

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CONFERENCE – WORD STUDY – SANCTIFICATION

What is sanctification? This is one of those highly religious words. A simple Internet search does not yield anything secular and for good reason. Anything that deals with sanctity, sanctuary, or consecrate, all have a religious concept. Usually the typical person relates sanctification and the word group to religious tradition, liturgical practice, and largely Catholic imagery. The one with an evangelical background will typically think of sanctification from the tabernacle or Levitical system and relate that to our lives in regard to becoming holy before our God just as He is holy—becoming Christlike.

### I. DEFINITIONS

**ἁγιασμός** *hagiasmos* (noun) – Holiness, sanctification

**ἁγιάζω** *hagiazō* (verb) – Sanctify, become holy, consecrate

**ἅγιος** *hagios* (adjective) – Holy, consecrated

As a word group, the basic definition is:

1. Reserved for God and God's service
2. Being separated from common usage or thought: sacred, honorable, special
3. The question must then be asked, "Set apart from what and to what?"

Most of the time this word is used in reference to God, places (temple, city, sanctuary), people (angels, prophets, believers), or things (scripture, vessels, temple furniture).

### II. THEOLOGICAL

Sanctification is typically understood as:

"This second aspect of salvation is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in delivering God's people from the power of sin. We call this work sanctification. Child of God, know and understand that you are being saved from the power of sin."

"The process of becoming holy"

"Sanctification can be described as an inward spiritual process whereby God brings about holiness and change in the life of a Christian by means of the Holy Spirit."

"Sanctification is an ongoing process, dependent on God's continuing action in the believer, and consisting of the believer's continuous struggle against sin. God's method of sanctification is neither activism (self-reliant activity) nor apathy (God-reliant passivity), but human effort dependent on God."

### III. BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING – We will focus on the three key words in the Greek Scriptures

First the verb "**ἁγιάζω** *hagiazō*" used 30 times in the Greek Scriptures.

Acts 20:28-32, 26:15-18 – The ones who are sanctified – this is a designation, not a potential. The means in this context is Jesus Christ through faith. *Sanctified* is an Articular Participle (Perfect Tense). This is descriptive of who they are, not what they are doing.

Romans 15:16 – The work of Paul has been set apart by the Holy Spirit.

1Corinthians 1:2 – To the ones having been made holy, called holies (saints). This greeting is the same Articular Participle (Perfect Tense) that we saw in Acts 20 and 26.

1Corinthians 6:11 – You were once identified by sin and the flesh, but you were made holy (sanctified). This verb is in the Aorist Passive Indicative tense, meaning a single point in time, something that has already occurred in the readers.

Ephesians 5:25-26 – Jesus loved and gave Himself up so that the church would be sanctified (Aorist).

1Timothy 4:4-5 – All food is set apart from the pagan society and is good for food if it is eaten with the right understanding of doctrine and thankfulness.

Hebrews 2:11 – The ones who were sanctified (Articular Participle) are one with the one who sanctifies. This participle is in the present tense but, with the article, it is descriptive not what one is doing.

Hebrews 9:13-14 – Contrasting the sacrificial system of the Hebrew Scriptures, we see that the blood of Jesus Christ is a complete cleansing.

Hebrews 10:10-14, 29 – This is a designation of being set apart by God. All these are in the Middle/Passive Voice. This is what has been done to the readership and is performed by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 13:12 – Jesus sanctifies the people through his blood (sacrifice)

1Peter 3:15 – Set aside Jesus as Lord in your “*kardia*.” This is not about the person’s sanctification but about placing Jesus in a special place of honor in the inner recesses of your mind. This is opposed to selfish ambition or desires.

2Timothy 2:14-26 – If you abstain from verbal altercations, avoid worldly teaching, put aside poor doctrine, and abstain from wickedness, then you will be a vessel for honor, having been set apart, useful, ready for every good work. The sanctification is in the Perfect Middle Participle. This adverbial participle precedes the main verb, it is not the result. The goal of this instruction is to hinder false and negative doctrines and promote truth.

