SANCTIFICATION: THE WORK
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SCRIPTURE

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Sanctification is inseparable from regeneration; where there is one, the other must also exist. Sanctification is the process of making holy, whether in the OT or the NT. God's holiness is complete, comparable to no one else, and is incompatible with sin. Man's holiness is progressive as it seeks to match the holiness of God in dedicating everything to Him. Both Testaments multiply references to God's holiness as the foundation for human holiness. The believer progresses in his own sanctification through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and through attention to the Scripture, but humans also have a role in sanctification. They must live out what they possess by the grace of God.

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Introduction

James calls believers to be alert to the harm of being spiritually adulterous or friends with the world (Jas 4:4). Instead, the believer should seek to be a friend of Christ—he ought to submit to God, draw near to God, cleanse his hands, and purify his heart (vv. 7–8). As the children of God, Christians must demonstrate a Christlikeness in their behavior—a behavior that avoids entanglement with the world. In his "Forward" to the Shepherds' Conference 2002 reprint edition of J. C. Ryle's classic book, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, & Roots*, John MacArthur writes,

> More than a century has passed since Ryle's *Holiness* was first published, and today the book is more timely than ever. All the erroneous notions Ryle confronted still flourish among evangelicals. Wrong notions about sanctification are still frustrating believers in their quest for genuine practical holiness. And that is why this superb nineteenth-century work is still a fitting antidote to much of what ails mainstream evangelicalism at the

179

beginning of the twenty-first century.[1]

Ryle summarized the issue of sanctification by declaring, "He that is born again and made a new creature receives a new nature and a new principle, and always lives a new life. . . . In a word, where there is no sanctification there is no regeneration, and where there is no holy life there is no new birth."[2] Positional sanctification involves what is initial, inward, and permanent at salvation. Positional (or, initial) sanctification demands progressive sanctification—the demonstration of an outward and progressive holiness in the life of the saint. In regeneration (the new birth), both the incorruptible seed of the Word of God (1 Pet 1:23) and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8; Titus 3:5) play a role. Accordingly, the same two agents involved in initial sanctification bring about the progressive sanctification of the believer.

Defining Sanctification

Linguistically, conceptually, and theologically, holiness comprises the root of sanctification. By definition, sanctification refers to the process of making holy. Thus, a proper understanding of sanctification must start with the meaning of "holy" (Hebrew: קָדֵשׁ, *qā d̄ēš*; Greek: ἅγιος, *hagios*). Potentially, two different Greek words convey the concept of holiness. In the ancient Greek games, when judges found it impossible to determine a victor, the presiding officials assigned the prize to one of the gods, thus making that prize "holy" (ἱερός, *hieros*), in other words, set apart to a deity, because no one but a god could determine who had won. Thus, *hieros* could refer to a "dead heat"—a tie without resolution.[3] In the New Testament (NT), the same Greek root occurs in words for "priest" (ἱερεύς, *hiereus*; Matt 12:4) and "temple" (ἱερόν, *hieron*; Matt 4:5). Paul employs a form of the adjective in 1 Cor 9:13 to speak of "sacred service" and in 2 Tim 3:15 to identify the "writings" (Scripture) as "sacred." Scripture writers do not use *hieros* as the most common Greek term for holiness, but the term is available to them.

Hagios occurs far more frequently (over 230 times in the NT). It forms the foundational root for "holiness" (ἁγιωσύνη, *hagiōsunē*; 2 Cor 7:1), "sanctification" (ἁγιασμός, *hagiasmos*; 1 Thess 4:3-7), and "make holy" or "sanctify" (ἁγιάζω, *hagiazō*; John 17:17). "Saint" translates *hagios* when it is used as a title for the Christian believer.

First, holiness refers to that which is totally other, that which one dedicates completely to God alone. The Scriptures identify holiness as an attribute fundamental

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[1] "Forward" in John Charles Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, & Roots* (1879; reprint, Moscow, Idaho: Charles Nolan Publishers, 2002) viii–ix.

[2] Ibid., 21.

