

## ARTICLE 6

**We believe in sanctification subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ; through the Word, and by the Holy Ghost.**

## ARTICLE 7

**We believe holiness to be God's standard of living for His people.**

**When people become Christians, the Holy Spirit participates in their lives so that they can respond with obedience to God.** Christians no longer pursue the same life they did before following Christ—they live a new life characterized by truth and goodness, not sin. In this new life, Christians are motivated by the desire to be like Christ and to abandon wrong motives and detrimental pursuits.

**This new life in Christ is to be a life that is cleansed by the Spirit, often referred to as a "holy" or "sanctified" life.** This type of life is one that allows the fruit of Christian character to grow and flourish in it (Galatians 5:16-26). Such a life of holiness involves devotion to God in one's personal life, as well as expressing God's love in one's society. A life permeated with "holiness"—that is, a life patterned after Christ and led by the Holy Spirit—is the surest sign that we are Christians.

### 1. The Meaning of Sanctification

- a. The Greek verb for "sanctify" (*hagiazō*) means "to make holy, set apart, dedicate, or purify."**

The noun "sanctification" (*hagiasmos*) means holiness or separation from profane and obscene things and actions. Properly speaking, the main aspects of sanctification are separation from what is sinful and consecration to what is righteous and holy.

*Scripture references:* 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 9:14

- b. Sanctification, though distinct from and subsequent to the new birth, begins at the beginning of the Christian experience of salvation.**

Sanctification is so fundamental to the entire Christian life that it cannot be regarded as a single experience that only occurs once in our lives. Initially during our conversion, we are regenerated and transformed, receiving a renewed relationship with God. Immediately we have an inner desire to live according to the will of God. In an ongoing way following our conversion, God through sanctification breaks the power of sin over our lives. Because of this blessing, we, as children of God, can be holy and pure; that is, we are able to walk daily with God and pursue His will in our lives. Because we will not be entirely free of temptation until we are in heaven with God, we must daily ask Him to help us to be Christ-like and to make our lives holy.

*Scripture references:* 1 Peter 1:15-16; Hebrews 12:1; Philippians 1:9-11; 2 Peter 3:11-13; Ephesians 5:8, 10-11

## **2. Sanctification, A Work of God**

### **a. In the Bible, sanctification is something God does.**

#### **(1) Sanctification through Christ**

Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ is our sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30); therefore, apart from Him we cannot be holy. The phrase "through faith in the blood of Christ" connects sanctification to the death of Christ. We accept sanctification and appropriate it in our lives only through our faith in Him. Faith is the believing obedience that accepts the power of God. This saving power works through the death of God's Son Jesus Christ and enables us to be holy people. Christ "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:13-14). Our response of trust to the power of the Cross makes effective the new life of obedience to which God has called every believer.

#### **(2) Sanctification through the Word of God**

Sanctification rests on the death of Christ at Calvary, but it is through the truth of God's Word that believers are sanctified. Christ prayed to the Father for His disciples, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." (John 17:17). God's Word communicates His truth and gives us wisdom for spiritually balanced living.

#### **(3) Sanctification through the guidance of the Holy Spirit**

Since the Holy Spirit has given the Scriptures, He always leads believers to live according to them. He works through the Word of God, preparing and enabling believers through His sanctifying work to walk in obedience to God and His Word. Although the Father and the Son are involved in sanctification, the Scriptures place special emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification.

*Scripture references:* 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Titus 2:13-14; John 17:17; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 John 1:9

### **b. The Holy Spirit is in believers, always working to conform their thoughts, speech, and actions, so that they become more and more like Jesus Christ.**

#### **(1) As we walk with the Holy Spirit, He cleanses and transforms our lives daily.**

We are not simply given a fresh start by the Holy Spirit and left to ourselves. Rather, in sanctification we are led by the Spirit and learn not to indulge our fleshly (sinful or wrong) desires. As Paul said, "Walk in [by] the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). This means that each moment that we completely follow the Spirit's lead we will not commit acts that are contrary to God's will. When we submit our lives to the Holy Spirit, we are allowing the Spirit to lead us daily. Thus our sanctification has a dynamic dimension—it involves an ongoing relationship with God. In this relationship, the Holy Spirit transforms our lives and provides strength for our new life in Christ. A holy, or sanctified, life is characterized by our endeavoring to be conscious of God and the leading of the Spirit throughout our day.

#### **(2) God in His grace forgives our shortcomings and teaches us through our weaknesses.**

As human beings, we are not yet perfect and we live in an imperfect world. Until we are one day made complete and are with God in heaven, we will be confronted with temptations that appeal to the "desires of the flesh," that is, temptations that appeal to our selfish desires.

