

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION
WITH RESPECT TO ITS ROLE IN ETERNAL SALVATION

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by
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ABSTRACT

Chapter 1 provides the foundational material that is necessary to pursue the stated thesis of the necessity of sanctification for inheriting eternal salvation. The pertinent terms of salvation and sanctification are defined, and the thesis is explained. The chapter closes with a broad view of historical positions regarding sanctification. These are the Wesleyan, Pentecostal, Keswick, Dispensational, Lutheran, and Reformed views. The analyses of these positions reveals that the component of necessity in respect to sanctification is either largely missing or does not adequately portray the biblical portrait.

Chapters 2 and 3 are an attempt to hold the thesis under the scrutiny of New Testament investigation. The purpose of these chapters is to demonstrate that the authors of the NT wrote in such a way as to consider sanctification an essential aspect of eternal salvation. Twelve specific texts are discussed in hermeneutical detail in order to defend the thesis. While chapter 2 concentrates on Pauline literature, the texts of chapter 3 demonstrate this teaching to be represented in a broad spectrum of NT epistolary documents.

Chapter 4 answers the perceived objections that could be raised against the present thesis. The objections are classified into two groups: biblical texts and logical arguments. The purpose of this chapter is not to debunk the opposing positions, but to simply demonstrate that the stated objections are not sufficient to nullify the author's argument.

To all those who faithfully announce the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ by proclaiming to the saints that the One who made them holy in position, and will one day make them holy in perfection, is also working daily to make them holy by progression.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1895 Methodist minister James Mudge published a work entitled *Growth in Holiness: Toward Perfection or Progressive Sanctification*. His intention was to correct some popular thoughts within Methodism concerning sanctification. In the opening lines of the book he recognizes that some may view another treatment of sanctification questionable given that a plethora of statements already abounded. He writes that he suspects some may raise the question, “Why more talk? What we need is better practice, not more elaborate and fine spun theories.”¹ The rest of his opening chapter is a defense about why he felt compelled to offer some thoughts on this crucial doctrine. The following position, though not in complete agreement with Mudge’s position, is prompted from the same compulsion and suspects probable resistance in the present day as well.²

Further in Mudge’s opening chapter, as he continues to defend the necessity of his work, he writes, “. . . if one has anything like a mandate from on high and feels a ‘Thus saith the Lord’ reverberating in his soul, why should he not speak out what God has given him in a straightforward way, trusting that it will find an echo in other hearts and

¹ James Mudge, *Growth in Holiness* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1895), 5.

² However, even though there has been much said concerning sanctification, there has been little consensus, which would seem to indicate a call for further study. See Gordon S. Dicker, “Sanctification: Three Models in Scripture and Theology,” *St. Mark’s Review* 112 (D 1982): 12. He observes, “Protestant Christianity . . . has never achieved the same degree of unanimity on sanctification which it reached with regard to justification.”

commend itself as true to other minds?”³ That question characterizes the spirit of this dissertation. The theological treatment below follows the same vein of Mudge’s work, both in motivation and doctrinal focus. Evangelicals⁴ of the West need to be reminded of Bonhoeffer’s rebuttal of “cheap grace.”⁵ The present motivation for this dissertation matches Steven Porter when he writes, “evangelical theologians have a duty to offer a biblical presentation of the doctrine of sanctification in a clear, coherent, and comprehensive manner that is at the same time relevant to the lives of contemporary Christian believers.”⁶ Viewed from that perspective, everything that follows comprises a comprehensive defense of why today’s professing Christians must have clarification followed by application with respect to the doctrine of sanctification.

³ Mudge, *Growth*, 26.

⁴ R. V. Pierard and W. A. Elwell, “Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,” in *Baker Reference Library*, ed. Walter L. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2nd ed., 2001), 405. Pierard and Elwell define evangelicalism as “the movement in modern Christianity, transcending denominational and confessional boundaries, that emphasizes conformity to the basic tenets of the faith and a missionary outreach of compassion and urgency,” and they define an evangelical as a person who “believes and proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

⁵ Dicker, “Three Models,” 12. He writes, “it might be said that Bonhoeffer’s attack on ‘cheap grace’ in his book *The Cost of Discipleship* is really an attack of the notion of justification which is divorced from all concern for sanctification.”

⁶ Steven L. Porter, “On the Renewal of Interest in the Doctrine of Sanctification: A Methodological Reminder,” *JETS* 45 (Sep 2002): 415.

Statement of Thesis and Purpose

In soteriological discussions, the issue of sanctification is often relegated to more of a secondary consideration coming after topics such as justification and regeneration.⁷ In fact, sanctification is rendered in some theological circles as more of a discipleship issue rather than a significant aspect of salvation. As a result, one who professes Christianity may understand sanctification as an optional task for the believer. That is, it is reserved for the more mature or the more obedient. In this line of reasoning, the only loss in not pursuing sanctification is the loss of heavenly reward; there are no soteriological consequences at stake.⁸

Underpinning this position is the belief that salvation, in total, is summed up in the new birth.⁹ Namely, to be born again, or converted (initial faith and repentance), is all that is necessary for any individual to be a Christian and inherit eternal life. To add anything else would be to embrace a works-based salvation. Therefore, sanctification is a separate issue; it is not a part of salvation.¹⁰ In response to this view, the following defense reasons that the Bible presents sanctification as a crucial aspect of salvation; it is indeed a soteriological issue.

⁷ See Charles Ryrie, *So Great Salvation* (Wheaton: Victor Books, Second Printing, 1989), 40.

⁸ An example of this line of reasoning would be Zane Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), and Robert N. Wilkin, "The Biblical Distinction Between Eternal Salvation and Eternal Rewards: A Key to Proper Exegesis," *JGES* 9 (1996): 15–24.

⁹ See R.T. Kendall, *Once Saved, Always Saved* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 50–51.

¹⁰ While statements from authors involved in the Lordship controversy will be cited, the controversy itself will not be a focus of this project. The Lordship controversy is understood to be a pre-conversion debate, whereas this topic is concerned with the post-conversion realm of soteriology.

This dissertation will argue that sanctification is indeed a necessity in the life of a believer in order to inherit eternal life. It will demonstrate that salvation is an umbrella term encompassing three major occurrences; regeneration, sanctification, and glorification.¹¹ Throughout the dissertation, answers to the relevant questions surrounding the issue of sanctification will be sought. Is it positional with regard to union with Christ or progressive with regard to ongoing holiness? Is it a passive work performed by the Spirit in the believer's life or is it an active pursuit in which the believer engages? Is sanctification a hidden work or is its presence measurable in the believer's lifetime? And most importantly for this project, is it an optional category of discipleship or is it a necessary component of eternal salvation?

This study will not delve into an exhaustive explanation of historical positions regarding sanctification, but will rather rely mostly on biblical exegesis to support its thesis. The purpose is to provide a fresh statement on sanctification, not a defense of a previously stated argument. Neither will it endeavor to rehash certain aspects of sanctification, such as the role of the Holy Spirit or the contribution of historical figures to the doctrine of sanctification, which have been widely discussed.¹²

¹¹ This is meant as a correction to the possible misconception of salvation as totally comprised in the new birth. R. T. Kendall and others promote that position. See fn. 8.

¹² Historical positions and figures will be alluded to and discussed in broad terms for the purposes of clarification and demonstration, but not in a detailed fashion for pure description. There are at present many descriptive works readily available. Examples would be Paul Cefalu, "Godly Fear, Sanctification, and Calvinist Theology in the Sermons and 'Holy Sonnets' of John Donne," *Studies in Philology* 100, no. 1 (2003): 71–86; Kenneth Leroy Friesen, "A Study of the Doctrine of Holiness in the Thought of A. W. Tozer" (M.Div. thesis, Western Evangelical Seminary, 1978); Randall Gleason, "B. B. Warfield and Lewis S. Chafer on Sanctification," *JETS* 40 (Ju 1997): 241–56; Egil Grisliis, "Menno Simons on Sanctification," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 69, no.2 (1995): 226–247; S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., "Charles Wesley and the Journey of

In terms of contribution, the intention of this work is to accomplish several goals. First, a possible corrective to the perceived misunderstanding of biblical salvation is pursued. In placing a great emphasis on conversion, usually through the commendable motive of evangelism, biblical salvation may become somewhat distorted and unbalanced. While conversion must be emphasized, there is an equally strong belief that the other facets of salvation must be emphasized as well. One must be careful not to define salvation solely in terms of the new birth. Salvation, in the biblical sense, is more of an umbrella term encompassing all the major salvific events in the life of a believer.¹³ True salvation is much more of a process than a one-time event. There is, therefore, a needed distinction between salvation and conversion. If the distinction is not clear, the result will be a flawed interpretation of salvation.