[3] Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, Roderick McKenzie, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 822.

to God's character. According to James Montgomery Boice, "The Bible itself . . . calls God *holy* more than anything else. *Holy* is the epithet most often affixed to his name"[4] (cf. Rev 15:4 and Matt 6:9). Indeed, the title "the Holy One" (Job 6:10, קָדוֹשׁ, *qā dôš*) appears to be one of the oldest names for God. Occurring most often in the title "the Holy One of Israel," this name comprises the key divine title in the Book of Isaiah (1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; etc.—a total of 30 times). Holiness sets God apart from His creation; it distinguishes Him from everything. God's holiness, therefore, involves proclaiming Him as "Wholly Other." In other words, as D. A. Carson declares, "not to revere God as holy is not to revere God as God."[5]

Secondly, holiness identifies God's absolute moral perfection. He is without sin. In short, the two aspects of God's holiness identify Him as both *incomparable* to others and *incompatible* with sin.[6] As William Shedd explains, God's holiness cannot be defined the same way as man's holiness. Christians' holiness, as believers who have been sanctified and proceed to grow in holiness, relates to their conformity to God's own moral standards or, as Shedd puts it, "moral law." "Holiness in God must, consequently, be defined as conformity to his own perfect nature. . . . He is righteous by nature and of necessity."[7] His sanctity consists of the purest and highest form of holiness.

Biblical Demonstration of God's Holiness

Until a person understands what the holiness of God involves, he will have difficulty comprehending what his own holiness should involve. The OT depicts God as unique and absolutely incomparable—He alone is God, the Exalted One, the Most High, the Creator, the King, and the Redeemer (Isa 40:12-28; 41:1-29; 43:1-13; 44:6-8; 45:1-7; 45:18–46:13). The Servant passages in Isaiah focus on the identification of God as God alone, unique, the Only One, sovereign, Lord and Master of creation, of history, of redemption, and of judgment. These passages in Isaiah provide comfort for the people by majoring on this description of God. Only in that kind of God can hope reside. Since He has perfect control over all things, His people can rely on Him for peace, rest, comfort, and forgiveness.

Being completely righteous and holy, God loves righteousness (Ps 11:7; cp. v. 6), but hates sin (Amos 5:21-23). Sin is an abomination to God. It is what He

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[4]James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1986) 125.

[5]D. A. Carson, "I Peter," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) 1018.

[6]Cf. Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2006) 56: "By *holy* at least two things are meant: (1) that God is separate from all else that exists . . . and (2) that his holiness is translated into moral and ethical perfection."

[7]William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3 vols., Classic Reprint (1888; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971) 1:362.

abhors. Sin is violent, disobedient, immoral, crass, crude, and filthy. Sin produces guilt and separates from God. Therefore, He judges sin and sinners in His wrath (Isa 5:16; Ezek 28:22—to execute judgment means to manifest holiness; Rev 6:10). Divine wrath exhibits divine holiness; by it God shows that He is holy (Num 20:13—to judge means to prove holy; 1 Sam 6:20). Only One Who is sinless has the right, authority, or capacity to judge sin. Divine judgment originates in God's total otherness and His total uniqueness and control. When God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, He asked Job if he had been present when the Lord created the earth and all things that are in it (Job 38:4). Then God asked Job whether he had ever commanded the dawn (v. 12), bound the chains of the Pleiades (v. 31), led forth the constellations in their seasons (v. 32), or fixed the ordinances of the constellations over the Earth (v. 33). God confronted Job with his having spoken as though he should be justified while God should be condemned (40:8). Coming to the end of His revelation to Job, God suggests that Job clothe himself with majesty (v. 9), pour out his anger on the proud (v. 11), and tread down the wicked (v. 12). Only the Creator can judge the wicked. Unless Job had created and had control over creation, he cannot judge the arrogant and wicked. Job can save himself only if he can both create and judge as God has done and will do (v. 14). Hannah confessed such things of God in her prayer: "There is no one holy like the LORD, indeed, there is no one besides You" (1 Sam 2:2). Only the Creator can judge; only the Judge can redeem.

