

Holiness: Sanctified Living

HOPE813 FAITH WALK RESOURCES

"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'" — 1 Peter 1:15-16 (NKJV)

Introduction

Holiness is one of the most misunderstood words in the Christian vocabulary — often reduced to a list of external rules, or dismissed as legalism from another era. But biblical holiness is neither. It is the process, begun by grace and continued by grace, of being made like Christ in actual character, not just standing before God. At HOPE813, sanctification is central to how we understand the Christian life, not a side topic for the especially devoted.

Justification and Sanctification Are Not the Same Thing

Justification is the moment God declares a sinner righteous through faith in Christ — a legal, once-for-all reality (Romans 5:1). Sanctification is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit conforming that believer's actual character to the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Wesleyan theology has always insisted that grace does not stop at the courtroom. God does not merely change our status; He intends to change us. Both are entirely by grace — sanctification is not self-improvement by willpower, but the Spirit's ongoing work, received the same way justification was: by faith.

The Means of Grace

Sanctification is not passive. God has given ordinary channels — "means of grace" — through which His sanctifying grace ordinarily flows: prayer, Scripture, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian community. John Wesley taught that these are not the source of grace but the means by which we position ourselves to receive it, the way opening a window doesn't create sunlight but lets it in. A believer who neglects these means should not expect to grow, not because grace is earned, but because they've closed the window.

Entire Sanctification and the Pursuit of Holy Love

The Wesleyan-Holiness tradition holds that God's grace can bring a believer to a place of entire sanctification — a decisive work of grace, distinct from and subsequent to conversion, in which the believer is cleansed from inbred sin and their heart is filled with perfect love toward God and neighbor (1 Thessalonians 5:23). This is not sinless perfection in the sense of never making a mistake or growing further — Wesley himself distinguished between "sin properly so-called" (willful transgression) and infirmities that remain part of our human limitation. It is the purifying of motive: a heart no

longer divided between loving God and loving self, but wholly given to holy love. This grace is received by faith, the same way justifying grace is, and it continues to be worked out and matured across a lifetime.

Holiness Is Relational, Not Just Behavioral

Because holiness is about the heart, not merely the hands, it shows up as much in how we treat people as in what we abstain from. 1 John 4:20 is blunt: a person cannot claim to love God while hating a brother. Social holiness — care for the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized — was central to Wesley's own theology and ministry, not a modern add-on. A holiness that only polices personal behavior while ignoring how we treat others has missed half the picture.

Reflection Questions

1. Have you thought of holiness mainly as a list of don'ts? How does understanding it as Christlike character change that?
2. Which "means of grace" — prayer, Scripture, fasting, communion, community — have you been neglecting lately?
3. Is there a "divided love" in your heart right now — something competing with wholehearted love for God?
4. Where might God be calling you to extend holy love toward someone you find difficult to love?

This Week

Choose one means of grace you've neglected and commit to it daily this week — not as a performance, but as opening a window to receive what God wants to do in you.

Closing Prayer

Holy God, You have called us to be holy as You are holy — not by our effort alone, but by Your grace at work in us. Purify our hearts, unite our love for You, and conform us more each day to the image of Christ. Teach us to walk in the means of grace You have given, and to love as You love. In Jesus' name, Amen.