Second, if sanctification is indeed an integral part of salvation it can no longer be viewed as a discipleship issue that is optional for those who desire to mature in Christ. To be a disciple is to be a follower of Christ; therefore, the call to “make disciples” is a call to bring people to salvation through the proclamation of the gospel, not a call to train them in their post-conversion Christian growth. Sanctification, then, will be presented as

Sanctification,” *EvJ* 16 (Fall 1998): 49–75; Bo Karen Lee, “The Holy Spirit and Human Agency in Barth’s Doctrine of Sanctification,” *Koinonia* 12, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 175–93; Casimir McCambley, “Saint Gregory of Nyssa: *Peri Teleiotes*—On Perfection,” *GOTR* 29 (Winter 1984): 349–79; Jonathan H. Rainbow, “Double Grace: John Calvin’s View of the Relationship of Justification and Sanctification,” *ExAud* 5 (1989): 99–105; Timothy H. Wadkins, “Christian Holiness: Positional, Progressive, and Practical: Martin Luther’s View of Sanctification,” *TJ* 7, no. 1 (Spr 1978): 57–66; and B. B. Warfield, *Perfectionism*, 2 vol. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932).

¹³ The terms “new birth” and “conversion” are used interchangeably as descriptive of a believer’s experience of coming into the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The new birth is understood to be an umbrella concept as well, which would include the actions of regeneration, justification, initial faith and repentance. These terms are used when the context calls for more specificity.

the middle, necessary component of complete salvation. Conversion begins the journey. Sanctification is the journey. Glorification is the destination. Viewed from this perspective, sanctification is no longer an aspect of the Christian life relegated to an individual's preference; it *is* the Christian life.

Third, it is hoped that many practical applications will result from this study. For example, the enterprise of preaching will be affected. A passionate plea for hearers to continually repent and believe will be heralded with the same degree of intensity as the plea for hearers to initially repent and believe. Also, some evangelism practices may need to be altered in methodology and presentation in order to preserve the biblical requirement of holiness among those who truly believe. More importantly, the Church as a whole may realize the need to incorporate holy living as a necessary part of their profession of faith. The end result of understanding sanctification as vital to salvation will be the transformation of genuine believers to "come out from among them and be separate." Serious consideration of the implications of this doctrine will produce an authentic Church bearing a true Christian identity.

The impetus for seeking to clarify the doctrine of sanctification is a personal observation of "easy-believism" and "cheap grace" within the writer's own church experience.¹⁴ Bonhoeffer describes cheap grace as "the preaching of forgiveness without

¹⁴ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988, 1994), 27. MacArthur observes that typical gospel presentations such as "ask Jesus into your heart" are actually not found in Scripture. Such diluted pleas are not true gospel presentations. He writes, "The gospel Jesus proclaimed was a call to discipleship, a call to follow him in submissive obedience, not just a plea to make a decision or pray a prayer." He then concludes, "It [the gospel of Jesus] put sinners on notice that they must turn from sin and embrace God's righteousness. It was in every sense good news, yet it was anything but easy-believism." MacArthur's solution for this "easy-believism" is then a return to presenting the gospel with the same demands as

requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”¹⁵ J. C. Ryle bemoaned in his own day in 1879, “The older I grow, the more I am convinced that real practical holiness does not receive the attention it deserves, and that there is a most painfully low standard of living among many high professors of religion in the land.”¹⁶ When ungodliness is tolerated in the local church with no reprisals, when sin is permissible as long as forgiveness is available, the doctrine of “cheap grace” has infiltrated the church. What this dissertation means to convey is that this errant view of holiness is not a matter of “backsliding” believers; it is a matter of wrongly convincing unbelievers that they are believers.

Before establishing a working definition of sanctification, it is essential to clarify the crucial terminology that will be employed throughout the dissertation. Due to the range of ideas and aspects attached to each, the reader must know what the author has in mind when he mentions “salvation” and “sanctification.”

found in the New Testament. In agreement with that assessment, the author argues that restoring biblical sanctification will deter the spread of a false assurance of salvation based on easy-believism.

¹⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959), 45.

¹⁶ J.C. Ryle, *Holiness* (Moscow, Idaho: Nolan, Reprint, 2001), XIII.

Clarification of Terms

*Salvation*¹⁷

By arguing for the necessity of sanctification, this dissertation will also present a broad, biblical view of the term “salvation” with respect to its nature of encompassing a varied range of events that transpire in the life of a true believer.¹⁸ This understanding of salvation will serve to support the thesis. The error, as previously stated, is the one-to-one correlation of salvation with the new birth experience.¹⁹ Due to such enormous emphasis on matters such as faith, repentance, and conversion, complete salvation, in some theological camps, has been identified entirely with the new birth.²⁰ There is agreement

¹⁷ R. E. O. White, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 1049–1050. White defines salvation as “the saving of man from the power and effects of sin.” In his article, under the comprehensiveness of salvation, he notes that “salvation is past (Rom 8:24; Eph 2:5, 8; Titus 3:5–8); present (1 Cor 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor 2:15; 1 Pet 1:9; 3:21); and future (Rom 5:9–10; 13:11; 1 Cor 5:5; Phil 1:5–6; 2:12; 1 Thess 5:8; Heb 1:14; 9:28; 1 Pet 2:2).”

¹⁸ This is a separate issue from the *ordo salutis*, which presents a temporal or logical ordering of salvific events beginning in eternity past and finding fulfillment in eternity future. The presentation here is solely concerned with the events a believer experiences from the moment he/she becomes a believer through eternity future.

¹⁹ Richard Lovelace, “The Sanctification Gap,” *ThTo* 29 no.4 (J 1973): 366–7. Lovelace proposes this error was handed down from the revivalist tradition. He purports of the nineteenth century heirs of the revival tradition, “Having unloaded conversion, however, they failed to reinsert sanctification in its proper place in the development of the Christian life, and left the engine with no power-train at all. The divorce from Puritanism was effected, and the sanctification gap was born.”

²⁰ Zane Hodges, *The Hungry Inherit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 7, 187, respectively. An evangelical example of this error is found in Zane Hodge’s work *The Hungry Inherit*. Hodges states his purpose is to “distinguish salvation and discipleship.” He will later conclude from the parable on the four soils that the disciple and the non-disciple both have faith. Over against this view, one would point to a text like Acts 11:26 to argue for the synonymy of the terms “Christian” and “Disciple.” For an excellent treatment that argues for this position and exposes the fallacies of bifurcating “Christian” and “Disciple” see Hans Kvalbein, “Go Therefore and Make Disciples . . . The Concept of Discipleship in the New Testament,” *Them* 13 (Ja-F 1988): 48–53. See also James G. Samra, “A Biblical View of Discipleship,” *BSac* 160 (Ap-Ju 2003): 220. Samra examines

with the methodology of placing an emphasis upon the issues of conversion for two reasons. First, the Bible emphasizes the necessity of conversion. Second, since the new birth is the beginning stage of salvation for the believer, it must be emphasized. In order to run the race, one must get on the track.

On the other hand, there is disagreement with the conclusion reached by some as a result of emphasizing regeneration. Against their view, this position argues that the new birth is not salvation *in toto*. In order to demonstrate the validity of this point, the biblical term for salvation and its uses in the Bible are now discussed.

The New Testament word for Christian salvation is the Greek verb σωζω. It means “to preserve or rescue from natural dangers or afflictions” and “to save or preserve from transcendent danger or destruction.”²¹ The New Testament term “salvation” may refer holistically to the process of Christian salvation or could also refer to the various stages within Christian salvation. The textual context in which the term is located helps the reader determine how the author is utilizing the term. The following are four examples of how this one term has various applications within the framework of Christian salvation.

First, “salvation” is used at times to refer to the activities surrounding the new birth experience. Rom 10:9-10 says, “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved

the passages on discipleship and concludes that discipleship in the NT refers mostly to the process of becoming like one’s master. He states, “Discipleship involves both becoming a disciple (which he defines as following Christ) and being a disciple.”

²¹ Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 3rd ed., 1957, 1979, 2000), 982. Hereafter referred to as BDAG.

(σωθήσῃ, future, passive); for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation (σωτηρίαν).”²² By referring to faith and confession, this passage addresses the activities of a believer that result in the new birth, and it speaks of this with the σωτηρίαν term.

Second, “salvation” is also applied when speaking of the Christian life or journey of faith. In 1 Cor 1:18 Paul writes, “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved (σωζομένοις, present, passive) it is the power of God. “Those who are perishing” is contrasted with “us who are being saved;” unbelievers are in the condition of presently perishing while believers are in the condition of presently being saved. Therefore, “being saved” in 1 Cor 1:18 is a separate issue from “will be saved” in Rom 10:9, but uses the same terminology. Richard Foster elaborates on this “being saved” by stating, “Through a lifelong process, we become, little by little, with time and experience, the kinds of people whose lives naturally and freely express ‘love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control’ (Gal 5:22-3). This, too, is the salvation of the Lord.”²³ It is not the same aspect of salvation as found in Romans 10:9-10, but it is another aspect in the larger process of salvation.

Third, “salvation” can be used as well to reference eternal life in heaven after death as in Mat 10:22 (cf. Rom 13:11, Heb 9:28). It reads, “You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved (σωθήσεται, future, passive). Jesus was instructing His disciples concerning the certain

²² All Scripture quotations are taken from the NASB unless noted otherwise.

²³ Richard J. Foster, “Salvation is for Life,” *ThTo* 61, no. 3 (O 2004): 303.

persecution they would experience as a result of following Him. With that in mind, “the end” is obviously meaning the end of life. The implication is that those who do not endure will not be saved. So “saved” is here referencing the believer’s glorification after death.