1Thessalonians 5:23 – This is a benediction. The verbs *sanctify* and *preserved complete* are in the Optative Mood (desire or want). This leaves questions as to potential. In verse 24, Paul clarifies. God is faithful and will bring it to pass.

Is the verb used in terms of potential or process? The only passage that seems to indicate potential is John 17 in the prayer of Jesus Christ. In that passage the “process” is not described. The means is given but not in terms of process.

The adjective “*ἅγιος* *hagios*” is used over 225 times. About 160 times the word is used to describe the Holy Spirit, Holy City, Holy One, Holy Angel, etc. Another 60 plus times it is used as “saints,” holy ones of God describing believers. There are a few passages that we need to look at particularly.

Ephesians 1:4 – Believers are chosen to be presented as holy and blameless.

1Peter 1:14-16 – Being holy is equated to not conforming to the former lusts, to be set apart from the world in all your behavior. Peter’s imploration is not to increase their standing before God but that they should act in accordance with who they are. They are to set apart themselves in their behavior. For what purpose?

1Peter 2:1-3, 11-12. Behavior and works that are in accordance with their identity are designed to be a

behavioral witness. Our being set apart is not for God's benefit but is to be an example for those around us. God honors actions that cause others to honor and glorify God.

2Peter 3:10-12 – Our witness is not only in word but also in deed. Our set-apart (holy) conduct needs to be considered since this world with its lusts will be burned up.

The idea of being holy (set apart) from the world is described as a “do or do not.” There is no try; there is no process. You are holy. You either act holy or don't.

The noun “**ἁγιασμός** *hagiasmos*” is used 10 times. This is the term that is normally used and the passages that are used are normally referred to as describing the process of sanctification.

1Corinthians 1:29-30 – Justification, holiness, and redemption are from God.

2Thessalonians 2:13-14 – Being set apart by the Spirit and doctrinal understanding of truth are what God does in regard to salvation (Titus 3:5-7).

Romans 6:15-23 – The question and answer that Paul proposes here is whether a believer should sin because we are not under law but grace. This is the premise; we cannot lose this point and the rest of the passage must be kept in this context.

In verse 19 Paul states that you yielded your body to uncleanness and lawlessness, unto the lawlessness. Notice that many translations add “resulting” or something else that would lead to the conclusion that the result of yielding is further lawlessness.

The preposition “eis” is used here at the end of verse 19 and verse 22. The preposition has many uses. One of them is to look toward a thought or an idea. When “*eis*” is used with “telos,” this is enhanced (John 13:1; 2Corinthians 3:13). This same construction is used in verse 22.

The conclusion is that lawlessness, sanctification, and eternal life are not the outcomes. The action or behavior is done with these things in view. If sanctification is a result, then lawlessness and eternal life also must be a result of presenting your members.

Remember the question is do we sin now that we are under grace? The point is not how we get sanctified; the point is how we should act because we are sanctified, because we have eternal life.

1Thessalonians 4:1-7 – The main point in this passage is how to walk and please God.

This is the will of God (the desire of God), your sanctification. *Your sanctification* is restating what the will of God is. The question is from what to what and who is doing the work of sanctification?

Here are the commandments in this passage: abstain from sexual immorality, knowing how to control your body (in regard to sanctification and honor) and do not go beyond or overreach in the matter of the brother (this may be in reference to fornication and control: do not steal your brother's wife, adultery).

Is there a practical sanctification in this text? Yes. But there is no process. Do not do these things. Also, God's desire is known but is not stated as the source. The way that most present sanctification is knowledge, testing, accomplishment, that result in sanctification. Is that what we see?

Is there a desired growth process in Scripture? Yes. But the growth is not sanctification. Sanctification, being set apart, is either you are or you are not. Notice there is no metric. How sanctified are you? You either are sanctified or you are not.

The vast majority of texts concerning the sanctification of the believer is a statement of fact. As a believer, you are sanctified by God, you are set apart, you are special, you are uncommon, you are holy.

A few of the texts do deal with what some may consider a practical sanctification. But this is not before God. This holiness is before men as a behavioral witness so that men may see and give glory to God. Even in these texts, there is no process; you either are or you are not acting holy.