

WHAT IS SANCTIFICATION

SANCTIFICATION

After laying the foundation of a house, it is imperative to continue building in accordance with the design in order to protect the foundation. It is also important not to lose momentum. Sanctification, which follows immediately after conversion, is the final part of the process of justification. This process is ongoing until we die. All those who have been sanctified, and therefore fully justified, will be redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ. We should note that everyone who has ever lived, from the time the Lord was crucified to this day, has already been redeemed by the blood of Christ. However, we have to answer the call to repent for us to be converted into the household of God.

What is the meaning of the word sanctification according to the Holy Scriptures? Sanctification is a process by which we change in character, from the inside out, from our old ways of life into a new man. Empowered by the Spirit of God, we develop the personality of God within us, growing also in wisdom, knowledge and understanding of the truth but not limited to these. If we do not notice any changes in our character, we have to review the process of justification.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our best example of the process of sanctification by the way He lived His life here on Earth: without sin, completely holy, doing the will of God the Father. The apostles also followed His example and were therefore fully converted into the kingdom of God after they had received the free gift of the Holy Spirit. They too grew in knowledge, wisdom, understanding, power, character and much more. The Lord Jesus Christ prayed to God the Father to sanctify His disciples and those who would believe through their word. This includes everyone who chooses to believe.

John 17:14-23 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁴I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

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²⁰ “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: ²³ I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

The above passage of Scripture is the Lord’s Prayer to God the Father for us to be made one with the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father. Can it be possible that everyone who believes can become one with Christ and God? The simple answer is yes. We can be one with God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ through the Spirit of God, which dwells in all converted believers. It is important to note that the Spirit of God is not a person, contrary to what many are being led to believe.

The process of sanctification also has steps in which we grow in holiness to the Lord. The first step of that process is living by faith.

TO LIVE BY FAITH

A convert of the kingdom of God has to move from one level of faith to a higher level of faith. By increasing one’s faith in this way, there are several trials that one must undergo to prove one’s development. Being justified in the eyes of God is one such way of showing this development in a person. As stated in the Scriptures, those who are just shall live by faith:

Romans 1:16-17 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.* ¹⁷ *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”*

Faith begins with human faith that leads us to believe the truth initially, to enable us to come to repentance and conversion. Then to the faith comes from the Spirit of God, which we receive as a free gift that empowers us to be able to do the will of God. Human faith wavers like the sea, but the faith of the Spirit of God is stable in every way.

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James 1:4-8 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁴But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. ⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

New converts into the kingdom of God must move from unstable human faith, to the tremendously powerful faith that comes from the Spirit of God. Only through having such strong and stable faith can we please God. Human faith alone is too unstable. We must grow in faith and weather trials, which test our faith, before it will become powerful.

Hebrews 11:5-6 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁵By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. ⁶But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

If we do not have the Spirit of God, we can never become part of His family and we will never have the faith which is pleasing to God. The only source of faith that pleases God comes from the Spirit of God.

BE BAPTISED

It is of profound importance to be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He who died for our sins, making it possible for us to avoid the penalty of death. This doesn't mean we will not all die. We still have our appointment with death. Some of us will taste death until the appointed time of resurrection, but there are some in our generation who will not taste death. There is an ordained period of time when the Lord will abolish death forever.

What is the significance of baptism? We have to understand what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us all and the awesome plan of God - to be able to comprehend the significance of water baptism. To be a part of the government of God, that is to stand before God and rule

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the world with our Lord Jesus Christ, we have to be born of water, which is the first step to allow us to see and enter the kingdom of God. It is important that one is immersed fully in water when baptised, not just a light sprinkling of water on the head as some practice. Christ said that only a man who is born of water can see and enter the kingdom of God:

John 3:3-6 New King James Version (NKJV)

³Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

⁴Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

⁵Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

At this stage it is important to clarify some misconceptions. To become born again, one must have been born of the Spirit of God. This is an event prophesised to happen at the end of the age. No one on earth is born again at this particular moment. The only one who is born again now is the Lord Jesus Christ - who is in heaven with God the Father. He lived and died as a man but was resurrected and born of the Spirit, enabling Him to be able to see and enter the kingdom of heaven. This is the clearest example that proves the truth of the Holy Scriptures.

