no sanctification, there can be no certainty that there is true belief and that the Holy Spirit is within a person. Paul tells us in his letter to the Ephesians that believers are sanctified and made clean through the application of the word of God upon our life, this is also mentioned by Jesus (John17vs17). Believers are called to live a spirit-led life that is washed daily by the word of God. As we do, we can accomplish Christ's purpose of preparing for Himself a body of believers that will be without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish (Ephesians5vs25).

Even though all believers are justified before God and are seen as being perfect in our spirit, God's will is for our outer person, as well as our spiritual inner person, to be influenced and changed by the Holy Spirit within us. The result is a deep cleansing of our lives so that we can become increasingly holy.

2Corinthians7vs1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The world has much to offer people but what it gives is temporary and has little spiritual or eternal value. We are called to live daily in a way that prepares us for eternity and which will assure us of our soul going to be with God when it leaves the physical body. We are called to live our life filled with love for God and in a way that we are always eager to do His will and please Him. We are called to live a holy life that reflects God's character.

Romans6vs19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading

to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

Although we will be made holy by God when we enter into heaven, the requirement for Christians to live a holy and godly life on earth is more important than most Christians realize. In speaking to the Roman Christians about the Christian life, Paul says that there are steps every Christian must take in their life. Once free from sin, God requires us to be obedient to His commands in the way that slaves are to their masters. When we have this level of obedience in our life the natural outcome will be the holiness that God desires to see in our daily life. The purpose of being freed from sin, our obedience, and the holy life that results, is to live a life that is pleasing to God and one which results in the reward of eternal life with God.

Romans6vs22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

The Christian life is a pathway of being increasingly sanctified in our daily living by the Holy Spirit and being transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. We are called to be new creations not only in our spirit but also in the daily life we live for God.

Light is used in the Bible to speak of purity and holiness and God is all light without any darkness (1John1vs5). In heaven, God is feared and worshipped for His holiness (Isaiah6vs 3). His holy presence in the life of a believer means that we must live a life that is holy and He has given us the Holy Spirit to help and empower us to do exactly that. This is the journey of holiness because we live each day in close contact with a holy God and are being gradually transformed to be more like Him. This is God's requirement for His children.

1Peter1vs14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, " Be holy, for I am holy. "

The writer of the book of Hebrews stated that holiness is so important to a person's assurance of salvation that without it people will not see God.

Hebrews12vs14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord...

- 13. Kurian, G.T. 2001. Nelson's New Christian Dictionary: The authoritative resource on the Christian world. Thomas Nelson Pubs. Nashville, Tenn.**
- 14. Spurgeon C.H., 1834-1892, Sermon #434 Threefold Sanctification.**

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