Fourth, a final use of σωζω in the context of Christian salvation is its use to describe the whole of salvation. An example of this is found in Mat 1:21. The angel declares to Joseph, “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save (σωσει, future) His people from their sins.” In describing the work that Christ will accomplish on behalf of His people, “will save” encompasses every facet of salvation that is wrought in the soul of a believer.

In sum, when the Bible uses the root σωζω, it may be depicting aspects of conversion, sanctification, glorification, or all three taken together. Context determines which use the biblical writer had in mind. Therefore, salvation is better understood, from the biblical perspective, as a process and an umbrella term.²⁴

Salvation is presented biblically as a process.

Salvation, in its entirety, is better viewed as more of a process than a one-moment-in-time experience. While it is biblical to speak of the new birth as salvation, it is unbiblical to speak of the new birth as synonymous with salvation. Salvation has more aspects, or stages, beyond the new birth, which are just as vital to a holistic view of redemption. Salvation is not consummated until glorification, and, as this paper will

²⁴ Throughout this dissertation, historical and current references will be made in support of viewing biblical salvation in more of a process rather than a single event, which should demonstrate that understanding salvation in this way is not a novelty.

argue, salvation is not complete without the presence of sanctification. Conversion, then, is synonymous with the new birth, not with salvation.

A key text for this process of salvation is found in Rom 8:29-30. Paul encourages the Romans by stating, “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined . . . and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.” There is a process in place here that is difficult to deny. “Salvation”, from σωζω, could be used in correspondence to any one of the above terms, “foreknew,” “predestined,” “called,” “justified,” “glorified.” The process of redemption outlined in Romans 8 stretches from eternity past to eternity future, but the terms “called,” “justified,” and “glorified” are illustrative of this thesis. The salvation events experienced by the believer occur in stages. One is called, and then one is justified. One is justified, and then one is glorified. For the purposes of this work, “sanctified” is included between justification and glorification, so why didn’t Paul include it?

One may reason, in objection to this dissertation, that since Paul does not list “sanctification” here it is not a crucial aspect of salvation. For example, Charles Ryrie inquires, “Could it be that Paul did not want to base our guarantee of ultimate glorification on our personal sanctification?”²⁵ There are three possible responses to this assessment. First, while the term “sanctification” is not found in this text, the concept of sanctification is present in the phrase “to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Paul speaks in similar language in 2 Cor 3:18 when he says, “But we all . . . are being

²⁵ Ryrie, *Salvation*, 150. A short reply would be that Paul should not have a problem with basing our glorification on personal sanctification because John does not (1 John 3).

transformed into the same image from glory to glory . . .” Being conformed to the image of the Son and being transformed into the image of the Son takes place in the here and now, that is, in the realm of sanctification. Therefore, Paul actually does speak of sanctification in this text.²⁶

Second, Paul is not proposing to provide an inclusive listing of the *ordo salutis*. His list does not include any of the necessary, human activities in salvation. Therefore, since progressive, personal sanctification falls under the same category of human cooperation as does faith, repentance, and perseverance, Paul does not include them in this particular list.

Third, Paul’s purpose is to list the beginning and ending of salvation to demonstrate that salvation is all of God. He is writing to encourage the believers to have full assurance in their salvation. That is why he goes on to say in the next verse, “What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?”²⁷

²⁶ It is important to note here that when Scripture speaks of growth in holiness and maturity in the faith and when it describes the Christian life by way of analogy as warfare, a race, or a fight, it is addressing the realm of sanctification. Therefore, sanctification is often found conceptually by description and not lexically as “sanctification” in Scripture. The arguments employed in this dissertation recognize and utilize this function of Scripture.

²⁷ Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994): 199–200. Addressing this text Lewis and Demarest write, “The final verb (“glorified”) is a proleptic aorist, indicating that the action is so certain of occurrence that it is viewed as past. Salvation is a ‘package deal’ embracing the whole of God’s action from election in eternity past to glorification in eternity future. The following verses (vv.31-39) ground the believer’s eternal security in the Father’s verdict of justification . . .”

Salvation is presented biblically as an umbrella concept.

Given the four biblical examples above and the understanding of salvation as a process, it is evident that complete salvation is an umbrella term.²⁸ Pastors and theologians must use precise language here, if anywhere at all. If it is true that eternity is at stake, there is no room for confusion when addressing the matters and components of salvation. Therefore, when one intends to convey the idea of complete and full salvation, the context and use of language should relay that concept. On the other hand, when one has in mind a single facet of salvation, that should be made apparent as well. The danger is that the listener may mistake one aspect of salvation for complete salvation, which could lead to his ruin. This is the compulsion behind this dissertation.

This potential for equating the part with the whole could be easily corrected not only through precision in language, but also by presenting complete salvation as a concept pregnant with all the other facets of salvation. It is not unusual or necessarily wrong to speak of the parts in terms of the whole. People communicate this way all the time. If someone is asked in the evening, “How was your day?” it is understood as indicating a part of the whole by using the holistic term. However, since the matter of salvation carries such weighty consequences, one must be especially careful in relating information. So in keeping with the suggestion, specific terminology is used when referring to the parts of salvation in order to distinguish them from the umbrella concept of complete salvation.

²⁸ “Complete salvation” is being used as a way to distinguish the umbrella concept from the aspects encompassed under it. “Complete salvation,” then, refers to the completion of all matters dealing with justification, sanctification, and glorification.

The danger in not discussing salvation in all its fullness is a distortion of biblical truth. In light of all the previously mentioned texts, plus texts like Heb 12:14 and 1 Cor 9:24, which call for the necessity of persevering faith, those who speak of salvation as synonymous with regeneration alter the biblical presentation. For example, one evangelical scholar writes, “Of course, our faith in Christ should continue. But the claim that it absolutely must, or necessarily does, has no support at all in the Bible.”²⁹ What one is left with, if following this position, is no required, visible distinction between the Christian and the nonbeliever save that the “Christian” says he believes in Jesus. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, the Bible presents a much greater and much more essential distinction.

Sanctification

The Greek word, which is translated as either “to be holy” or “to sanctify,” is ἁγιάζω, which means “to set aside something for ritual purposes,” “to include a person in what is holy,” “to treat as holy,” or “to eliminate that which is incompatible with holiness.”³⁰ The word may occur as a verb, as in the previous case, as an adjective distinguishing a person, place, or thing (ex. ἁγίαν, “holy”), or as a noun describing a category (ex. οἱ ἅγιοι, “holy ones,” “saints”) or a state of being (ex. ἁγιασμός, “sanctification,” “holiness”).³¹ J.I. Packer lists three cases in which the Bible uses this

²⁹ Hodges, *Free!* 63.

³⁰ *BDAG*, 9-10.

³¹ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 527–529. Berkhof provides an extensive outline for the biblical terms for sanctification in both the Old and New Testaments. He notes that the NT uses these terms to mean “set apart” and in the ethical sense as well.

terminology. It “signifies (1) all that marks out God as set apart from men, (2) all material substance that God sets apart from men, and (3) all that should mark Christians as set apart for God.”³² Unless stated otherwise, it is this third categorical use of sanctification that is the focus of this dissertation. The following three sections will help to clarify and define this use of sanctification.

Sanctification is presented biblically as instantaneous, progressive, and complete.

Sanctification, like salvation, is presented in the Scripture as an umbrella concept encompassing a process.³³ The process involved is the ongoing removal of sin’s dominance in man and the changing of man “from glory to glory” (2 Cor 3:18).

Instantaneous sanctification occurs simultaneously with the new birth. It is the act of God whereby He sets an individual apart from the world for His glory and the salvation of His child. Instantaneous sanctification is then spoken of in Scripture in the past, passive voice. This usage is found in 1 Cor 6:11 where Paul says, “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified (ἡγιάσθητε), but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” Two points emerge from this verse and its context. First, all three terms that Paul uses: “washed,” “sanctified,” and

³² J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 96.

³³ R. E. O. White, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 1052. In discussing the nature of sanctification, White defines it as a “status conferred” and a “process pursued.” Conversion is the entrance into sanctification, which then issues “in conformity to Christ (Rom 8:29–30; 2 Cor 3:18; 1 John 3:1–3).”

“justified,” are used in description of transactions taking place at the new birth. Thus, it is clear from this text that one aspect of sanctification is attached to conversion.³⁴

Second, by looking at the previous two verses, Paul is contrasting the Corinthian believers with those who pursue sinful lifestyles, and he is attributing that difference to an act of God. He says, “. . . but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” Therefore, it can be concluded that instantaneous sanctification, which takes place at conversion, is an act of God upon man setting him apart for service unto Him.

Progressive sanctification, while founded upon instantaneous sanctification, is another separate aspect in the process of sanctification. Progressive sanctification occurs between the new birth experience and the entrance into Paradise. It is the God-enabled pursuit of a believer to “lay aside the old self” and “put on the new self” (Eph 4:22, 24). It is the “working out” of the salvation that God has “worked in” an individual (Phil 2:12, 13). Progressive sanctification is, then, the present state of a believer. It is evidenced over time by a gradual, increasing godliness of actions and mindset. This idea of responsible progression in practical purity and thought is conveyed in Peter’s admonition to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18). Taken in the context of verse 17, Peter exhorts the Christians to grow as their means of being resistant to the sway and influence of ungodly, wrong-thinking men. Those types of “unprincipled” men have twisted Scripture “to their own destruction” (v.16). So Peter is communicating urgency in this matter of growing in grace and knowledge.

