

Convent Avenue Baptist Church
Wednesday Bible Study 4/28/10
Pastor Jesse Williams

The Articles of Faith; What we believe...

Article X. Sanctification

John 17:15-21, Romans 15:16, 1 Corinthians 1:2 & 6:9-11
Ephesians 5:24-29, 2 Timothy 2:19-21, 1 Thess. 4:1-7, Hebrews 10:10 & 13:12

The word “sanctification” is one that has been unfortunately misunderstood and misused by many within the church of today. It seems that somehow this word has been labeled or categorized as a description that is often applied to some churches that have a more charismatic style of worship. For years, I have heard people talk about “sanctified churches” as if they are somehow a different denomination among themselves. Likewise, there was also a phrase that people used when they testified that said they were “saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost.” This terminology was also labeled and characterized to be referring to a sanctified group of people who were like a separate group of Christians who have a different style of worship and rules for living their daily lives.

This article of faith teaches us that ALL churches should be sanctified churches, and ALL true Christians are indeed sanctified. To be “sanctified” does not simply refer to a particular characterization or style. Sanctification is the process by which God makes us holy. To be holy means to be set apart and totally committed to God’s purpose and will for our lives both individually and collectively as a church. Sanctification is a part of the activity that God wants to accomplish in us as a result of our salvation. While salvation is instantaneous, sanctification is the process by which God progressively makes us just like Himself; Holy. As with the other doctrinal teachings, this is only accomplished through our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. That is, we cannot sanctify ourselves, it is work of God that is made possible through Jesus Christ and is carried out by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart of believers.

We are all sanctified, and should not be ashamed or embarrassed to be described as sanctified. The world and our culture have made fun of this concept as if it is irrelevant or a “holier than thou” attitude. But in reality, being sanctified is an admission and confession that we understand that God is still working on us to make us holy, like Himself. God proclaims that we are sanctified, and then God continues to work in our lives to bring us into that reality. Sanctification gives us new ways of acting, thinking, and being. All of it does not change overnight because we still wrestle with the sinfulness of our flesh, but spiritually God is constantly converting us and transforming us into the new creations that the Bible talks about. Regarding sanctification it is important to remember the following;

1) Sanctification is a continual, progressive process of God’s work in us.

It is interesting to note how the Bible calls the church in Corinth “sanctified” and “saints” and then goes on to describe their sins and ungodly actions! This lets us know that while God pronounces our new identity, we are not yet all that we are supposed to be. God continues to work on us and in us in the midst of our moral and spiritual failures and imperfections. When we get saved, we are not perfect right away! But God does have an expectation that we improve and become more like Him as time goes by. The longer we walk with God, the more

like Him we should be! We can see then how it must truly grieve the heart of God when we resist His will for us and continually rebel against Him when we truly know better. God is in the process of trying to work in our lives for our good and make us more like Him, and when we sin, we rebel and reject Him. The Christian life is one of self-denial in which we must constantly learn to say no to self and yes to God; the only way that we will be able to be obedient like that is if we mature and grow in our relationship to God. It should be the desire of every Christian to be more and more like Jesus every day. We ought to be able to look back over our lives and see how we are MORE like Jesus today than we were yesterday, last week, last month or last year.

2) Sanctification comes as we embrace the truth of God's word.

The Bible, God's word is the blueprint and guide that shows us how to live like God wants us to live. The word of God sanctifies us because it is a light that guides us in the way that God wants us to go. If the Bible tells us to do something, we can trust that doing it will help us to grow to be more like God. If the Bible tells us not to do something then we can trust that doing it is working against the process of becoming more like Jesus. The more we get into the word of God, and let the word of God get into us; the more we are able to act, think and be like God wants us to be. If we don't know God's word, we can't be fully sanctified properly the way God created us to be because we will inevitably break various parts of the blueprint that God has given us. That's why it is possible for people to be in the church, but not be like Jesus! Our culture nowadays, even in the church is largely biblically illiterate. When we don't know God's word and follow our own blueprint, we end up becoming who WE want to be instead of who God wants us to be. Faith comes by hearing the word of God and embracing its truth. When we do that, then the Holy Spirit has a strong foundation from which to work in our hearts and minds.

3) The Holy Spirit sanctifies us in our hearts and minds.

The Holy Spirit is God, and what a blessing that God lives in us! Every day, as we live in the presence of God we are being molded and shaped because of the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. We are not 100% transformed and converted in an instant, but the presence of the Holy Spirit does His perfect work in our lives and progressively breaks down sinful strongholds that are robbing us of the fullness of God's image in us. Every day, the presence of the Holy Spirit regulates our minds and guides our hearts and actions. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins, brings things to our remembrance, moves us to take Godly actions, tells us when to sit still and wait, and even helps us love and forgive one another. The Holy Spirit even prays for us when we don't know what to pray for! All of this activity and more is a part of God sanctifying us and making us Holy. It is God's will for us to be sanctified until we are just like Him.