

Sanctification

Canonisation is process by which person is recognised by the Roman Catholic church as saint.

According to Roman Catholicism, 1) a person has to be dead (so if you're thinking of applying for the job of saint, start there!); but 2) before rush out and kill yourself you have to have lived an exemplary life; and 3) you must either have been a martyr or must have performed at least two miracles after your death when someone prayed to you.

According to the Oxford Dictionary a saint is a "very virtuous, kind or patient person."

Since there are different ideas on what it means to be a saint, what does the Bible teach?

1. Sainthood is for ordinary Christians

Let's take a look at some things that Paul said in his letters.

Romans 1:7

To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints

1 Corinthians 1:2

To the church of God ... called to be saints

He says similar things in 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

In every instance, he addresses his letters to saints, ordinary Christians who comprise the church, the genuine followers of Christ.

Please feel free to introduce yourself to the person next to you and say, "Hi I'm Saint ..." and put your name in there.

The word "saint" means "holy one".

So sainthood is for ordinary Christians.

You might be wondering, if we're talking about saints and holiness, what's this got to do with sanctification?

It's not obvious in English, but in Greek, all those words belong to the same word group and have the same root.

As we've seen, a saint is a holy person.

Sanctification is the process of being made holy.

2. To understand sanctification we must understand holiness

First, holiness begins with God; nothing and no one is holy in itself.

Holiness is one of what theologians call the communicable attributes of God.

In other words, it's something He can, and does, pass on to others.

Second, the basic idea is of holiness is separation / differentness.

In Isaiah 6:1, God is described as "high and lifted up".

In His thinking and His behaviour, God is utterly different from humanity.

Isaiah 55:8-9

For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

How different?

Well, how much higher are the heavens than the earth?

The nearest star, Alpha Centauri, 4.3 light years away.

Take 4.3, and multiply by 300,000, X 3600 X 24 X 365 = 40,681,440,000,000.

That's how many kilometres away Alpha Centauri is.

And that's the nearest star!

That's how different God is from us in His perfect holiness.

Doesn't that highlight the utter stupidity of trying to earn your way into heaven?

In His love, goodness, righteousness, grace, justice, mercy, etc, God is infinitely different and superior.

3. God requires us to be holy

Leviticus 11:44

Be holy, for I am holy.

Hebrews 12:14

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

So holiness is not an optional extra.

You can go to McDonalds drive-through and place an order, and they'll probably respond with something like, "Would you like fries with that? Drinks? Mashed potatoes? Gravy?"

They're all optional extras; McDonalds would like you to buy them, but you don't have to.

But God isn't saying, "I'm going to give you eternal life and all the benefits of the cross. Would you like holiness with that?"

Matthew 7:21-23

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

That's Jesus speaking.

But pastor, I thought eternal life was a free gift, not dependent on our works.

Yes, but here's what people often don't understand.

A person believes in Christ, which means that the Holy Spirit comes and resides in them, which means that they are born again, which means that their spirit is made alive, which means that they receive a new heart, new desires, and new motivations.

How is it possible for that to happen and for a person not to become holy?

This is why Paul says (in Romans 6:1-2), "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"

It's irrational to think that we can have an encounter with God, make Jesus Lord and still "do it my way."

Holiness is essential and is the natural result of a dynamic walk with the Lord.

4. How to be holy

First of all, die!

Remember I said that to be a saint, you had to die?

It's true.

That's what Romans 6 is all about and what baptism is all about.

God says, "I'm finished with the old creation. It's corrupt beyond remedy."

So we die with Christ and become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.

The old creation is totally incapable of being holy.

Second, we need the Holy Spirit.

Only the Holy Spirit can bring life and raise us up as new creations.

Third, we need God's Word.

John 17:17

Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth.

We're not just talking about Bible facts such as Methuselah was 969 when he died, Adam was 930; Isaac's wife was Rebekah.

We're talking about allowing God's Word to sink into our minds and hearts, to take root and change our behaviour so that our minds are renewed.

Obedience to God's Word brings about holiness / sanctification.

Fourth, the chastening of the Lord brings holiness.

Hebrews 12:9-10

Furthermore, we have had earthly fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? (10) For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness

There are three stages of God's chastening.

First, He corrects you by the still, small voice of His Spirit.

Next, if you didn't listen to that inner voice, He speaks to you through people.

If you still don't listen, He uses the circumstances of life to discipline you.

The final thing we need to understand about sanctification is that it's a process.

Hebrews 2:11

For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

We are all in the process of being sanctified.

Here's a non-theological definition of holiness: To love what God loves and hate what God hates.