A proper view of the saints' sanctification must include an accurate understanding of the holiness of God. His holiness is the foundation of believers' holiness, as Peter's admonition recalls: "but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior" (1 Pet 1:15). MacArthur concurs: "If we don't understand the holiness of God, we won't understand our own sinfulness."[8]

Once the student of Scripture has identified the concept of holiness, he can develop the meaning of sanctification by applying the biblical concept of holiness to sanctification. MacArthur makes the connection by stating that "*Sanctification* does not mean perfection. It means separation. It speaks of being set apart from sin and set apart unto God."[9] Thus, John Walvoord writes that the "three main ideas of consecration, separation, and purification combine in the central idea of holiness."[10]

Securing Sanctification

By what means does the believer progress in sanctification in this life? How

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[8] John MacArthur, Jr., *God: Coming Face to Face with His Majesty* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1993) 47.

[9] John MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1993) 167.

[10] John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991) 210.

does he become more set apart to God and set apart from sin? Scripture speaks of living a life of holiness as an obligation, not an option.

Substantiating Synergism in Sanctification

Three agents work together (i.e., synergize) to sanctify the believer: the Spirit, the Scriptures, and the saint. The saint cannot attain sanctification without the Spirit and the Scriptures. Those two agents are primary in the process of making the believer more and more holy.

The Spirit's Role. All three Persons of the Godhead act as agents of sanctification: (1) The Father provides ultimate sanctification (1 Thess 5:23),[11] (2) the Son involves Himself in initial/positional sanctification (Eph 5:26), and (3) the Spirit provides initial/positional sanctification (2 Thess 2:13).[12] To examine progressive (outward) sanctification, one needs to remember the continuity of sanctification between the two testaments.

In the OT, God reveals that the Holy Spirit provides the solution to impurity stemming from the sinful human spirit (Ps 51:10-12; cp. Isa 32:15-17).[13] David's confession of his sin involves a plea that the Spirit of God would aid in his forgiveness, restoration, and sanctification. Without the Spirit of God, David cannot experience purification or sanctification. The NT merely expresses the Holy Spirit's role with greater clarity and specificity; it does not reveal a new or different agent for sanctification. As with many doctrines, the NT expands upon that which God has already revealed in the OT and clarifies the relationship of those doctrines to the completed redemptive work of Jesus the Messiah. God does not change the means of sanctification in the NT. Instead, He increases the visibility of the Holy Spirit's role and explains what necessitates the Spirit's involvement. The Lord explains the foundation of sanctification in Christ's work that allows one to live a new life.

By reason of the frequency of mention in the NT, the Holy Spirit appears to act as the primary divine agent for progressive sanctification.[14] In the words of Millard Erickson, progressive sanctification means "the continued transformation of moral and spiritual character so that the life of the believer actually comes to mirror the standing which he or she already has in God's sight."[15] Association of the Holy Spirit with sanctification occurs in Romans 8:1-16 though neither ἁγιάζειν

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[11] Richard Mayhue, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Focus on the Bible (Geanies House, U.K.: Christian Focus, 1999) 150.

[12] Ibid., 185; Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas, Tex.: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948) 7:277-78.

[13] John N. Oswalt, *Called to Be Holy: A Biblical Perspective* (Nappanee, Ind.: Francis Asbury, 1999) 67-69.

[14] Cf. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* 219.

[15] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) 875.

(*hagiazein*) nor ἀγιασμός (*hagiasmos*; see 6:19, 22) occurs in these verses.[16] Related passages include 1 Cor 6:11; 1 Thess 4:7-8; 2 Thess 2:13; and 1 Pet 1:2. Sanctification is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit whereby He produces in the believer "a positive likeness of Christ."[17]

According to Rom 15:16, the Holy Spirit sanctifies Paul's gospel ministry to the Gentiles. Thus, sanctification involves more than just the process of making the believer holy—it also includes the attribution of holiness to the service and ministry of the believer. In other words, the believer's service for God depends for its acceptability upon the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit. Cranfield views this text as a reference to an offering made by Christ with Paul assisting and that the gift of the Holy Spirit sanctified the Gentile Christians.[18] He also notes that

> The verb ἀγιάζειν occurs in the Pauline corpus only here and in 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; 7:14 (*bis*); Eph 5:26; 1 Th 5:23; 1 Tim 4:5; 2 Tim 2:21. All these occurrences are in the passive except for those in Ephesians and 1 Thessalonians. It is God who sanctifies (makes ἅγιος).[19]