³⁴ For a thorough treatment of this aspect of sanctification see John Murray, “Definitive Sanctification,” *CTJ* 2 (Ap 1967): 5–21.

Other texts that communicate this same concept of increasing godliness are 2 Cor 3:18, Rom 12:2, Eph 4:14-16, 23, 24, Col 3:10, and 1 Pet 2:2.³⁵ While these texts reference a progressive growth in a believer's life, there are other texts which stress the necessity of such growth in holiness as a matter of salvation. This classification of texts will be examined in chapters 2 and 3. Suffice it for now to say that the Bible does speak of a process and progression of holy action and thought for the believer.

Finally, there is complete sanctification, or entire sanctification. This stage of sanctification is synonymous with salvation's end, glorification. So taken together thus far, instantaneous sanctification occurs at and is a component of the new birth, progressive sanctification takes place during the life of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17), and complete sanctification occurs at and is a component of glorification. Walter Marshall explains the interconnection of sanctification and salvation in that "Sanctification in Christ, is glorification begun; as glorification is sanctification perfected."³⁶ Thus, the process of sanctification itself spans the process of experiential salvation.³⁷

Complete sanctification is the aim of progressive sanctification, to be entirely set apart from sin unto God. Therefore, a believer never reaches his goal of "perfection" until he passes from this life into life eternal. Glorification is like instantaneous sanctification

³⁵ Packer, *Spirit*, 203.

³⁶ Walter Marshall, *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 227. See also Ed Marks, "From Glory to Glory," *Affirmation & Critique* 7 no.1 (Ap 2002): 16–21. Marks defines sanctification as the gradual process of glorification.

³⁷ By "experiential" salvation the author has in mind the stages of salvation that the believer actually experiences, feels, or realizes are taking place. For example, salvific stages in eternity past such as "election" and "foreknowledge" are not "experienced" by the believer even though they are just as real and actual as stages like "conversion" and "sanctification" that are "experienced" by the believer.

and unlike progressive sanctification in that it is entirely a work of God upon man. God brings about one's glorification. In Phil 3:20-21 Paul writes "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." Clearly, perfection, that is complete sanctification, occurs upon the death of a believer, and God brings it about through His Son. The following two categories expound upon the instantaneous and progressive aspects of sanctification.

Sanctification is presented biblically as positional and personal.

Positional sanctification falls under the category of instantaneous sanctification but carries different connotations. Instantaneous sanctification refers to the act of God upon an individual in correspondence with regeneration whereas positional sanctification explains what has actually occurred as a result of that divine activity. "Instantaneous" refers to the process of sanctification, whereas "positional" refers to the status of a believer in relation to God. There are two facets of this status from the perspective of God's work in sanctification.

First, positional sanctification may refer to the status of a believer as now in union with Christ. Paul addresses this union when he speaks of believers as "those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1) and to believers as "Christ in you" (Col 1:27). Both references indicate this relation is based on belief in Christ and therefore takes place upon conversion. This aspect of sanctification is vital for understanding all other aspects of sanctification. It is the reality of positional sanctification, or union with Christ, that

enables personal or progressive sanctification and ensures complete sanctification. The work taking place in a believer to conform him more and more to the image of Christ is made possible and ensured by the work of Christ.

Second, positional sanctification may refer to the status of a believer as considered by God to be already perfected since union with Christ is present. From the perspective of eternity, believers in the here and now are already secured before the presence of God. While this is not the present experience of the believer, it is the present consideration of God upon the believer. Hence, the ever present tension in theology of the “already–not yet.” An example of this positional sanctification is in Eph 2:6. After describing how the believers once “walked according to the course of this world,” and extolling the grace and mercy of God which brought them to salvation, Paul writes that God has “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus.” Paul is writing to the believers in Ephesus and describing their glorification, though not yet realized, as already having taken place. In other words, it is already accomplished even though it has not been consummated yet. God reckons them as entirely sanctified, yet they are in the process of progressive sanctification. This is the second reason why one can affirm that positional sanctification guarantees complete sanctification.

Personal sanctification, on the other hand, is another view of progressive sanctification. Both refer to the same activity and span of time and experience in the life of a believer. There is only a slight variance in perspective. While progressive sanctification emphasizes the growth in holiness of a believer, personal sanctification

emphasizes the believer's role in that progress. Two examples of this emphasis upon the believer's responsibility to grow in godliness are found in 2 Timothy and Ephesians.

In 2 Tim 2:22 Paul commands young Timothy to take some action in regards to his own personal holiness. After contrasting useless vessels with useful vessels, he exhorts Timothy, "Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." Timothy's responsibilities entailed a negative element, "flee from lusts," and a positive one, "pursue righteousness." The point being emphasized in this dissertation is that it was up to Timothy to achieve Paul's imperative.

In Eph 6:10-17 we find Paul's famous spiritual armor passage. His exhortation now is not to a teacher but to every believer. Paul brings to light that believers are engaged in a warfare that takes place in the spiritual realm. By way of illustration he delineates the essential tools that must comprise a believer's arsenal if one is to maintain victory over the enemy's onslaughts. Apart from the passage being filled with imperatives like "be strong" and "stand firm," Paul states that "*our struggle* is not against flesh and blood."³⁸ The weight falls on the shoulders of the believer. Personal sanctification or progressive sanctification is the responsibility of every believer.

The thrust of this dissertation is concerned with this stage of sanctification. The argument is that just as positional sanctification is a necessary and biblical component of salvation, personal sanctification is a necessary and biblical component as well. These two facets, positional and personal, give rise to the need for further elaboration on God's role versus the believer's role in sanctification.

³⁸ Emphasis Added.

Sanctification is presented biblically as operative and cooperative.

Operative and Cooperative are categories referring to the responsible participant (God and/or the believer) in the process of sanctification.³⁹ Operative describes the actions in which God acts alone to bring about change in an individual. When God acts in this fashion, the verbal referent is presented in the passive voice. An illustration of operative sanctification would be 1 Corinthians 1:2. Paul indicates the recipients of his letter in the following manner: “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified (ἡγιασμένοις, perfect, passive, participle) in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours.” The perfect tense “refers to a state resulting from a completed action.”⁴⁰ Passive voice indicates that the “subject is receiving the action of the verb.”⁴¹ Therefore, Paul has in mind here a state of sanctification that results from the previous action of regeneration and is totally enacted upon the believer by God. While not every passive in Scripture communicates human inactivity, Paul’s qualifying phrase, “saints by calling,” indicates that is what he has in mind here. Operative sanctification, then, in this text, occurs in the realms of instantaneous and positional sanctification.

³⁹ Augustine, “On Grace and Free Will,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Vol. 5 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 4th Printing, 2004), 458. Augustine introduced the categories of “operative” and “cooperative” grace in his writing against Pelagianism. He writes, “He [God] operates, therefore, without us, in order that we may will; but when we will, and so will that we may act, He co-operates with us. We can, however, ourselves do nothing to effect good works of piety without Him either working that we may will, or co-working when we will.”

⁴⁰ David Alan Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, Revised Edition (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 69.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

Cooperative sanctification refers to a joint involvement of both God and the individual in regards to sanctification. This takes place in the progressive, personal stage. Peter calls his readers to “sanctify (ἁγιάσατε, aorist, active, imperative) Christ as Lord in your hearts” (1 Pet 3:15a). Granted, the word “sanctify” is not being used in the sense of sanctification, but sanctification surely is the context in which it is found. Peter is calling believers to specific action, set apart God in your hearts, in order that they may not fear men and may be prepared to deliver a gospel witness.

This does not imply that the believer acts alone or to a greater degree than God in this stage of his sanctification. He cooperates; that is, he works responsively with God as God performs this work in him. God is always given the credit for any advancement of holiness in the believer, but at the same time, the believer is called to take action in order to progress in his holiness. Joel Brondos explains, “Cooperation is used to offset any ideas that man is merely a puppet or robot after conversion.”⁴² He then illustrates this cooperation as a car (person) with a driver (Spirit). While the car will operate without the driver, the driver avoids dangers and guides the car to the proper destination. He later concludes, “Properly understood, then, sanctification is not synergistic but monergistic.”⁴³

To maintain the biblical perspective, one must retain the biblical balance on this issue. The doctrine of sanctification is slighted and less than the biblical presentation when one elevates/negates God’s role or man’s role beyond the scriptural parameter. As

⁴² Joel A. Brondos, “Sanctification and Moral Development,” *Concordia Journal* (October 1991): 435.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 435. This understanding could also be properly termed “cooperative monergism.”

mentioned earlier, Phil 2:12-13 brings out this cooperation by calling the believer to action “work out your salvation” and simultaneously crediting its accomplishment to the grace of God, “for it is God who is at work in you.”