To become born again, which enables us to be able to see and enter the kingdom of God, we have to be first born of water, which is to be baptised. As mentioned earlier, we must then also be born of the Spirit of God. This will happen at the appointed time at the end of this present age when God will give us the power to become His Sons of God in His kingdom. Why then do we have to be baptised? When we are led by the Spirit of God to be baptised, we are baptised into the body of Christ. This completes our conversion process of becoming one with Christ and God the Father.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹²For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one

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body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

When we are baptised into Christ, we also become Abraham's seed and heir according to this promise:

Galatians 3:25-29 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁵ But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Most importantly, when we become baptised, we are baptised into the death of Christ when we are submerged into water. Then when we come out of the water, we begin a new life in Christ, led by the spirit.

Romans 6:3-10 New King James Version (NKJV)

³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

If we have been baptised into the Body of Christ - then Christ will live in us.

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Galatians 2:20 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Amen, Amen, and Amen.

But can baptism done properly, which is total immersion in water, have no significance? Yes, it can. But why could that be? Baptism will not be significant if the individual was not led by the Spirit of God to be baptised. The Lord has set the path and if we do not follow the prescribed path we will not fulfil the will of God. Some will just copy what they see others doing without any understanding of what it means. The Lord knows all His people and what it was that led them to be baptised.

GROW IN KNOWLEDGE

We have to grow in the knowledge of the Lord. The Lord said, “man does not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”. If we have the Spirit of God dwelling in us - we have to feed that Spirit with the right food: the word of God and through works of righteousness. Without which we can easily starve the Spirit of God.

Can anyone lose their call to salvation? The answer is an emphatic yes. They can, and in many ways. One way of losing the Spirit of God is by not feeding the Spirit that is within us with the word of truth. By doing so, we starve the Spirit. God had earlier said, through His servant the prophet Hosea, that His people are destroyed because of a lack of knowledge. It is not just the lack of knowledge of the truth, but also by rejecting the truth.

Hosea 4:6 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

This passage of Scripture is also linked with what the Lord said to Satan during the time of His temptation. Knowledge of the truth is of paramount importance to us.

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Matthew 4:3-4 New King James Version (NKJV)

³Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

⁴But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

It is by living by every word from the mouth of God that we will become skilled in the 'word of righteousness' and the knowledge of God.

Hebrews 5:9-14 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁹And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, ¹⁰called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," ¹¹of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Without the Spirit of God, we cannot grow in knowledge of the truth, because it is the Spirit of God that guides us towards all truth. We have to be aware that understanding, knowledge and wisdom of the truth comes from and is given to us by God.

Daniel 2:20-23 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁰Daniel answered and said:

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His.
²¹And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. ²²He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him. ²³"I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, And have now made known to me what we asked of You, For You have made known to us the king's demand."

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From the above passage of Scripture, we can see that it is crystal clear that wisdom, knowledge and understanding are given to us by God. Today, we have the Spirit of Truth in us, which means that we have God in us - revealing the truth and teaching us His ways.

John 16:12-13 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

Our task is to set aside the time to study the word of God, to grow in knowledge of the truth of the Spirit of God. At the same time, we have to be obedient to the laws and commandments of God to be given this understanding by God.

Psalm 111:10 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.

