

Knowing God Series #7



“Be Holy because He Is Holy”

Introduction

Hosea the prophet called the people of God to return to Him.

Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him. So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth.” Hosea 6:1-3

Hosea promised the people that if they returned to God, He would heal, revive, restore to life refresh like the spring rain on a dry desert in a specified amount of time.

I. The nature of God

II. The Attributes of God

A. God is infinitely GREAT in His ability / capacity

B. God is infinitely PURE in His morality

1. God is HOLY

God is absolutely separated from all that is contrary to His own moral standard. He is above and separated from all evil because He is holy. The Hebrew root form appears nearly 1,000 times in the Old Testament. The Greek root form shows up almost 300 times in the New Testament. Holiness in both creator and creature appears all through the Bible. It stands as a key foundational concept deserving closer attention. Both the Greek and the Hebrew root words convey the general idea of separation, set apart for a special purpose, to cut, to be unique, special.

Translators translate these Greek and Hebrew roots into several English words.

Noun – holiness, sanctification, saint

Verb – sanctify, purify, consecrate, set apart.

Adjective – holy, pure, sanctified, sacred.

It refers to someone or something recognized or considered different, special, and distinct. Only God is infinitely holy, special, transcendent, and pure. Only a holy God can make something holy. Both God and man can declare, or consider something to be holy. Many things in Scripture were “consecrated”, “sanctified”, “made holy” and thus called “holy”. Holy Ground, holy assembly, a holy habitation (living space), Keep the Sabbath holy, a holy nation, holy men, holy gifts, Holy Place, consecrated clothes, sanctified plates, holy offerings, consecrated altar, special anointing oil, pure incense, God’s holy name, holy angels, holy temple, holy people (saints) prophets, covenant, faith.

Applied to God, holiness points to the fact that God lives infinitely separated from all that is contrary to His own moral character and law and thus holy, special above, transcendent. It is His character or nature to be absolutely free from defect of any kind. He is holy!

Often in Scripture, the declaration or recognition of God's holiness was accompanied by graphic and frightening manifestations. Moses encountered a flaming bush in the desert followed by a voice instructing him to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground before a Holy God. The presence of a holy God made the ground holy.

Who else among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is glorious in holiness like you—so awesome in splendor, performing such wonders? Exodus 15:11

Aaron's sons met with a holy fire from a holy God.

Joshua encountered the Holy Christ and was instructed to remove his sandals. Josh 5:15

Isaiah, Daniel and Ezekiel fell on their faces after visions of a holy God on the throne.

The Apostle John struggled to describe the manifestations accompanying God's presence in the heavens.

Isaiah's encounter with a transcendent holy God on the throne in the temple shook him to his core. Isaiah realized that without some sort of intervention by God himself, he was doomed.

The same is true for us. Without some sort of intervention of God on our behalf we have no hope of relationship with a holy God. Yes, the Bible also reveals a God of mercy and love but the holiness of God will not permit him to overlook sin. He himself is infinitely separated from all that is contrary to his own nature and law which also separates us from him.

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. Isaiah 59:1-2

So where does that leave us? What are we to do?

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14

No one will see the Lord without sanctification.

Just as Isaiah needed the purifying touch of God to survive his encounter with a holy God, so does every man woman and child.

But by God's doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." 1 Corinthians 1:30,31

God created us to reflect His nature – including holiness. Adam's choice to go on his own broke the connection enabling such reflection. What Adam forfeited through rebellion, Christ restored through redemption.

Sanctification is one of the four foundational truths of the C&MA.

Christ our Savior

Christ our Sanctifier

Christ our Healer

Christ our Coming King

As image bearers, God intended that we reflect His nature which includes separation from sin and the continual practice of righteousness. Holiness and righteousness are two sides of the purity coin. The righteous absolutely conform to God's character and law. The holy or sanctified absolutely separate from anything contrary to God's character and law.

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I don't want us to just grasp concepts but practice them. Here is the official alliance doctrine on the subject.

It is the will of God that each believer should be filled with the Holy Spirit and be sanctified wholly, being separated from sin and the world and fully dedicated to the will of God, thereby receiving power for holy living and effective service. This is both a crisis and a progressive experience wrought in the life of the believer subsequent to conversion.

THE MEANING OF SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is a term which describes the process by which God applies the work of Christ to the life of the Christian in order to bring about his complete transformation from the likeness of Adam into the likeness of Jesus Christ. When we talk about holiness, purification, obedience, Christlikeness, we are talking about the same thing. Sanctification is the process by which our spirit, soul and body undergoes a transformation from the life found in Adam to the life found in Jesus Christ who is our life and our sanctification. Sanctification describes the truth of the Trinity's work in the believer to bring about our completed, full redemption of our Spirit, soul and body into the glorious heritage provided by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the destiny of every spirit transformed follower of Jesus Christ.

THE SCOPE OF SANCTIFICATION

Scripture seems to identify three aspects of our break with sin's hold on our life. Sanctification is the willful abstinence from sin at every level. Everyone sins but a regenerated spirit longs to please God in every respect; to be filled with knowledge of His will followed by a doing of His will. (Paul prayed for it in Colossians 1)

This is God's continual renewal plan for every Christian.

*So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** Philippians 2:12-13*

It is not enough for God to just declare us holy, we need to actually be holy and righteous.