Statement of Working Definition of Sanctification

As with any doctrinal treatment, varied definitions of sanctification have been offered. A couple of select divines are focused on here for reflection and introduction to the author’s own definition. In a sermon on sanctification preached by Charles Spurgeon in 1886, he explained sanctification as a work coming after effectual calling and regeneration to further separate believers from the world. He expounds, “This separating work is further carried on in what is commonly known as sanctification, whereby the man of God is removed farther and farther from all fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, and is changed from glory unto glory, into an ever-growing likeness of his Lord, who was ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.’”⁴⁴

A few aspects of Spurgeon’s understanding of sanctification are apparent. First, Spurgeon viewed sanctification as an intricate part of the whole process of salvation. In his view, one central purpose of God’s saving grace is to sanctify a people unto Himself. That purpose of sanctification is carried out through the unified work of the triune

⁴⁴ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia*, vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: Baker, Reprint 1977), 24. W.B. Godbey, *Sanctification* (Dallas: Holiness Echoes, 1884, 1956), 91. Godbey defined sanctification as “taking the world out of you.” Steven Hein, “Sanctification: The Powerful Pardon,” *Logia* 6 (1997): 19. Hein defines it as “a lifelong process of growth and maturity in the Christian’s life of faith.”

Godhead. God the Father sets believers apart, the purchase of the Son legally sets believers apart, and the Spirit manifestly and visibly sets believers apart.⁴⁵

Second, Spurgeon understands the process of further separation from the world to be of a progressive, temporal nature. The visible, demonstrable setting apart of believers occurs gradually over a period of time, not instantaneously in a moment of time.

Sanctification is an “ever-growing likeness” of the Lord.⁴⁶

Third, derived from another sermon and key to the thesis of this work, Spurgeon proclaimed the necessity of this visible “setting apart” of the believer for the hope of eternal life. In 1862, he heralded, “We have always held, and still hold and teach, that the work of the Spirit in us, whereby we are conformed unto Christ’s image, is as absolutely necessary for our salvation, as is the work of Jesus Christ, by which he cleanses us from our sins.”⁴⁷ As each person of the Trinity is involved in the salvation of God’s people, so each work that each Person performs is as necessary and vital as any other.

In understanding sanctification as ongoing repentance, Calvin provided terminology to elucidate what the process of sanctification entails. He called it the twofold work of mortification⁴⁸ and vivification. He states, “The turning of our lives to

⁴⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁶ Calvin, *Inst.* III, 3, 9. Calvin explained this process of further separation in terms of a process of restoration of the image of God in man. He writes, “...this restoration does not take place in one moment or one day or one year; but through continual and sometimes even slow advances God wipes out in his elect the corruption of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples renewing their minds to true purity that they may practice repentance throughout their whole lives and know this warfare will end only at death.”

⁴⁷ Spurgeon, *Encyclopedia*, 18.

⁴⁸ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 6 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1853, Reprint 1967): 9. The most comprehensive and well-argued treatment of

God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification of the flesh and of the old man and in the vivification of the Spirit.”⁴⁹

Richard Ngun further summarizes Calvin’s position, “By faith, a Christian participates in the death and resurrection of Christ in order that his flesh is mortified and his spirit vivified. Mortification is participation in Christ’s death, and vivification is participation in His resurrection.”⁵⁰ Therefore, the process of sanctification carries a negative component, mortification, and a positive component, vivification. Through mortification a believer puts away the old man (Eph 4:22).⁵¹ Through vivification a believer puts on the new man (Eph 4:24).

With Calvin, as with Spurgeon, this process was progressive and guaranteed. If one believes that the granting of faith is a work of the Spirit and that one fruit of this faith is an increasing likeness to Christ, then when faith is present, holiness is present as well. Ngun writes, “For Calvin there is no break but a sure progress in holiness of the ones already regenerated,” and later, “Faith is given by the Spirit in order for man to believe,

mortification comes from the Puritan John Owen. Owen stressed the power of sin to overwhelm the professing believer and the believer’s responsibility to destroy the power of sin in his body, to mortify the flesh. For Owen, mortification was a must. He writes, “Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you.”

⁴⁹ Calvin, *Inst.* III, 3, 5.

⁵⁰ Richard Ngun, “A Survey of the Role of the Law in Sanctification Among Selected Calvinists,” *STJ* 8 (May-N 2000): 47.

⁵¹ John MacArthur, “Mortification of Sin,” *TMSJ* 5 (Spring 1994): 3, 13, respectively. John MacArthur follows in the tradition of Owen on mortification and writes, “Mortification is the believer’s responsibility and includes such responsibilities as abstaining from fleshly lusts, making no provision for the flesh, fixing one’s heart on Christ, meditating on God’s Word, praying incessantly, exercising self-control, and being filled with the Spirit.” And later, “Although a Christian should expect his triumph over sin to be ever-increasing, his mortification can never be wholly complete before he is glorified.”

be forgiven, and then to exercise repentance.”⁵² The ongoing nature of repentance, then, issues forth a life of a “sure” progressive holiness before the Lord.

For this dissertation, sanctification is defined as the process whereby through the enabling grace of God, the accomplished work of Christ, and the sustaining work of the Holy Spirit a believer will necessarily progress in his personal holiness towards the goal of inheriting eternal life. Sanctification, then, cannot be divorced from salvation; regeneration, sanctification, and glorification are all interconnected, vital aspects of God’s saving grace. For now, elaboration on a few central features of this definition is presented. At length, this definition is referred to throughout the rest of this work in defense of the thesis and rebuttal of other views of sanctification.

First, the biblical portrait of sanctification is understood to be a progressive process. While positional sanctification is instantaneous, personal sanctification is a lifelong pursuit with the goal being perfection of body, soul, and spirit in the presence of God. It is characterized as progressive because the believer grows and matures in the faith throughout his lifetime. It is characterized as a process because it occurs over time and bridges the chasm between justification and glorification. Lewis and Demarest describe the process and progress of sanctification by saying, “The process of sanctification involves growth both in spiritual relationships and in ethical behaviors in a progressively realized redemption.”⁵³

⁵² Ngun, “Survey,” 46.

⁵³ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 206. They further explain, “The goal of the Christian life is nothing less than uniqueness from the world, ethical perfection of character, and spiritual perfection in communion with the divine Spirit and all others (Matt. 5:8; Col. 1:28).”

Second, this process of progression is incumbent upon believers while simultaneously guaranteed by God. With sanctification as an aspect of salvation, it comes by way of grace just as does regeneration and glorification (Eph 2:8-9). Any amount of holiness observed in a believer's life is attributed to the gracious acting of God upon the individual. However, the grace of God does not in any way negate man's responsibility. Believers, not unbelievers, are compelled throughout Scripture to stand firm, persevere, fight the flesh, resist temptation, flee immorality and pursue holiness. As Gleason reasons, "But if humans are not responsible for their own sanctification in at least some small measure, the Biblical exhortations to godly living appear meaningless."⁵⁴ While God acts operatively upon the heart and will of a believer, the believer is by no means passive in the process of his sanctification. In fact, the believer remains active in the process of salvation from the point of effectual calling until final perseverance.⁵⁵ Gordon Clark aptly states, "It is indeed dependent on the continuous power of God, but it is also the activity of the regenerated man. Both God and man are active."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Randall Gleason, "B. B. Warfield and Lewis S. Chafer on Sanctification," *JETS* 40 (Jl 1997): 255.

⁵⁵ This is not to say that man receives credit in any way for any part of his salvation. At the same time, one must be sure to preserve the biblical notion of human responsibility in salvation. For example, this position affirms that the new birth is solely a work of grace, but it also affirms that in the experience of the new birth one must repent and believe. Granted that repentance and belief are gifts from God (Acts 5:31, 11:18, Eph 2:8), it is still the individual who is responsible to carry out those religious duties (Acts 16:30,31). See Thomas Schreiner and Art Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001): 314. They write, "To be faithful to Scripture we must preserve the biblical tension between our responsibility to exercise faith and run the race, and the truth that any faith and work we have is a gift of God."

⁵⁶ Gordon H. Clark, *Sanctification* (Jefferson: Trinity Foundation, 1992), 1; Ernst Gaugler, *Die Heiligung im Zeugnis der Schrift* (Bern: BEG-Verlag, 1948), 77; Ernst Gaugler describes this cooperation as, "Das ist die Heiligung Gottes, dass Gott Sich an uns heiligt, das ist unsere Heiligung, dass wir mit unserm ganzen Leben Seine herrlichen

These two points of process and responsible cooperation lend themselves to the personal, individual nature of sanctification. Personal holiness means that every believer lives in different stages, levels, and experiences of this growth in holiness. So the progress is not measured by a stated set of universal, normative goals used in a legalistic fashion. It is not a quantitative list required for every believer to fulfill but rather is a qualitative orientation of believer's life to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet 1:14-16). These three features enforce the given definition's most crucial attribute, necessity.

Given that sanctification is an integral part of the overall schema of salvation, serving as the bridge from justification to glorification, it is necessary for eternal salvation. It is therefore argued, if one does not pursue holiness, one is not a true believer. True faith will seek to reflect holiness in all areas of life. If one is void of faith, one is void of holiness. If one is void of holiness, one is void of eternal life. This is Ryle's understanding when he writes,

There are three things which, according to the Bible, are absolutely necessary to the salvation of every man and woman in Christendom. These three are justification, regeneration, and sanctification. . . . He that lacks any one of these three things is not a true Christian in the sight of God, and, dying in that condition, will not be found in heaven and glorified in the last day.⁵⁷

Clark succinctly writes, "Sanctification *is* the Christian life."⁵⁸ Walter Marshall concludes, "holiness in this life is absolutely necessary to salvation, not only as a *means* to the end, but by a nobler kind of necessity, as *part* of the end itself. Though we are not

Taten in Christus verkunden und preisen." See also Adolf Koberle, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung* (Leipzig: Dorffling & Franke, 1930), 113-235. Koberle devotes a chapter to this dual role.

