

Sanctification

Introduction. In 1 Corinthians 1:1-9, Paul described the Corinthians as the "church of God at Corinth," "sanctified," "called to be saints," recipients of the "grace of God" and "called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Clearly, the brethren at Corinth had been saved from their sins. They had partaken in the blessing of Christ's salvation. Among this list of blessings Paul speaks of is sanctification. This is a subject that needs to be understood and applied. It deals with how one is saved from sin, and it also deals with how a saved person should live. In addition, all of us need to be aware of the Bible's teaching on this subject because of the error that some religions have taught. Because of this, we will first study and provide an answer for their doctrine.

I. ***The Denominational Idea Of Sanctification***

A. The Methodist Church.

1. The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church says, "Sanctification is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Ghost, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleanseth from all sin; whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and are enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in his holy commandments blameless."
2. The "fallen nature" of man is a reference to the belief that man inherits the sin of Adam. But the Bible does not teach this doctrine (Ezekiel 18:20; Matthew 19:14).
3. It also says one is "enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and walk in his holy commandments blameless." However, grace does not "enable" one to love God and do His will (Acts 20:24).
 - a) The word teaches one to love God with all the heart (Matthew 22:37).
 - b) It teaches one to walk in His commandments (2 John 4).

B. The Church of the Nazarene.

1. The Nazarenes state, "We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.... It is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service."

2. Notice again that this statement of belief mentions "original sin" or "depravity." As we saw in our previous point, this idea is foreign to the Bible.
3. We also are told that sanctification "is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit." However, there are only two cases of baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. One occurs on Pentecost in Acts 2 and the other occurs with Cornelius in Acts 10.
 - a) There is a very telling incident in Acts 8:12-18.
 - (1) No one in Samaria had received the Holy Spirit.
 - (a) They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord.
 - (b) The church at Jerusalem dispatched Peter and John.
 - (2) Why? Because God sent the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33) and the Holy Spirit was only transferred through the laying on of apostles' hands. All Christians did not receive Holy Spirit baptism in New Testament times!
 - b) Furthermore, consider what it meant for Peter and John to come all the way to Samaria. It would have saved Peter and John a lot of time and effort had the Samaritan converts simply received Holy Spirit baptism upon their conversion!
4. The positions of these groups also have other problems.
 - a) They negate the part the word of God plays in sanctification (John 17:17).
 - b) They make God a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11).
 - c) They imply that God does not want all to repent (2 Peter 3:9).
5. Everyone can appreciate the obvious concern for righteous living found in the quotes from the Methodists and the Church of the Nazarene. However, their teachings on sanctification do not agree with the Bible.

II. ***The Bible Meaning Of Sanctification***

- A. It does not mean to "render incapable of sin."
 1. The Corinthians were called "sanctified" by Paul. Yet, look at all the sins of which they were guilty (1 Corinthians 3:4; 6:9-10).
 2. Everyone would agree that the apostle Peter was sanctified. Yet, he sinned (cf. Galatians 2:11).
 3. In Hebrews 10:26-29, the one that the writer speaks of as "sinning willfully" (vs. 26) is one who had previously been "sanctified" (vs. 29).
 4. Even inanimate objects in the Old and New Testaments were sanctified (Exodus 19:23 [Mt. Sinai]; 29:37 [altar]; Matthew 23:17 [gold]).

5. According to the Methodist's teaching, by sanctification we are "enabled ... to walk in his holy commandments blameless."
Sanctification did not mean that in the New Testament and it does not mean that now. In the New Testament, those who were sanctified sometimes sinned.

B. Sanctification is translated from the noun *hagiasmos*, which occurs 10 times and is translated as "sanctification" five times and as "holiness" five times. The verb form (*hagizao*) occurs 29 times and is translated as "sanctified," "sanctify," "sanctifieth" and "holy." The word "sanctify" in the Old Testament comes from *qadash*, which occurs 172 times and is variously translated as "hallow," "dedicated," "prepare," "consecrated," "wholly" and "purified." Sanctification is used two different ways in the Bible.

1. "To set apart for holy use."

a) Clearly, this is how "sanctified" is used of the Corinthian Christians (1 Corinthians 1:2).

b) In Exodus 13:2, 12, "sanctify" and "set apart" are used interchangeably (cf. 1 Peter 2:9).

c) In John 10:36, Jesus was sanctified by the Father and sent into this world.

2. "To purify."

a) It speaks of God's work to purify man from sin.

(1) Christ's blood is the sole sacrifice for our sins (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:13-14; 13:12).

(2) God reveals His word to purify or sanctify man (John 17:15-17; Titus 2:11-14).

(a) As a helpful aside, our denominational friends speak a lot about the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

(b) God reveals His will through the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). According to John 17:17, the word of God is essential to sanctification. Hence, the Holy Spirit works through the word.

b) It speaks of man's work in response to God's work to purify man from sin.

(1) One must first have their sins remitted before one can have "an inheritance among those that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32; 26:18).

(a) We noted that the Corinthian Christians were sanctified (1 Corinthians 1:2). How did this take place?

(b) Their past life as lost sinners was taken away when they were washed, sanctified and justified (1 Corinthians 6:11).

- i) "Washed" is the same word used in Acts 22:16 (1 Corinthians 12:13; cf. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21).
- ii) "Justified" means "be acquitted, be pronounced and treated as righteous." Their behavior was conformable to God.
 - (1) We are justified and made "free from sin" when we obey that "form of doctrine" (Romans 6:16-18; cf. Hebrews 5:8-9).
 - (2) The "form of doctrine" equals a pattern of teaching (Romans 1:16-17).
- iii) When one has been washed and justified, it is safe to say that a person has been sanctified.
 - (2) After I become a Christian, sanctification means that I keep myself pure (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 12:14-16; cf. James 4:4; 1 John 2:15). When I sin, I must repent and pray for forgiveness, as did Simon (Acts 8:22).
- c) How are you doing with sanctification in your life? A Baptist preacher once said, "The sinful and uncommitted lifestyle of many professing Christians is absolutely foreign to the Scriptures. The believer is to 'walk in the Spirit' which simply means letting God lead us (with his word, kc). We are to set aside our goals and desires for the lofty and pure purposes of God which is the best life we can possibly live. We are God's creation. We are not our own. 'For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's' (1 Corinthians 6:20). As God's child He wants the best for us."

Conclusion. Many people claiming to serve God have not yet been set apart. This is because they have not done what the Bible says one must do in order to be sanctified. Furthermore, sanctification has applications beyond one's being set apart for God's usage. It also has reference to the Christian's continued efforts to purify his or her life (1 Peter 1:9).