Positional sanctification (cf. 1 Cor 6:11) enables Christians to obtain progressive sanctification. As John MacArthur explains, "To be sanctified is to be made holy inwardly and to be able, in the Spirit's power, to live a righteous life outwardly. Before a person is saved, he has no holy nature and no capacity for holy living."[20] Philippians 2:12-13 mentions this same process. It is God who energizes the believer to desire and to perform God's will. That work consists of "working out" one's salvation (v. 12). That outworking takes what has already been planted within and makes it visible in how one lives.[21] In other words, it is the salvation that is already accomplished by Christ that must be made manifest in how the believer lives—initial sanctification displays itself outwardly in progressive sanctification. Elsewhere MacArthur also writes, "This is the Spirit's work, to set us apart from sin,

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[16]C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., ICC (London: T&T Clark, 2004) 2:757. Schreiner counters Cranfield's view that Paul assists Christ ("The sacrifice offered to God by Christ," 2:757) by presenting three reasons why the text presents Paul performing the priestly duty (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998] 766).

[17]Erickson, *Christian Theology* 875, 967-68.

[18]Cranfield, *Epistle to the Romans* 2:757.

[19]Ibid.

[20]John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians* (Chicago: Moody, 1984) 143.

[21]The Greek for "work out" in Phil 2:12 is κατεργάζομαι (*katergazomai*). In Rom 1:27 the internal unnatural desire is worked out in indecent acts of homosexuality and in 7:8 the law causes the sinful nature to display itself in covetousness. Likewise, the absence of good internally results in the absence of an outworking of good in the life (7:18).

consecrate us, make us holy. He is conforming us to the image of Christ"[22] (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18). Indeed, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) consists of the virtues inherent in the Savior's own character, His love, His joy, His peace, His patience, His kindness, His goodness, His faithfulness, His gentleness, and His self-control.

However, the Holy Spirit is not the only agent for sanctification. The Triune God employs union with Christ (1 Cor 1:2, 30), the Word (John 17:17; Eph 5:26), the death of Christ (1 John 1:7, Gal 6:14), and a believer's choice (Heb 12:14; 2 Tim 2:21-22) to accomplish progressive sanctification.[23]

The Scripture's Role. The Word of God acts as the co-agent of sanctification both initially and progressively. What is the exact role of the Word of God in the process of present, progressive sanctification? Sometimes the disagreement comes down to whether or not Mosaic Law possesses a role in personal sanctification. Does Mosaic Law possess a role in personal sanctification?

The Lutheran tradition seeks to avoid confusing law and gospel, since such confusion can result in an increase of legalism.[24] As Moisés Silva points out,

> Even the Lutheran standards recognize the so-called "third use of the Law," namely, that although believers have been "set free from the curse and constraint of the Law, they are not, nevertheless, in that account without Law, inasmuch as the Son of God redeemed them for the very reason that they might meditate on the Law of God day and night, and continually exercise themselves in the keeping thereof" (The Formula of Concord, 1576, Article VI).[25]

While Mosaic Law does not provide the Christian's primary authority for living a godly life (cp. Gal 3:13, 23-25), God has assigned a role for all Scripture, including Mosaic Law (2 Tim 3:15-17; cp. Matt 7:21; Mark 3:35).[26] The profitability of the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16-17) results from the fact that the Word of God rebukes,

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[22]MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel* 167.

[23]Chafer, *Systematic Theology* 7:278.

[24]Moisés Silva, "Sanctification," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. by Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, 2:1898-1902 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988) 2:1900.

[25]Ibid. See, also, Anthony A. Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views of Sanctification*, by Melvin E. Dieter et al., Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) 85-86. "The Christian life, we conclude, must be a law-formed life. . . . The law, therefore, is one of the most important means whereby God sanctifies us" (ibid., 88).