⁵⁷ Ryle, *Holiness*, 18.

⁵⁸ Clark, *Sanctification*, 1.

saved by good works, as procuring causes: yet we are saved to good works, as fruits and effects of saving grace; *which God hath prepared that we should walk in them* (Eph ii.10).”⁵⁹ There simply is no “Christian” life if there is no “Christian” holiness.

After comparing this definition to six other major perspectives, the next step is to seek a demonstration of how Scripture upholds this understanding of sanctification. The next engagement is a refutation of common objections to this position followed by some important implications this definition conveys for preaching, evangelism, and the Church.⁶⁰

Historical Overview

The following is a brief historical overview of theological positions on sanctification.⁶¹ The purpose for this overview is threefold. First, it is presented to ensure that the writer’s understanding was not developed in a vacuum, but with respect to and regard of history. Second, it is presented to supply an opportunity to critique these positions and illumine the strengths and weaknesses of each. Third, the historical positions will provide a critique and assessment of the author’s definition.

⁵⁹ Marshall, *Mystery*, 99.

⁶⁰ When “Church” is used in this way, it is referring to the universal body of Christ.

⁶¹ Readers who adhere to the following positions may find the descriptions lacking in some areas. However, this overview is not intended as a detailed analysis. It will only focus on the key issues that provide distinction with the other views and the stated definition. See Porter, “Renewal,” 423. Approaching the doctrine of sanctification from historical perspectives is what Steven Porter identifies as the “schools-of-thought” approach.

Wesleyan View

The Wesleyan View takes its name from its founder, John Wesley.⁶² The Wesleyan View believes in the necessity of personal sanctification. It is understood to be a second work of grace just as justification is the first work of grace. At the moment of this second work of the Spirit, the believer experiences “entire sanctification.” “Entire sanctification” is then described as “a personal, definitive work of God’s sanctifying grace by which the war within oneself might cease and the heart be fully released from rebellion into wholehearted love for God and others.”⁶³ Lewis and Demarest explain the effects of the “second blessing experience” in that it “removes inherited sin, eradicates the carnal nature, enables Christians to live without willful sin, and fills the heart with pure love for God and others.”⁶⁴ Straight from the source, Wesley writes, “In conformity, therefore, both to the doctrine of St. John, and the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion: A Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin.”⁶⁵ Furthermore, the

⁶² The Wesleyan View is often defended by referencing statements in Wesley’s *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. See Mudge, *Growth*, 13. An interesting critique of Wesley’s doctrine of “entire sanctification” is found in James Mudge’s work. Mudge points out that in *Plain Account*, “Wesley admits that Paul rarely means saved from all sin, but in his subsequent writings paid no attention to this distinction.”

⁶³ Melvin Dieter, et al., *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 17. See also Laurence W. Wood, *Christian Spirituality: Five Views on Sanctification* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 96. Wood writes, “Entire sanctification is the experience of being made perfect in love.”

⁶⁴ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 177.

⁶⁵ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: Epworth, 1952), 19.

Wesleyan position argues that if perfection were possible only in eternity, God would not have commanded it.⁶⁶

However, this “entire sanctification” does not mean that the believer no longer needs to grow in grace or will never again fall into sin. It only means that the individual has been delivered from the influence of voluntary transgressions.⁶⁷ A believer who has experienced “entire sanctification” is so complete in love towards God and man that he/she will not give in to the temptations to commit known sin.⁶⁸

There are two strengths observed in the Wesleyan position.

First, the Wesleyan position is concerned with an ethical faith, and for that alone it is to be commended. Stanley Hauerwas observes, “Wesley’s doctrine of perfection, for all its difficulties, at least rightly denotes that there is an inherent contradiction to claim to be a Christian without that claim making a difference in our lives and how we live.”⁶⁹ It is right to deduce from the plethora of scriptural statements on morality and the Christian life that Christianity is to be a life of purity, chaste living, and separation from the

⁶⁶ Dennis Leggett, “The Assemblies of God Statement on Sanctification: A Brief Review by Calvin and Wesley,” *Pneuma* 11 no. 2 (Fall 1989): 118.

⁶⁷ Dieter, *Five Views*, 14.

⁶⁸ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 179. Charles Finney, who adopted Wesleyan perfectionism, would argue from texts like Galatians 2:20 that the Apostle Paul “lived without sin and also that he regarded himself as dead to sin in the sense of being permanently sanctified.” This interpretation of Gal 2:20 does not adequately take into account texts like Phil 3:12 where Paul also says of himself that he is not perfect and has not arrived at his goal.

⁶⁹ Stanley Hauerwas, “Characterizing Perfection: Second Thoughts on Character and Sanctification,” in *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 124; quoted in David Fergusson, “Reclaiming the Doctrine of Sanctification,” *Int* 53 no. 4 (1999): 386

entanglements of the worldly culture. Clearly, the primary biblical message for the unbeliever is repentance and faith toward God, and the primary biblical message for the believer is holiness before God. Wesleyans understand this mandate and act on it.

Second, the Wesleyan position is correct in its historical statements of the necessity of sanctification in the life of a believer. Personal, practical holiness is not an option for “special” believers, it is a command for all believers. Wesleyans have historically understood the lack of holiness in someone’s life to be indicative of a lost condition.⁷⁰ W.B. Godbey emphatically writes, “You must have it or there is no heaven for you.”⁷¹ It is for this “bottom line” stance on the necessity of holy living for the obtaining of eternal life that Wesleyans are to be applauded.

There are two weakness noted in the Wesleyan position.

The first objection arises as to their understanding of sanctification as a “second” work of grace. One example of how this view misinterprets Scripture as its defense is found in W. B. Godbey’s *Sanctification*. Godbey appeals to 2 Cor 1:15 where Paul states, “I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing.”⁷² The context, however, simply does not bear out the “second work of grace” position. Paul is speaking of his personal visit with the Corinthians for the purpose of exhortation, not the imparting of some kind of second-level Christianity.

⁷⁰ This has often been stated in an Arminian framework. W.B. Godbey, *Holiness or Hell?* (Atlanta: Foote & Davies, 1893), 34. W. B. Godbey argues, “If they give up their sanctification, there is danger of their going on backsliding till they lose their justification and drag into hell.” A response from the Reformed position would argue that a lack of sanctification indicates there was no true justification to begin with.

⁷¹ Godbey, *Sanctification*, 18.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 58.

Second, while their statement includes ethics and necessity, it is the theological framework they employ to arrive at their conclusion that presents them with a major problem. The teaching of “entire sanctification” automatically raises some problematic issues with regard to using words like “entire” or “perfection” to describe the sanctification one experiences in this life.⁷³ In his *Christian Dogmatics*, Pieper scripturally dismisses the idea of perfection in this life. He argues,

Scripture admonishes us to grow, increase, abound, in sanctification, Eph. 4:15; in every good work, 2 Cor. 9:8; in the work of the Lord, 1 Cor. 15:58; in the knowledge of God, in all patience and long-suffering, Col. 1:11; in the love of the brethren and all men, 1 Thess. 3:12; in knowledge of what is excellent, Phil. 1:10; in doing what pleases God, 1 Thess. 4:1; and couples these admonitions to grow in holiness with the admonition to keep putting off the old man, Eph. 4:22. It is clear that the sanctification of even the most earnest Christians remains imperfect in this life.⁷⁴

At its heart, the Wesleyan position has simply confused final sanctification, that is, glorification, with progressive sanctification.⁷⁵ This error is clear when one sees a faulty application of key texts on final sanctification presented as texts on personal sanctification. John Walvoord writes, “ultimate perfection is not to be achieved until the

⁷³ The most thorough rebuttal of the “perfection” doctrine is B. B. Warfield, *Perfectionism*, 2 vol. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932). See also Peter Vogt, “No Inherent Perfection in this Life: Count Zinzendorf’s Theological Opposition to John Wesley’s Concept of Sanctification,” *BJRL* 85, Part 2/3 (2003): 297–307. Vogt explains that Zinzendorf believed Wesley’s concept of entire perfection diminished the role of Christ and denied the continuing effect of sin.

⁷⁴ Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 3 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 30; quoted in Joel A. Brondos, “Sanctification and Moral Development,” *Concordia Journal* 17 (O 1991): 432.