It is of paramount importance to understand the concept of 'the fear of the Lord'. As we proceed through the path of salvation, the first stage is 'the fear of the Lord'. This is when we get the call to repent and thereafter repent to God. This is so that we depart from all evil and become just before God. As we continue to follow in the path towards sanctification, we are given wisdom and understanding. Knowledge is only given to those who have understanding of the precepts and statutes of God. Sanctification can only proceed following justification; no one can be sanctified before they are blameless before God. Ironically, this is the path the majority of professing believers follow. This ultimately leads to confusion. The root cause of this confusion stems from the lack of knowledge and the rejection of the truth. This is because we tend to learn things from our parents and ministers who are not blameless themselves - who have no understanding of the truth.

GROW IN CHARACTER

As we grow in the Spirit of God, we begin to see visible changes in our character, from the ways of this world towards that of holiness to God. We begin to gain features and distinctive attributes of the character of God. If there are no visible changes in our character from

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what we were before repentance and what we have become thereafter within a short period of time, we have to go back and evaluate the path we have taken. The mind-set with which we answered the call to repentance has everything to do with who we become during the process of sanctification. We have to make sure that we come with the right mind-set and ‘renew’ our minds:

Romans 12:1-2 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The purpose of renewing our minds is to enable us to be able to do the will of God and to make us open to receive the changes which the Spirit of God will administer in us. This is the reason why our Lord Jesus Christ said that if we do not accept the kingdom of God as little children, we will by no means enter it. Paul had to renew His mind when he received the gift of the Holy Spirit. We have to remember: Paul was very knowledgeable of the word of God, but not in the truth. When he was converted into the kingdom of God - his understanding of the truth was opened by the Lord.

Acts 9:20-22 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁰Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

²¹Then all who heard were amazed, and said, “Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?”

²²But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

Here are two examples of those who did not renew their minds:

Acts 5:1-10 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. ²And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie

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to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴ While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

⁵ Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. ⁶ And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

⁷ Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?”

She said, “Yes, for so much.”

⁹ Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” ¹⁰ Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.

And the other is when Simon thought he could buy the power of God with money:

Acts 8:17-23 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁷ Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸ And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, “Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”

²⁰ But Peter said to him, “Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! ²¹ You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. ²² Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.”

The vast majority of the New Testament is full of doctrines on how to become spiritual believers through the process of sanctification. The Lord Jesus Christ prayed to God the Father to sanctify us by the truth:

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John 17:16-19 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

Earlier, the Lord had said that in order for us to be His disciples, we have to abide by Him and His words:

John 15:5-8 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

And when we know the truth, it will set us free:

John 8:30-32 New King James Version (NKJV)

³⁰ As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

If we do not understand what God has said, how can we abide by His word? We have to study and pray to the Lord to give us understanding of His word for us to be able to know the truth. The truth will then set us free from bondage to the ways of this present world when it becomes alive in us. Remember, the word of God is not just words, but they are also living words. What does it mean to abide by the Lord and His words in us? The Lord answered this question:

Matthew 7:24-27 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁴ "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

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²⁶ “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

The book of James paints a clearer picture of what we are supposed to do as disciples:

James 1:21-26 New King James Version (NKJV)

²¹ Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

²⁶ If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless.

We are instructed to hear the word and put it into action. In other words, we are advised to practice what we have heard or read. If there is no action in our part, then we are not doers of the word but hearers only. Acting on the word of God, with understanding, leads to salvation. The perfect law of liberty is the ten commandments: the constitution of the kingdom of God. We are told to keep them. As well as abiding in His word and keeping the commandments, we must also add virtue to our faith:

2 Peter 1:5-11 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁵ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

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¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As we are diligent in adding all these characteristics into our lives by the empowerment of the Spirit of God, we will start to bear the fruits of the Spirit:

Galatians 5:22-24 New King James Version (NKJV)

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Without the knowledge of the required elements of character development, and the understanding that we are set to go through trials of our faith, we will never be able to develop our character correctly and be sanctified in the truth. Every word of truth in us will be tested. Do not be ignorant of this important fact that sanctification continues until the end of the age, or until we sleep the sleep of death before the end of age; whichever comes first to the people of our generation.