[26]John F. Walvoord, "Response to Hoekema," in *Five Views of Sanctification*, by Melvin E. Dieter et al., Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) 101: "[I]n general all can agree that Christians are under moral law, as indicated clearly in the New Testament. While moral law condemns, it also demonstrates the holiness of God and provides a standard for the Christian life." On the fallacy of dividing the Law into moral, civil, and ceremonial, see William D. Barrick, "The Mosaic Covenant," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 10/2 (Fall 1999): 230-32.

reproves, corrects, and instructs in righteousness. Those Scriptures consist primarily of the OT. Therefore, they include the law. The law is profitable and of use in equipping the man (or woman) of God for every good work. Iain Murray concludes that "the law, ended for our justification, is far from ended in sanctification."[27]

Psalm 19:7-13 (Hebrews 8–14) presents the OT's own revelation concerning the role of special revelation (especially the *torah* of the OT) in the saint's sanctification. The psalmist declares that special (written) revelation converts the soul (v. 7a), thus making the naïve wise (v. 7b; cp. 2 Tim 3:15, "the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation"). This produces joy of heart (v. 8a; cp. 1 Thess 1:6) and illumination (v. 8b; cp. Eph 1:18). Verse 9a then describes the Word of Yahweh as enduring—attributing to special revelation a quality rather than continuing the identification of the work performed by the Word (vv. 7-8). Verse 9b unexpectedly alters the verb to a perfect, in contrast to the preceding five participles. Most translations treat the verb as a stative ("are righteous"). The same Hebrew verb root (צדק, *zdq*) occurs once in the Niphal (Dan 8:14) where it has the meaning "made right" or "justified."[28] Therefore, if the same factitive sense carries over to a context like Psalm 19:9 (Hebrews 10), the final clause might be translated as "made right completely." The following context (vv. 10-13) focuses on how the Word warns Yahweh's servant (v. 11), so that he does not commit sins of ignorance (v. 12) or arrogance (v. 13). Instead, the servant can become blameless (v. 13)—the same quality attributed to Yahweh's instruction (v. 7). "Make righteous completely" falls within the realm of progressive sanctification. Shedd says that "holiness is a general term denoting that quality in God whereby God is right (*rectus*) in himself, and in all his actions."[29]

The clearest text occurs in the high priestly prayer of Christ in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." Thus, the Word of God sanctifies. Both in the OT and in the NT, the Word of God produces holiness. OT law demands sanctification, a life of holiness.[30] Interestingly, the text in Ps 19:9, like John 17:17, describes the Word as "truth" just before specifying that it "makes righteous completely."

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[27] Iain H. Murray, *The Old Evangelicalism* (Carlisle, Penn.: Banner of Truth Trust, 2005) 91.

[28] Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., rev. by Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm, trans. and ed. by M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 2000) 2:1003. Biblical Hebrew possesses a number of stative verbs with causative implications in Qal: לבש, "clothed" or "put on clothing" (Ps 93:1); חזק, "strong" or "gave strength" (2 Chron 28:20); יבש, "dry up" (Hos 13:15). Even fientives in Qal can be causative: עבד, "destroy"; עצב, "cause pain, hurt").

[29] Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* 1:364.

[30] Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007) 382. Waltke cites Paul A. Wright, "Exodus 1–24 (A Canonical Study)" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Vienna, Austria, 1993) 199.

A similar function of the Word of God appears in Paul's first epistle to Timothy when he writes concerning food, "[F]or it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim 4:5). The Word of God can and does make something, or someone, holy.

The Saint's Role. Silva identifies the basic issue involving agency in sanctification as a matter of the human role in sanctification.[31] What role can people play? Obviously, they cannot sanctify themselves. Without the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures, no one can be holy. Roman Catholicism stresses the cleansing power of baptism and good works. Meanwhile, advocates of the Victorious Life Movement focus on the believer's passivity in sanctification.[32] Philippians 2:12-13, while stating that God does work in the believer, also indicates that God empowers the believer to work at the task of manifesting inward godliness or holiness outwardly. In fact, an imperative governs the entire statement: κατεργάζεσθε (*katergazesthe*), "work out" (v. 12). The force of this verb appears in Rom 4:15 where Paul explains how the Mosaic Law produces (works out) wrath. In Rom 7:8 the apostle uses the same verb to express how sin works itself out in covetousness. In verses 17 and 20 indwelling sin works out its effects in the apostle's life. Again in Rom 15:18 the indwelling Christ accomplishes the proclamation of the Gospel to the Gentiles through the apostle Paul.[33]