1. Saints (holy ones) by calling or declaration (Positional Sanctification)

Regardless of our daily conduct, God declares us to be sanctified as He declares us to be righteous (justification).

A \$100 bill or other printed currency really has no intrinsic or real value. It is essentially just ink and paper. It has been declared to valuable by some authority. God however has intrinsic value in itself. At one level God declares us to be holy even though we are not but He is working in us to the degree that one day we will actually be holy in all our behavior. We live just like the sinless Jesus. It is a work scheduled for spirit, soul and body.

Listen to Paul's affirmation to the Corinthian church.

*To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: **Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** 1 Cor 1:2-4*

Paul used a perfect passive tense verb indicating sanctification at a point in time by someone else that remains in force. Reading the rest of the letter it is clear that they were anything but holy in their conduct. Paul addressed some serious issues bouncing around this group of people freshly plucked from a morally corrupt culture.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Scripture employs the perfect passive tense in several other places.

And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all the ones having been sanctified. Acts 20:32

to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me. Acts 26:18

By God's will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Heb 10:10

It is clear that God does a purifying work at the point of genuine faith that forever changes how God relates to us.

For by His own glory and excellence He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature (including holiness), having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 2 Peter 1:4

We are no longer called “sinners” but “saints” holy ones. God sees us not as dirty rotten rebellious sinners, but as saints who still sin and on their way to soul and body holiness.

Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. Ephesians 5:25-27

2. Saints by Conduct (Progressive Sanctification)

It is equally clear that God continually engages in the purification process.

By one offering Jesus has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Hebrews 10:14

Paul employed the perfect passive indicating an ongoing or continuous action.

it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2Co 3:17-18

Part of that likeness has to do with holiness – abstinence from sin and evil.

3. Saints by Completion (Perfected Sanctification)

At this point our conduct matches our calling.

God will bring about His promise to conform every aspect of our being to the image of Jesus.

Those whom God foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these

whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified (completed sanctification). Romans 8:29-30

being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Phi 1:6

Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Phi 3:20-21

THE MEANS OF OUR SANCTIFICATION

Who participates in this process of purification or holiness?

1. The entire Trinity contributes to the process.

The Holy Father Sanctifies

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1Th 5:23

The Father's part in the sanctification process includes protection from the evil one, engrafting truth into the soul. It is that engrafted truth that transforms the heart of His children and brings discipline into their life. The Father is the one who will see to it that the work is completed for the Son at His coming.

The Sinless Son Sanctifies

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Eph 5:25-27

*Run the race of faith by fixing your eyes on Jesus, **the author and perfecter of faith**, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2*

Through the redemptive work of Christ, we find the basis of sanctification both positionally and progressively. It was on the basis of His sacrifice that we can find the purity and cleansing necessary for relationship with a Holy God.

The Holy Spirit Sanctifies

who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. 1Pe 1:2

2. We have a responsibility in the sanctification process

A Matter of Faith

I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' Act 26:17-18

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by

believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing - if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? Gal 3:1-5

"I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me. Gal 2:20

A Matter of Spirit Empowerment

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Galatians 5:16

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Galatians 5:24-25

So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be continually filled (controlled) with the Spirit... Ephesians 5:17-18

The Holy Spirit enables us both to abstain from evil and pursue righteousness.

A matter of humble confession / repentance

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

A matter of the Word and Prayer

Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. John 17:17

And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. Jo17:19

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2

A matter of our sacrificial choice and obedience

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 1 Peter 1:22

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. James 1:21

but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. Romans 13:12-14

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship. Rom 12:1

Numerous New Testament passages instruct us to consider ourselves to be dead to sin, put away sin, stop sinning, and put to death the deeds of the flesh.

A Matter of spiritual Focus

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 1 John 3:2-3

*Therefore, **having these promises** (promises of intimate eternal fellowship with God), beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1*

*Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, **fix your hope** completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." 1 Peter 1:13-16*

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, **beholding** as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18*

A matter of Divine Discipline

It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ... He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Hebrews 12:7-11

We need to routinely embrace each of these seven things if we are to grow in holiness and become more like Jesus. It is not easy, it is a cross country obstacle course race filled with hills, valleys, straightaways, and adverse weather conditions. Don't be surprised when it gets tough. Don't focus on either the smooth patches or the steep patches. Keep your focus on the prize.

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 2 Timothy 3:12

Holiness is both our calling and destiny. God tells His children to be holy because He is holy. God calls us to be separated from all that is contrary to His law. God calls us to be holy in all our behavior. Ouch. All our behavior? That means that none of our words, attitudes, actions or thoughts violate God's standard of what is right. That includes how we treat people, habits, pursuits, activities we engage in, how we spend our resources of time and money. It includes every command directed at what we should not be doing. The New Testament is full of them.

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 1 Thes 4:3

How do I Get started?

1. Thank God for the hope that one day we will actually be like Jesus in all our behavior.
2. Ask God to expose your failure to separate from those things that run contrary to His nature.
3. Review the seven actions associated with the development of personal holiness.
4. Listen to what God has to say through His word.
5. Choose today to live differently.

Remember !

*Work out your salvation (cooperate with God, obey, work out what God worked in) with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to **will** and to **work (do)** for **His good pleasure**. (Examples) Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world... Philippians 2:12-15*