⁷⁵ A few examples were ascertained of where the Wesleyan position confused personal sanctification with positional sanctification. Godbey, *Sanctification*, 12. Godbey writes, “Why have we so few living witnesses that ‘the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin?’” The context, however, of 1 John 1 indicates this cleansing is an ongoing process based on continued repentance and confession (v.9).

believer stands in the presence of God in heaven.”⁷⁶ Even more tellingly, Lewis and Demarest observe, “James flatly denied that saints attain sinless perfection in this life: ‘We all stumble in many ways’ (James 3:2).”⁷⁷

The Wesleyan response would be that their position has not been rightly understood, at which point they would seek to clarify what is meant by “entire,” and the word then loses all meaning.⁷⁸ Or they focus on “perfected love” as the meaning of “entire sanctification,” and experience itself nullifies their definition.⁷⁹ Glenn Hinson suggests, “Anytime we have to spend so much energy clarifying and defining concepts, wouldn’t it be better to find different terms to express what we want to say?”⁸⁰ Even with appeals to texts like Matthew 5:48, in the end, the toughest challenge for this concept of

⁷⁶ Dieter, *Five Views*, 57. See also David Peterson, *Possessed by God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 68 and Packer, *Spirit*, 140.

⁷⁷ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 204.

⁷⁸ Frank G. Carver, “Biblical Foundations for the ‘Secondness’ of Entire Sanctification,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22 (Fall 1987): 17, 19 respectively. An example of this is when Frank Carver defines entire sanctification as “when in a moment of conscious faith-commitment one decisively and once for all shifts from all reliance on human strength and wisdom in ‘Christian’ living to a sole dependence on the Spirit of Christ for a holy life,” and later provides the following clarification, “This does not mean that there will not be moments of ‘sin improperly so-called’ or perhaps even of ‘sin properly so-called’”

⁷⁹ See Wesley, *Plain Account*, 45. In Wesley’s understanding, “perfect love” will lead to a holy life whereby the believer will not voluntarily transgress a known law of God.

⁸⁰ Hinson, *Spirituality*, 130. See also Ryle, *Holiness*, XX. Against perfectionism Ryle argues, “That believers are exhorted to ‘perfect holiness in the fear of God,’ to ‘go on to perfection,’ to ‘be perfect,’ no careful reader of his Bible will ever think of denying . . . But I have yet to learn that there is a single passage in Scripture which teaches that a literal perfection, a complete and entire freedom from sin, in thought, or word, or deed, is attainable, or ever has been attained, by any child of Adam in this world.”

“entire sanctification” or “perfected love” as lived out in this life, is its inability to ground such a theology in Scripture, especially in light of texts like Romans 7:19.⁸¹

Pentecostal View⁸²

The Pentecostal View grew out of the Wesleyan position in that a second work of sanctification is necessary. Like Wesleyans, Pentecostals understand sanctification to be a

⁸¹ Forde, *Spirituality*, 120. Forde sees the emphasis placed on what one contributes in the Wesleyan view as a “practical pelagianism.” See also David Bundy, “Visions of Sanctification: Themes of Orthodoxy in the Methodist, Holiness, and Pentecostal Traditions,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 39 (2004): 104–136. Bundy has provided an article linking the Methodist, Holiness, and Pentecostal thoughts with Early Church writers, particularly those of the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Bundy argues that Clement of Alexandria, Pseudo-Macarius, and the later Thomas à Kempis influenced Wesley, who in turn influenced Upham, Palmer, and on to Seymour, Abrams, and Barratt. He specifically writes about John and Charles Wesley’s poem “On Clemens Alexandrinus’ Description of a Perfect Christian,” the homilies of Pseudo-Macarius that spoke of perfection, and Thomas’s work *The Imitation of Christ*. Bundy provides a quote from Wesley’s journal where he stated that he wanted to take Clement’s idea of a perfect Christian and present it “in a more scriptural manner.” One could argue, then, that this is where the problems arose in Wesleyan sanctification. After being moved by the pietism and mystical speculation of these writers, Wesley and others attempted to make a doctrine of them from Scripture. In addition, not all Early Fathers wrote on sanctification in that way. See Casimir McCambley, “Saint Gregory of Nyssa: *Peri Teleiotes*—On Perfection,” *GOTR* 29 (Winter 1984): 349–379. McCambley provides insight into St. Gregory of Nyssa’s *On Perfection* and finds in it the description of sanctification as cooperative, progressive, and never achieved in this life. Interestingly enough, Bundy cites a source that suggests Macarius’s “Homilies” influenced Gregory of Nyssa. Evidently, though, Gregory did not adhere to Macarius’s understanding of attaining perfection in this life.

⁸² The description of Pentecostalism presented here is a succinct overview of Stanley Horton’s contribution to *Five Views on Sanctification*. The statement on sanctification from the Assemblies of God and some charismatic groups is similar to the author’s position. See The Statement of Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God < http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Statement_of_Fundamental_Truths/sft_short.cfm > (accessed January 3, 2008). Statement 9 reads, “We believe sanctification initially occurs at salvation and is not only a declaration that a believer is holy, but also a progressive lifelong process of separating from evil as believers continually draw closer to God and become more Christlike.” See also J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 83–117. Williams, as a charismatic, describes sanctification as a process with a beginning in conversion, a continuation through life, and a completion at glorification. The only element missing in these definitions is the aspect of necessity.

second experience following conversion. Yet, while Wesleyans define this as a second work of grace, Pentecostals describe it as the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The second blessing of sanctification must come in order to prepare the believer to receive the baptism.⁸³ This “baptism” is to be sought for by believers, and they are not complete without it. When one has been baptized in the Spirit, it will be evidenced through the gift of speaking in tongues.⁸⁴

There is one strength observed in the Pentecostal position.

As with the Wesleyan statement, the present understanding is in agreement with the conclusion of Pentecostalism’s sanctification. There is in this teaching an understanding that a vital, important step takes place in the life of a believer between justification and glorification. In addition, this step has everything to do with growing in holiness. However, also as with the Wesleyan statement, their theological structure that supports their conclusion lacks scriptural support.

⁸³ Horton, *Five Views*, 106. In a response to Horton, Melvin Dieter, a Wesleyan proponent, readily acknowledges the Methodist root within Pentecostalism. Ibid., 136. See also the Articles of Faith of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, < <http://arc.iphc.org/theology/artfaith.html> > (accessed January 3, 2008). Article 10 reads, “While sanctification is initiated in regeneration and consummated in glorification, we believe that it includes a definite, instantaneous work of grace achieved by faith subsequent to regeneration.”

⁸⁴ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 179–181. Lewis and Demarest distinguish the two major branches of Pentecostalism, a minority wing that was influenced by Wesleyans and a majority wing that arose independent of Wesleyan influence. The majority wing defines sanctification in terms of progress and holds that entire sanctification does not occur until glorification. Both groups, however, hold to a Holy Spirit baptism that takes place in between the new birth and sanctification.

There is one weakness noted in the Pentecostal position.

The idea of a Holy Ghost baptism separate from conversion that is mandatory for all believers and the idea that all Spirit-filled believers are granted the gift of tongues are concepts foreign to the Bible. Rom 8:9 forthrightly states that everyone who belongs to Christ is indwelt by the Spirit of God. In the same way, 1 Cor 12:9-10 teaches that the Spirit assigns varied gifts to believers so that not everyone is gifted with various kinds of tongues. The core hermeneutical error in Pentecostalism is its misapplication of the book of Acts as prescriptive of the church age instead of descriptive of the transitory period of the early church. Anthony Hoekema points to five texts which speak of baptism in the Holy Spirit, none of which refer to an experience after conversion that believers must undergo, but rather refer to a historical event which is not repeatable.⁸⁵

The error occurs when Pentecostals read into these texts a necessity upon all believers to undergo this particular expression of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Packer insists, “The only reason why the first disciples had to be taken through a two-stage, two-level pattern of experience was that they became believers before Pentecost.”⁸⁶ All believers undergo baptism in the Holy Spirit at conversion, now that the church age has come to full fruition (1 Cor 12:13). In addition, not every believer must or should have the gift of speaking in tongues (1 Cor 12:30).

Along these same lines, Peterson makes the case that 1 Thess 5:23, which is often quoted by Pentecostals to support “second blessing,” provides “no suggestion that a second ‘crisis of faith’ can bring us to an immediate perfection in love or to a new level

⁸⁵ Hoekema, *Five Views*, 141.

⁸⁶ Packer, *Spirit*, 91.

of spirituality where practical holiness becomes more attainable.”⁸⁷ An even more telling rebuttal of this position is Packer’s analysis that the most-quoted texts to support a second blessing theology are not defensible on the linguistic level. The use of the preposition (*en*) in Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 1:5, and 11:16 makes the Spirit the element in which Christ baptizes, which renders these texts as applicable to conversion.⁸⁸

Keswick View

The Wesleyan and Pentecostal statements on a second work or a second crisis of faith influenced the Keswick position. The Keswick proposal rightly acknowledges the vast amount of Scripture calling for change and growth. After listing seven such passages, J. Robertson McQuilkin inquires, “From this sampling of biblical teaching on the subject, who can deny that God intends the normal Christian life to be a life of change, advancing in knowledge and in likeness to Jesus Christ?”⁸⁹ The emphasis on advancement in that statement could almost be taken for a reformed view of sanctification, but the shift is made when the Keswick teaching provides the solution for how one is to advance in knowledge and likeness.

For the Keswick adherent, the solution for sanctification is the “Let go and let God” mentality.⁹⁰ A person must come to a crisis point of faith in which he quits trying to

⁸⁷ David Peterson, *Possessed by God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 81.

⁸⁸ Packer, *Spirit*, 203.