Silva admits that

> Sanctification requires discipline, concentration, and effort, as is clear by the many exhortations of Scripture, especially those where the Christian life is described with such figures as running and fighting (1 Cor 9:24-27; Eph 6:10-17). On the other hand, men must always resist the temptation to assume that they in effect sanctify themselves, that spiritual power comes from within them and that they may therefore rely on their own strength. This is a difficult tension, though no more puzzling than the paradox of prayer ("Why pray when God, who knows our needs and who is all-wise and sovereign, will always do what is best anyway?"). Yet perhaps the real "secret" of holiness consists precisely in learning to keep that balance: relying thoroughly on *God* as the true agent in sanctification while faithfully discharging one's *personal* responsibility.[34]

How can a believer be holy?

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[31]Silva, "Sanctification" 2:1900.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Cf. Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1997) 424-29. Demarest summarizes the saint's involvement in the following fashion: "Sanctification is a cooperative venture; the Spirit blesses believers with sanctifying grace, but the latter must faithfully cooperate therewith. Faith alone justifies; but faith joined with our concerted efforts sanctifies" (425).

[34]Silva, "Sanctification" 2:1900.

First, the believer possesses initial sanctification (1 Cor 6:11). Initial sanctification provides a basis for the believer's participation in the process of progressive sanctification. Being sanctified and justified, the believer must live out what he or she now possesses by the grace of God. Secondly, the Scripture exhorts the believer to complete his holiness (2 Cor 7:1). This completion involves more than mere cleansing or purification. Charles Hodge interprets 2 Cor 7:1 so as to identify the saint's role in his or her own progressive sanctification. He explains that, although the Scriptures often ascribe to God the role of purification, such references do not exclude the agency of God's people. Indeed, "If God's agency in sanctification does not arouse and direct ours; if it does not create the desire for holiness, and strenuous efforts to attain it, we may be sure that we are not its subjects."[35]

Paul refers to the sanctification process itself in 2 Cor 3:18 by referring to the Holy Spirit's transformation of believers into Christlikeness from the time they have been justified until they are glorified. Such Christlikeness comes by degrees, "from glory to glory." Unlike initial sanctification, it is not instantaneous. This is progressive sanctification—it develops over time. "Holiness, in a word," observes Bruce Demarest, "is Christlikeness daily manifested in the midst of a godless world."[36] Additional NT texts that relate progressive sanctification to Christlikeness include Rom 8:29; Gal 4:19; and Eph 4:13, 15.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews utilizes an imperative to convey instruction for sanctifying oneself—believers must pursue sanctification: "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" (12:14). Thus, as MacArthur explains, "We dare not view sanctification as something optional."[37] Note the kind of holiness about which the author of Hebrews writes, "without which no one will see the Lord." All too commonly, believers pursue a public display of holiness that says more about what they think of themselves rather than how they view God. Ostentatious devotional exercises might include public praying and giving merely for the purpose of gaining the approval of men, rather than providing evidence of holiness.[38]

As Iain Murray declares, "The regenerate man loves God, loves holiness, loves the Bible, loves the godly, because it is his nature to do so."[39] However, pursuit involves more than just loving and desiring holiness or attempting to display outwardly what one already has inwardly through justification and initial sanctifica-

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[35] Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 174.

[36] Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* 407.

[37] MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel* 168.

[38] See Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 536-37.

[39] Murray, *The Old Evangelicalism* 23.

tion. The believer must pour his energy, his efforts, his minds, and his being into being holy. Human agency can never accomplish self-sanctification, since only divine power can sanctify.[40] In summary,

    a.   The Spirit of God makes us holy (sanctified) as we behold (fix our attention on) God's holiness in Jesus Christ.

    b.   When we fix our attention on our Savior's holiness, we become like Him—we begin to delight in imitating His holy example (cf. 1 Thess 4:1-3).

    c.   Our sanctification is gradual and increasing in this life.[41]

    d.   Total holiness becomes our character only when we at last see Jesus (1 John 3:2).

