

What Does It Mean to be Sanctified?

[Hebrews 10:1-14](#)

Hebrews, Day 33

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

*“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;
in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.
Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”*

When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

- Hebrews 10:1-14, ESV

Christians use language we all think we understand but sometimes we really don't. It reminds me of a story from years ago of a child who was leaving church and asked her mom why God was so tired. The little girl's mom was really confused as to where her daughter would have gotten this idea, so she asked, "What makes you think God is tired?" The little girl quickly replied, "Well, in church, we sing, 'He is exhausted, the king is exhausted on high.'"

One of the Christian buzz words we use that many of us don't understand - and that the world around us really doesn't understand - is "sanctified." When the world hears Christians use the word sanctified, they probably think we mean "self-righteous and holier-than-thou." When Christians use the word, we often use it to mean "more spiritually mature." I'm afraid neither understanding of this wonderful word is really biblical or helpful.

Hebrews 10 uses the word "sanctified" twice, in two different ways, both tied directly to the willing, all-sufficient self-sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. First of all, Hebrews 10 repeats the already established truth that Jesus came willingly in God's plan to set aside the old covenant system of sacrifices tied to the Tabernacle and Temple. That system was only a shadow of the good things to come, while Jesus brought the reality in His own flesh.

Jesus was able to do away with the system of sacrifices and offerings offered according to the Law because He came to establish something better. He came to accomplish what all the blood of bulls and

goats could never accomplish. What did Jesus accomplish? One way Hebrews describes what Jesus did for us is by the word "sanctified." *"And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."*

So, this sanctified is a past tense accomplished reality. But what does it mean? The most simple definition is "made holy," which means "set apart by God for God." In order to be set apart by God for God, we have to be acceptable to God, which means we need to be cleansed of our sin and purified in the sight of God. So, to be sanctified is something only God can do for us, and it requires a cleansing, which Jesus accomplished on the cross.

While verse 10 uses the word sanctified as a past reality, verse 14 uses the term to describe an ongoing present experience: *"For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified."* Here, the accomplished reality is nothing less than our perfection, and the evidence that we have been perfected is the ongoing reality of our progress in sanctification, being made more and more holy.

Is this a contradiction or confusion? No. Jesus has sanctified us in the sight of God. His sacrifice of Himself in our place has made us perfect in the eyes of God for all time. This is our accomplished sanctification. Yet we are still being made holy in our actual character. We are still being cleansed in heart and behavior, day-by-day. The foundation of our accomplished sanctification is actually the basis for our progress in experiencing sanctification in our daily lives.

It's wonderful good news that gives us powerful hope on our worst days. We have been made perfect by Christ. We have been sanctified by one offering for all time. This assures us that, however many times we may stumble and fall, we will continue to progress in our sanctification until we personally reach the goal Christ has already secured for us.