

"Sanctification" Sermon - September 15, 2024

God is holy, and He requires His people to be holy.

Hebrews 12:14 "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord..."

1 Peter 1:15-16 "...but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

Clearly, it is God's plan for his people to be holy. The doctrine of sanctification shows how God fulfills this plan.

While sanctification is related to regeneration and justification, it is not the same thing. **Regeneration** changes our nature. **Justification** changes our legal standing with God. **Sanctification** changes our character and conduct. When God justifies us, he **declares** us righteous. When He sanctifies us, we **become** righteous. Justification puts us into a right relationship with God, but sanctification shows the **fruit** of a right relationship with God.

1. What is Sanctification?

Sanctification is the process by which we are sanctified or made holy. The word **sanctify** means to cleanse, purify, or make holy and to separate, set apart or appoint to a holy, sacred, or religious use.

Sanctification requires both a **separation from** evil and a **dedication to** God. Just one aspect of sanctification is not sufficient; both aspects (separation from and devotion to) must work together to make us holy and righteous before God.

Another word that can be used in place of sanctify is **consecrate**. To consecrate means to make or declare to be sacred and to set apart, dedicate, or devote to the service and worship of God.

Priests in the Old Testament consecrated a large variety of things such as clothing, the tabernacle, and the temple. The priests themselves were also consecrated to God.

Exodus 30:30 "And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister to me as priests."

In the New Testament, sanctification is more personal in nature. Jesus prayed to the Father that his disciples be sanctified.

John 17:17-19 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As you sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."

Paul showed that Christ sanctified the church and Paul desired for believers to be sanctified "through and through". Jesus himself was sanctified by the Father to carry out His will in the world.

John 10:36 "...do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

If Jesus was sanctified, shouldn't we also seek sanctification?

2. What is Holiness?

A key word we need to understand as we discuss sanctification is holiness. To be holy is to be pure, immaculate, and complete in moral character. God's fundamental characteristic in holiness.

In Isaiah Chapter 6, Isaiah describes a vision of God sitting on a throne high and lifted up and his robe was so big, the train of it filled the temple. Above the throne stood seraphim, which are angelic beings with six wings. And one seraph cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" When Isaiah saw this, he was immediately convicted of his sin. He was instantly made aware of his utter inadequacy in the presence of Holy God. He said, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

Because God is holy, he is completely separate from sin or evil. We humans have a sinful nature and are not holy. Holy God cannot have fellowship with sinful men and women, but He desires relationship with us because of his undying love.

The Old Testament teaches that forgiveness of sin comes through the correct sacrifice on the altar and that cleansing requires the correct purification ritual. In the New Testament, we find that the Old Testament sacrifices point toward Jesus who became the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Hebrews 10:10 "By (God's) will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all."

So through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, Holy God justified sinful man and made a way for us to be in relationship with Him.

How can we be holy when we live in a sinful world? God created us to be holy in the midst of a fallen world. Jesus' death and resurrection made it possible for us to be holy. In fact, the word saint means "holy one." This word isn't used for special Christians, it is used for all Christians. We are all saints and God expects and commands us to be holy.

Leviticus 19:1-2 "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.'"

Sanctification is the process by which God makes us holy.

Righteous is another word that is similar to holy. To be righteous is to be morally right, just, virtuous, and vindicated. In the Old Testament, righteousness came through obedience to the Law. In the New Testament, righteousness comes through faith in Christ.

Philippians 3:9 "...not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;..."

- **Righteousness** is conformity to divine **law** and **holiness** is conformity to the divine **nature**.
- **Righteousness** is about outward **obedience**, whereas **holiness** is about inner purity.
- **Justification** is what God does **for** us, while **sanctification** is what God does **in** us.

Both justification and sanctification occur at salvation. However, sanctification is also a process that lasts the rest of our lives and will only be truly complete when we are glorified with Christ.