How should believers manifest the *incomparable* aspect of holiness? Christians belong irrevocably to God. They are His people. Therefore, they should live in a fashion that demonstrates a difference from the lives of unbelievers. The OT and levitical law propagate such teaching. God's covenanted people must behave differently than unbelievers. Such behavior involves every area of life, whether in the toilet or at the dinner table. Old Testament believers must eat differently, dress differently, talk differently, think differently, and live differently in every area of life. However, rebellious Israel insisted on trying to be more and more like the unbelieving nations around them. New Testament believers possess a similar mandate to live in a way that will cause the unbeliever to ask the reason for the hope by which believers live (1 Pet 3:15). No other people should live life the way they do.

How should believers manifest the *incompatible* aspect of holiness? They should avoid and hate sin. Their behavior should display the character of God rather than of fallen mankind. Demarest recommends four means of overcoming sin and growing in Christlikeness: (1) Identify God's part and a Christian's part in sanctification, (2) be filled with the Spirit, (3) cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, and (4) imitate Christ.[42] Eugene Merrill speaks of the effects of the believer's sanctification as follows, "When God's holiness is recognized and displayed, it has the effect of silencing the prideful claims of arrogant and rebellious men."[43] That is what happens when believers live a holy life.

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[40]Chafer, *Systematic Theology* 7:278.

[41]Ryle, *Holiness* 24-25.

[42]Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* 424-29.

[43]Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion* 58.

Sorting the Strata of Sanctification

Believers must beware of making biblical references to initial sanctification appear as though they are texts referring to progressive sanctification. At first blush, Eph 5:26 ("so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word") might speak of the Word of God as the sanctifying agent for the church. A careful examination of the text, however, demonstrates that the Word of God cleanses the church in salvation and prepares her for positional sanctification. This Ephesians text contains within it the debates that plague the issue regarding the differentiation of justification and sanctification. Three purpose clauses (each introduced by ἵνα, *hina*) follow on the declaration that Christ loved and gave Himself on behalf of the church (v. 25). The text identifies the three purposes as (1) to cleanse the church by the Word (v. 26), (2) to present the church to Himself (v. 27a), and (3) in order that the church might be holy and blameless (v. 27b). Grammatically, "the word" relates to the "washing," which, in turn, relates to "cleansed."[44] Hoehner observes that "[c]leansing deals with the negative aspect, that of being cleansed from defilement of sin, whereas sanctification is the positive aspect, that of being set apart to God. They are two sides of the same coin."[45] Thus, Eph 5:26 refers to positional sanctification, "which serves as the basis for" progressive sanctification.[46]

To what does "the word" refer in this text? Only once in Paul's eight uses does ῥῆμα (*hrēma*) mean something other than words from either God or Christ.[47] Hoehner argues that here it refers to "the preached word of Christ's love for the church."[48] Although the apostle obviously speaks about an ultimate holiness in the future for the church, "application to the present church is no less appropriate. Although in the future, sanctification will be complete, but the process is ongoing. Holiness of life for believers is enjoined (4:17 32)."[49]

First Peter 1:2 ("according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure," NAU) contains direct reference to initial sanctification. In the following context, however, Peter makes it clear that this sanctification must be expressed or displayed outwardly: "but like the

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[44] For the various grammatical relationships and argumentation pro and con, see John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (1883; reprint, Minneapolis: James and Klock, 1977) 417-20.

[45] Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 752.

[46] Ibid., 757.

[47] Ibid., 755.

[48] Ibid., 756.

[49] Ibid., 761.

Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY'" (vv. 15-16; cp. Phil 2:12-13).

Conclusion

When invited to participate in a manner of living that belonged to pre-salvation days, believers need to respond, "I regret that I cannot attend, because I died recently." They died in Christ. Their life now is His, not theirs.

Where one stands depends on where one sits. We are seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph 2:6). In the U. S. President's State of the Union speech, Republicans sit on one side and Democrats on the other. They sit where they stand politically. The believer's position consists of Christ's holiness; therefore, he ought to walk in that holiness and be transformed by degrees into His glorious image. Sanctification is the work of the Triune God (especially the Holy Spirit), the Word of God, and the believer. Believers must manifest God's holiness in every area of life and must grow in that holiness from the time of salvation to the day of departure from this world.