

123 Steps

**The Foundational
Christian Experiences**

Have you received the
three foundational
experiences that
God has provided for
His followers?

Salvation

The Bible clearly teaches that we are all born in sin. We read in Romans 3:23, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." We face the penalty of death because of our sins, for the Bible also says that the soul that sinneth shall die. Each of us needs to be saved-granted pardon from that death sentence and delivered from the power of Satan.

Salvation is not accomplished by joining a church, accepting Christ, or simply turning over a new leaf and deciding to do better. To be born again is to be saved from our sins, forgiven, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus. When this happens, we are changed in a moment of time. This definite transformation is likened in the Bible to a new birth.

In John 3 we read an account of Jesus' conversation with a man named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. Christ told him, "Ye must be born again." Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" He didn't understand what Jesus was talking about, but Jesus explained that He was not referring to physical birth. He meant that man, because of the sin in his heart, needs to have a spiritual rebirth.

"Spiritual rebirth" and "born again" are other phrases that mean salvation. This salvation is possible for us because of the sacrifice Jesus Christ made on Calvary. He took the death penalty for our sins and died so that we might be free.

We receive the pardon He purchased for us when we repent and turn away from our sins. We come before a holy God and say, "Have mercy on me. Forgive me for the wrongs I have done. I turn my back on them." God forgives those who wholeheartedly desire to turn away from any actions that would displease Him and who are willing to submit to His direction and will for their lives.

God is not a respecter of persons. He says, "Him that cometh to me I will in 110 wise cast out" (John 6:37). It doesn't matter what your background has been, what church you have been in, or what kind of life you have lived,

salvation is available to everyone.

How will you know you are saved? The Bible tells us, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, letting us know that we have been converted. We have a desire and purpose to live differently. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Corinthians5:17).

If you are a child of God, you have been freed from the clutches of the devil. You have power to go and sin no more. Thank God for His forgiveness and for the salvation He has made available!

Sanctification

When we believe on Jesus Christ and become born-again Christians, the sins that we have committed are forgiven. That is the experience of salvation. However, the carnal nature inherited from Adam and Eve still needs to be cleansed. Because they transgressed God's commandment, Adam and Eve became sinners possessing a depraved nature, and that nature of sin was passed on to the whole human race. This can only be removed through sanctification.

Sanctification makes us pure - holy of heart - by removing the inherited inward tendency to sin. We

are saved because Jesus Christ died on Calvary. Our sanctification, as well as our salvation, is available because Jesus, "that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12). Holiness of heart comes about because God, through Christ's sacrifice on a hill outside of Jerusalem, made a way that we can be freed from the depravity of human nature. We must not disregard or minimize this doctrine of sanctification, because it is essential in our Christian lives.

We do not claim that sanctification makes us humanly perfect. We do not say everything we do is exactly right from that point on. No, we are still human and thus subject to human error. We forget. We make mistakes in judgment. However, God gives us a holy purpose and purity of motive.

One meaning of the root word translated sanctify is "to set apart or dedicate to a holy cause." When our church building was dedicated, we had a dedication service, praying that God might bless the building. That's what might be called sanctifying the place, dedicating it for a holy purpose. In the same manner, we, as individuals must dedicate ourselves for a holy purpose. We humbly ask God to accept the offering of our lives and our service. We separate ourselves from the world, determining to shun every

appearance of evil. This is the role we play in preparing for our heart's purification.

Then, when we have made all the necessary consecrations, God cleanses our inner man. This experience of sanctification is an instantaneous work of grace whereby the inbred nature of sin is purged from our lives. The result is that our inner tendencies toward sin are no longer present. The glory of God fills our soul when we are sanctified, causing us to know that the work is done. Paul referred to this part of sanctification when he wrote to the Thessalonians, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23).

The doctrine of holiness is vital. We want to be sure that we are saved and sure that we are sanctified.

The Baptism of the Holy Ghost

God's Word is definite about the importance of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This is a different work from salvation or sanctification, and it is given for a different reason. Salvation is to justify. Sanctification is to cleanse. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is to empower, and the outward witness of this experience is that of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance.

Jesus' last recorded words to His disciples were a command that they should wait in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit. His followers obeyed. We read in Acts 2: 1, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Read that verse carefully in the King James Version of the Bible. Note especially the words, "one accord/" Jesus had prayed that His disciples would be sanctified, and here we find that they were all in one accord in one place. In other words, they had been sanctified.

The Spirit of God came down, because those' who were praying had prepared their hearts to receive. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled ail the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" {Acts 2:2-4).

Some people teach that the baptism of the Holy Ghost was given only for the establishment of the Early Church. However, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter told the thousands who heard him preach that the promise was to them, and to their children, and to all who were afar off, "even as many as the Lord our

God shall call" (Acts 2:39). That includes believers of our day.

God's Word teaches us that the Holy Spirit is given to comfort and to counsel us. He will guide us into all truth and give us power and ability to be effective witnesses for Christ. He will bring to our memory the things that Jesus taught. He will direct our steps, give us hope and spiritual protection, help our infirmities, and bear us up in our weaknesses.

Are you saved? Are you sanctified? Have you received the baptism of the Holy Ghost? If not, seek God for these experiences.

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