



Accents & Issues

Sanctification

Sanctification means *to be set apart for God*. In salvation, we were made holy. Sanctification is becoming what God has made us. Although we devote ourselves to the work of God's Kingdom, sanctification is ultimately not what we do, but what God has done in us.

Two basic and interrelated ideas are contained in this definition of sanctification. One is consecration: Christians are considered to be God's property, purchased at the price of Jesus' blood (1 Cor. 6:20). The other concept related to sanctification is purity. Because God is holy, we are to be holy as well (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

Yet, we are always a work in progress. We want to do good, but evil is close by (Rom. 7:21). Nevertheless, Christians no longer live in sin as they did formerly. Both the outward conduct and the inner motives are transformed by the grace of God, who promises to empower us for purity of heart and life (2 Cor. 6:16-7:1; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Pet. 1:3-4).

God's Will

Humans were created to fellowship with and faithfully serve God. Yet, when Adam and Eve sinned, the human race lost its original righteousness. Since then, all people were born with original sin and became guilty of sinful practices.

Yet, in great mercy and love, God chose not to abandon us to our just fate. Instead, God sent Jesus, his only Son, to redeem human beings from the cause and the consequences of sin. His death on the cross provided forgiveness for committed sins and cleansing from the perverse bent toward sinning. Subsequently, the resurrection of Jesus from death canceled the penalty of death and granted the gift of eternal life. Our sanctification was God's plan from the beginning.

Jesus' Sanctifying Death

Jesus became human to redeem fallen creation. First, he demonstrated that it was possible to be fully human and live without sin. What was possible for Jesus is an ideal for humanity. Second, at the cross, the sinless Jesus took upon himself the whole burden of human sin — its penalty, its defilement, and its power (2 Cor. 5:21). Through his atonement the consequences of sin were set aside. Third, his victorious resurrection made possible a completely new way of life. Finally, in his gift of the Holy Spirit, Christ put at our disposal all the power for godly living that he himself knew. For the law of the spirit in Christ Jesus frees us from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:1-2). Christ's atoning death on the cross and his victory over death through the resurrection completes the sanctification of his people (Heb. 10:10). Jesus becomes to the believer "wisdom ... righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus did more than remove the symptoms of sin. The power of Jesus' resurrection destroyed the very root of sin, making holy living possible. As we abide in the risen Christ, we bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit (John 15:1-11). Ultimately, God intends to have his followers stand before him in perfect holiness of both soul and body, without defect and without blame. The culmination of the process of sanctification is glorification when our holiness is perfected in the presence of God.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit makes us what God wills us to be and what Jesus makes possible for us to be. This happens through both process and crisis. The Christian follows the light provided by the Spirit to progressively mature in

holiness. Yet, there are times when the Holy Spirit allows the believer to experience a heavenly moment, which empowers a new level of holiness beyond normal maturity. Sanctification comes through natural spiritual growth and supernatural infilling by the Holy Spirit.

In both, the Holy Spirit is the active agent of sanctification (Rom. 15:16; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2). By the Holy Spirit, believers not only become aware of sin but also find the power of God available to conquer it (Rom. 8:13). The Spirit changes us into the very image of God (2 Cor. 3:17-18), produces the fruit of the Spirit in us (Gal. 5:22-26), and equips us with gifts to minister effectively (1 Cor. 12).

The Spirit moves us to consecrate ourselves to God's will and his work (Rom. 12:1-2). He gives wings to our prayers (Rom. 8:26-27; Jude 20-21), voice to our witness (John 15:26-27; Acts 1:8), and heart to our worship (Acts 2:43-47; Eph. 5:18-20). This is what the Scripture means when it commands us to live in the Holy Spirit.

The Role of Christians

Christians pursue holiness with single-minded diligence (Heb. 12:14; 2 Pet. 1:5-11). Although sanctification comes through the truth of God's Word (John 17:17), we place ourselves under the influence of the Word. We side with God against all sin of act or attitude, in order to be purified from sin's corrupting influence and dominating power (Eph. 4:22-24; 2 Tim. 2:21). We pray for God to search our lives to locate and redeem us from secret sins hidden even to our own consciousness (Ps. 19:12-14). It is our duty to consecrate ourselves to God's will (Rom. 12:1-2).

When we accept the grace that God provides, sanctification becomes real in us. There are two scriptural conditions: He will "give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13) and "to those who obey him" (Acts 5:32). Praying and obeying, walking in the light as he is in the light (1 John 1:7), and purifying and consecrating our lives before God are the ways to realize the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit. Then God opens to us the fullness of the redemption that Jesus has provided for his people, a life pleasing to God.