Some of our thoughts, choices, priorities, and actions may not be pleasing to God. We must return to God continually, asking Him to forgive us for our wrongdoings and shortcomings and to teach us about His will for our lives. We must daily offer both our strengths and our weaknesses, allowing Him to cleanse us and make us holy, so that we may be transformed to be instruments of His love, joy, and peace in the world.

*Scripture references:*

Walking with the Spirit—Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:2

God's forgiveness and instruction—Luke 11:2-4; 1 John 1:9; 2:1

### **3. Sanctification, Also a Task of God's People**

#### **a. The process of putting sanctification into action is both the work of God and the work of His people.**

##### **(1) With the Holy Spirit's guidance, we are to put sanctification into action.**

The Holy Spirit cleanses, prepares, and empowers us for Christ-like living, but our work, while being submissive to the Holy Spirit, helps put sanctification into action in practical ways in our lives. We cannot leave our sanctification passively to the Holy Spirit alone. Once we have submitted ourselves to God for cleansing, we do not become robotic-like beings who are programmed so that we are not capable of wrongdoing. We continue to make choices.

##### **(2) We are to separate our selves from wrongdoing and to commit ourselves to pursuing the things of God.**

As told in the Old Testament, God sanctified His people (Exodus 31:13); but they were also told to sanctify themselves (Numbers 11:18). God's people were to be faithful, separating themselves from other nations, so that they could be His people (Leviticus 20:26) and could walk in His ways (Exodus 19:5). As Christians today, the idea of separating ourselves indicates that we are to be separate from what is sinful and to be dedicated to what is righteous and according to God's will. Scripture does not support the view that Christians who are living sanctified lives will have nothing to do with non-Christians and will not participate in activities of society. In fact as Christians, we are to be active in the communities in which God has placed us. In our normal activities through our actions and demeanor, we are to endeavor to point to Christ's love. We are not to attempt to draw attention to ourselves, pridefully showing how religious or good we can be. With the Holy Spirit's guidance, we are to share the love of Christ through our actions and words and have a positive impact on the world around us (John 17:6-26; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Philippians 2:15).

*Scripture references:* Exodus 31:13; 19:5; Numbers 11:18; Leviticus 20:26; Hebrews 12:14; Romans 12:1-2; Titus 2:11-12; John 17:6-26; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Philippians 2:15

#### **b. It is through a disciplined life that the grace of God is allowed to continue working in our life, so that we may experience spiritual growth.**

##### **(1) The strength to live the disciplined Christian life is a gift directly from God.**

As we come to God daily inviting Him to cleanse our lives and to lead us, He will give us the strength we need to do His work. With His blessing, we are able to continue in grace endeavoring to work out in everyday life what the Holy Spirit has worked in us. Paul emphasized this truth when he urged the Philippian believers, "Work out your own salvation

with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13). Since God was working in the Philippians' hearts through the Holy Spirit, they were expected, with the Holy Spirit's help, to strive constantly to avoid wrongdoing and to live lives that expressed God's holiness in practical ways.

**(2) Every aspect of our being—soul, spirit, and body—is to be submitted to God for Him to conform us to the likeness of Christ.**

There are no shortcuts to holiness and Spirit-led spirituality. We must submit all areas of our life to God. We can then go out into the world with courage and discipline and do the work He has called us to do.

*Scripture references:* Philippians 2:12-13; Luke 9:23; Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5, 12-14; Hebrews 12:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

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## Discussion

### Meaning of Sanctification

- 1) What are the main aspects of sanctification?
- 2) When does sanctification in a person's life begin?

### Sanctification, A Work of God

- 3) Explain how all members of the Godhead are involved in sanctification.
- 4) Whenever we give in to temptations or make mistakes in life, what do we need to do?

### Sanctification, Also a Task of God's People

- 5) What is our task in sanctification?
- 6) How do we get the strength to live the disciplined Christian life?

## Prayer

Blessed Holy Spirit, we thank You for Your powerful presence in our lives.

Please nourish and sustain our hearts that we may have a closer walk with our Lord.

Keep us from all activities that are not pleasing to You, and help us to focus our minds on You, rather than on things that are not pleasing to You.

Strengthen us against the assaults of Satan and grant us power to live in humility and obedience.

Above all things, we want to love You and others. We want to allow You to lead us, so that You may produce Your fruit in us and we may live in righteousness and true holiness.

Amen.

## Resources for Additional Study

Agnew, Milton S. *Transformed Christians: New Testament Messages on Holy Living*. Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1974.

Arrington, French L. *Christian Doctrine: A Pentecostal Perspective*, Vol. 2. Cleveland, Tenn.: Pathway, 1992; pp. 229-247

Coppedge, Allan. *Portraits of God: A Biblical Theology of Holiness*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988, 1978.

Hauerwas, Stanley. *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.