3. The Process of Sanctification

As Christians, we are living organisms that require regular nourishment and exercise in order to grow. We should not expect new believers to instantly turn into mature believers. The gradual transition from new believer to mature believer is called the process of sanctification.

Sanctification is both **instant** and **progressive**. In one sense, sanctification happens instantly.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 "...But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

Here the words "washed", "sanctified", and "justified" refer to a finished experience. Paul didn't say we **will be** sanctified or that we **are being** sanctified, he said we **were** sanctified.

In one sense, we were immediately justified through faith in Jesus the moment we got saved. At that moment, the Holy Spirit indwelt us and sanctified us. We were declared holy from the beginning of our Christian lives. This is called **positional holiness**. We are sanctified by our position in Christ.

In another sense, sanctification is an ongoing, progressive work.

1 John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

Here the verb "purifies" is in the present tense. The blood of Jesus is making us holy.

Hebrews 10:14 "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."

We are already holy in a legal sense, yet, at the same time, God is making us holy.

Although we are completely justified by Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross, His holiness is not made visible in our lives. Born of flesh and born into sin, we are not perfect.

When God looks at us, He does not see our sin but sees the holiness and righteousness of Jesus. We are holy before Him because of Jesus' sacrifice. However, those around us still see our sin.

1 John 1:8 "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

Although we are sanctified by our position in Christ, we still lack what theologians call **actual holiness**. The process of achieving actual holiness is something we should spend our lives striving for. For the rest of our lives, God will be working with us to progress toward actual holiness.

4. Cooperation Between God and Man

God and man must work together to produce holiness. Without God, it is impossible for us to become sanctified. God is always faithful to do his part in making us righteous.

God sanctifies us:

1. Through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the cross
2. Through His word
3. Through the Holy Spirit

God also sanctifies us through **discipline**. He has a purpose for using the hard times in our lives as discipline. God disciplines us for our good that we might share in His holiness. Just like gold is refined over a flame to remove its impurities, God refines us until we begin to reflect His image and His holiness.

Hebrews 12:6 "For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

God is doing his part. It is up to us as individuals to do our part in the sanctification process.

2 Peter 3:14 "...be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless..."

2 Corinthians 7:1 "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Here are four things we can do to partner with God in the sanctification process:

1. Decide to pursue holiness every day

Every morning we must consciously decide to seek righteousness. As we set our hearts on righteousness, our actions will follow. We must be intentional about this.

Colossians 3:1-2 "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth."

2. Separate ourselves from things that could lead us into sin

We shouldn't be like chameleons who change our behavior to blend in to our surroundings. We shouldn't behave one way at church on Sunday and another way at work on Monday. We shouldn't be out raising hell on Saturday night and praising heaven on Sunday morning. We should be like Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And we should avoid things that will lead us to be tempted.

Christians have no business being in bars or nightclubs, where sin and worldliness abound. Married Christians have no business being alone with those of the opposite sex. Single Christians must be on

guard and set boundaries with those they date, so as to avoid tempting situations.

3. Practice self-discipline

We must have the discipline to worship, pray, and study the Bible in our personal walk with God. We must not neglect our altars at home. As we pursue God daily, we bring His power and presence into our lives, and He helps us to be holy.

4. Obey the Word and the Holy Spirit

Galatians 5:16 "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

When two people walk together, one sets the pace while the other keeps in step. When we walk in the Spirit, He sets the pace and it is our responsibility to keep in step with Him. As we walk in the Spirit and not the flesh, He is able to sanctify us.

The root of sin is rebellion against God, but the root of holiness is full surrender to God and His Spirit.

5. Sanctification is a Lifelong Process

As we seek sanctification, we are bound by the flesh to experience setbacks, frustration, and times of discouragement. When we stumble, we must remember that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus". We look forward to the day our sanctification process will finally be finished.

1 John 3:2-3 "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And

everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

We eagerly await the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. At that moment, we will receive a glorified body and the process of sanctification will be complete. We will be perfect and without spot or wrinkle. Until then, let us "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."