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Often in Scripture the words sanctified and holy are synonymous. When the Bible refers to sanctification, it is speaking of one of two aspects. First, it can indicate being set apart—to be holy, to consecrate or to separate from ungodliness and dedicate to God (in a ceremonial sense), and to make holy or purify (in a moral sense). These meanings reveal that a holy and sanctified person is one who has been first consecrated or set apart to serve God, and subsequently cleansed from his sin nature.

What is Holiness?

The word sanctify comes from the Greek word hagios, which means “holy.” Thus, the experience of sanctification is sometimes referred to as “holiness.” The verb sanctify has two meanings: “to separate; to consecrate or to separate from ungodliness and dedicate to God” (in a ceremonial sense), and “to make holy or purify” (in a moral sense). These meanings reveal that a holy and sanctified person is one who has been first consecrated or set apart to serve God, and subsequently cleansed from his sin nature.

Life Application: Understanding the nature of holiness and why it is vital in the Christian life.

Key Verse for Meditation: As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. – 1 Peter 1:15-16

Focus Scriptures: Leviticus 19:2; John 17:9,15-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 2:9

4. Romans 12:1-2 has three directives that will help us maintain and grow spiritually once we have been sanctified. What are these three instructions?


6. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19, we belong to God. How might being set apart for God’s use affect our view of ourselves?

Lesson Key: While the experience of sanctification is definite and instantaneous, the sanctified believer continues to grow as a Christian. A sanctified heart has a desire to be instructed, to learn, to mature. A sanctified heart asks: What does living holy look like? How should holiness and separation unto God govern my words, my thoughts, and my actions? The answers to these questions were what Paul and the other Apostles sought to teach the early believers.
The Greek word translated common in Acts 10:14 and 28 means “unholy.” Thus, the word holy could also be translated uncommon. God’s Word draws a clear difference between holy and unholy, between clean and unclean (see Leviticus 10:10). Sanctified objects are not to be used in a common manner, they are to be used for the glory of God.

That principle extends to followers of Christ as well. The Apostle Peter said, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9). As Christians, we are not to be “common” people because we have devoted ourselves to God; we have set ourselves apart for Him.

The second aspect of sanctification—that of cleansing—is an act of God that brings about a change in the inner person. After our sins have been forgiven, we come to Him with a recognition of needing more. We long to fully conform to the image and nature of Christ, so we present our lives in total submission to Him. As we look to God to accomplish the purifying work in us, He sanctifies our hearts and makes them holy in a second, definite, and instantaneous work of grace. The carnal nature with which we were born is destroyed.

Avoiding Contamination

My cousin was recuperating in the hospital after a near-fatal accident on his job. Because of the nature of his injury and to prevent the possibility of infection, scrupulous care was taken to prevent his visitors from contaminating the surroundings. Before we entered his room, we had to put on surgical gowns and gloves. We were not allowed to touch him or his bed, and every nurse who entered scrubbed thoroughly before assisting him in any way. It was clear that every effort was being made to maintain a sterile environment.

There are many ungodly influences in our world today. As God’s people, we must be willing to separate ourselves from anything that would defile or contaminate the purity God has given us. This does not mean that we become hermits. Rather, it means that we carefully avoid anything that would influence us toward sinful practices. In a world filled with evil, we must resist the sin around us, instead of partaking of it. – From a Daybreak devotional

God wants every individual who has been saved to be entirely sanctified. When we pray and consecrate to God, we have separated ourselves for His use. But then we must let His Blood be applied again to our hearts to make us clean and pure and holy in the sight of the Lord.

Even after we have received the experience of sanctification, we are still subject to human limitations such as flawed reasoning and imperfect judgment, which can cause us to make less than perfect decisions. However, holiness will keep our hearts pure and motivate us to always want to do the right thing. We want to receive instruction from God. We listen, we obey when that instruction comes, and we continue to grow in Him. We mature as Christians.

Holiness must permeate every aspect of our lives. Our lives should reflect that we are consecrated to God. The decisions we make should be based on the fact that we have separated ourselves to live for the Lord. Our speech should reflect our commitment to belong to Him. Our actions, the places we go, the music we listen to, the way we look—all of it should reflect the fact that we have set ourselves apart for God.

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When I was saved, I thought it was the most wonderful thing in the world, and I basked in the wonder of spiritual new birth. However, before too long, a brother in the church said to me, “You know, you cannot live on that experience alone forever. You need to pray that the Lord will sanctify you.” I found out that was absolutely the truth.

My job was with the post office, and the Christmas rush came shortly after I was saved. For about six weeks we worked twelve or more hours a day, seven days a week. There was almost no opportunity for me to go to church, and I was in the same environment as before I was saved. Working with me were people with whom I had drunk alcohol, smoked, and partied. God gave me the strength to stand, but because of the battles that came my way, I began to understand the importance of sanctification.

God gave me such a hunger that I could hardly sleep or keep focused on my job or my daily routine. Sanctification became the most important thing in my life. Even though I did not really understand the experience, I was desperately hungry for God. During church services, I sat and wept.

Then one day, as I prayed and consecrated myself to God, the Lord opened the heavens and gave me the wonderful experience of sanctification. He really did something for me. It seemed even better than salvation, which I did not think anything could top.

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When God sanctified me, He purified my heart and gave me the very thing that has kept me steady through the years. I found myself of one heart and one mind with the saints of God. Being in unity with my brothers and sisters in the faith was a tremendous and beautiful experience that nothing else could ever produce.

How I thank Him for that wonderful experience! – Gary Bertram

For Personal Study

1. Why must Christians be holy? Leviticus 11:44-45; 1 Peter 1:13-16

2. Read 2 Corinthians 6:17 and Ephesians 5:11. What does it mean to be separated from the world?

3. Even though the experience of sanctification is instantaneous, we need to “perfect holiness” (see 2 Corinthians 7:1). How can we keep our hearts as “good ground”?

He Purified My Heart!
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It was during this time that I discovered the importance of sanctification. I found myself in a situation where I was unable to hold up under the pressures of the job. I began to realize that I needed to be closer to Jesus to get through the difficult times.

The Lord opened my eyes to see the need for sanctification. He really did something for me. It seemed even better than salvation, which I did not think anything could top.

Heart!

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