⁸⁹ McQuilkin, *Five Views*, 179.

⁹⁰ Godbey, *Sanctification*, 105. An example of Keswick’s thought rooted in Wesleyan thought is when Godbey writes, “I rest sweetly in the arms of Jesus, and let him manage me and my affairs.” See also Packer, *Spirit*, 148. Packer explains the

live better and simply allows God to do His work of holiness in him. Therefore, the resolution of the crisis between the scriptural mandate and the moral laxness observed in the church begins with experience. McQuilkin writes, “The average experience of church members is far different from New Testament norms for the Christian life.”⁹¹ Lewis and Demarest explain, “The born-again person becomes a ‘spiritual Christian’ by a postconversion, crisis experience of unconditional surrender or complete abandonment to Christ. One receives fullness of the Spirit not by a protracted spiritual struggle, but simply by a decision of the will to dethrone self and enthrone Christ.”⁹² Christians then have the option to settle for a subnormal Christian experience through ignorance or unbelief or live the victorious Christian life through domination of sin through rejection of self-effort and utter reliance upon God.⁹³

There is one strength observed in the Keswick position.

The great strength of this view is its uncompromising position that the biblical witness for the normal Christian life is a vastly different presentation than the perceived evangelical norm. The New Testament neither presents the option nor the portrayal of an

Keswick position as bidding to “cease striving to be holy and embrace the habit of trusting Jesus.”

⁹¹ McQuilkin, *Five Views*, 151.

⁹² Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 182.

⁹³ See Luke S. Fetters, “The Holy Spirit in Sanctification,” In *Theological Perspectives* (Huntington: The Church of the United Brethren of Christ, 1992). Fetters explains the United Brethren of Christ position on sanctification. While UBC is a descendant of Wesleyan theologically in its Arminian stance and emphasizing the role of the Spirit, it departs from the Wesleyan influence of a necessary second work. UBC calls for an active response on behalf of the believer and believes growth in grace to be a life-long process.

accepted, below average Christian experience. By implication then, the biblical Christian life is attainable for all believers. Once again, as with the previous two positions, the Keswick teaching recognizes the disjunction between the Bible's description of Christianity and their contemporary accepted Christianity. There is full agreement with this despairing observation, but it is with the solution that the problems arise.

There are three noted weaknesses in the Keswick position.

First, problems immediately arise when proponents of this view begin to define sin and victory over it in this life. Hoekema points out the seeming contradiction of defining sin as falling short of God's glory and simultaneously maintaining the possibility of a uniformed sustained victory over known sin.⁹⁴ A transgression of one of God's commandments, while maybe unknown to the individual at the time, is a falling short of God's glory. Furthermore, the victorious Christian life teaching implies there is no more warfare against the flesh, world, and temptation.⁹⁵ This is simply not the Christian

⁹⁴ Hoekema, *Five Views*, 188. See also J. I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness* (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1992, 1999), 138. Packer writes, "It is, in fact, a law of the spiritual life that the further you go, the more you are aware of the distance to be covered." Further knowledge of an individual's estrangement from godliness is in itself part of one's growth in holiness. Through this realization of one's own depravity, he/she is beginning to think more and more about sin and grace from God's perspective. See also Godbey, *Sanctification*, 23. This contradiction has filtered down from the Wesleyan position. Godbey confusingly proposes in almost the same breath, "The soul pure from every spot, clean from all unrighteousness . . . it can never reach absolute maturity." In addition, see Packer, *Spirit*, 154. Packer observes this seeming contradiction and states, "They really did affirm a perfection of acts, and they really did deny that after conversion God further changes our hearts, and both claims are wrong."

⁹⁵ Godbey, *Sanctification*, 8. A connection with Wesleyan thought is when Godbey pointedly states, "And where is the war? The battle is fought, the victory won, the field is silent."

experience. Not only do the “average” believers continue to wrestle with sin, but the heroes of the faith and the biblical witness indicate the battle is lifelong (Eph 6:12).

Second, the Keswick position resolves the dilemma between the biblical passages and normal experience with a “quit trying” answer. Packer tellingly states of this Keswick flaw, “[I]t knows no other way of opposing Pelagian activism than by establishing Pelagian quietism in its place; and its way of exalting the Spirit’s work in sanctification really amounts to a calamitous depreciation of it.”⁹⁶ On the other hand, the NT resolves this dilemma with a “get busy” answer.

Third, in Keswick sanctification an individual church member who sees no use in pursuing holiness is described as sub-normal.⁹⁷ In a vastly different analysis, the NT describes such a church member as unsaved (James 2:14).

Dispensational View

The Dispensational View is sometimes referred to as the Augustinian View or the Chaferian View.⁹⁸ This view correctly identifies the ongoing struggle that exists in the Christian experience post-conversion. Dispensationalism identifies this tension as the

⁹⁶ J.I. Packer, “Keswick and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification,” *EvQ* 27 (Jl-Sep 1955): 154. See also Jack Lee Arnold, “The Pauline Doctrine of Progressive Sanctification” (Th. D. diss., Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1967): 191. Providing quotes on passivity from Hannah White Smith and Edwin H. Palmar, Arnold concludes, “Much of what the victorious teachers are attempting to teach is certainly within the scope of Pauline theology, but they fail to stress the importance of obedience, struggle, and warfare in Christian living. These victorious life teachers give a one-sided picture.”

⁹⁷ McQuilkin, *Five Views*, 160. The term “subnormal” is used by Keswick proponents.

⁹⁸ Jonathan R. Pratt, “Dispensational Sanctification: A Misnomer,” *DBSJ* 7 (Fall 2002): 95–108. Pratt demonstrates in his article that the dispensational view of sanctification is rooted in the sanctification teachings of Lewis Sperry Chafer and Charles Ryrie. See also John F. Walvoord, “Augustinian-Dispensational View,” in *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).

battle to overcome carnal Christianity and live in the spiritual realm. Therefore, sanctification is the process of deciding to become mature in Christ.

In this understanding, then, sanctification is not necessary. It is merely a decision that some Christians make in order to grow in their faith. It is essential for maturity but irrelevant for salvation. The only consequence for remaining “carnal” and not learning to live by the Spirit is the loss of heavenly reward.⁹⁹ On the other hand, this view is in agreement with the author’s defense of progressive sanctification and the final culmination of sanctification in glorification.¹⁰⁰

There are two strengths observed in the Dispensational position.

One strength of this position is its realism. The Dispensational View does not dismiss but rather seeks to properly deal with the war that rages within a believer after conversion. Tracing its answer back to Augustine, it resolves this dilemma by arguing for

⁹⁹ See Bob Wilkin, “The Biblical Distinction Between Eternal Salvation and Eternal Rewards: A Key to Proper Exegesis,” *JGES* 9 (Spr 1996): 15–24. See also Zane Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1985, 1987). Hodges’ thesis is that inheriting the kingdom is not the same as entering it. So for example someone walking in the sins listed in 1 Cor 6:9 will still enter the kingdom, he just will not inherit it. One would point to 2 Pet 1:10-11 as evidence that Hodges’ hermeneutical distinction between entering and inheriting is terribly flawed. “Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.” Peter uses “entrance” in this text in the way that Hodges argues for an understanding of “inheritance.” They are not, then, separate, but synonymous terms. See also Luke 10:25-28 where Jesus equates “inheriting eternal life” with “eternal life” and not as an elevated sense of eternal life.

¹⁰⁰ Walvoord, *Five Views*, 225. See also Randall Gleason, “B. B. Warfield and Lewis S. Chafer on Sanctification,” *JETS* 40 (Ju 1997): 250 and Arthur L. Farstad, “We Believe in Sanctification: Part 1,” *JGES* 5, no. 2 (Aut 1992): 4–10.

a two-nature existence for a Christian.¹⁰¹ While the Christian has been made alive in Christ, the sin nature remains in this life.

A second strength is the insistence on relying on the Holy Spirit. Walvoord writes, “Redeemed individuals cannot lead a holy life apart from divine help.”¹⁰² This help is described as the filling of the Holy Spirit. When a believer is filled with the Spirit, that is, when he allows the Spirit to minister, the Spirit then enables the believer to live a holy life.¹⁰³

There is one noted weakness in the Dispensational position.

The main weakness of the Dispensational View flows from the previous traditions to which it owes its heritage. For the Dispensationalists, as with the Wesleyan, Pentecostal, and Keswick adherent, sanctification is only a possibility based on the decision of a believer. For the Wesleyan it is necessary for perfected love. For the Pentecostal it is necessary for empowered service. For the Keswick it is necessary for the victorious life. For the Dispensationalist it is necessary in order to not be a “carnal Christian.” But for all these positions, it is merely a choice for the believer.¹⁰⁴ The “Carnal Christian” doctrine will be discussed as a fallacy in chapter four, but suffice it for now to say that progressive sanctification must and will take place in the life of a believer

¹⁰¹ Walvoord, *Five Views*, 203. The resolution of a two-natured believer may be questionable, but the point here is the acknowledgment of the struggle.

¹⁰² Ibid., 209.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 216.

¹⁰⁴ Pratt, “Dispensational,” 102–105.

for it is the will and work of God (1 Thess 4:3, 5:23, 24).¹⁰⁵ Growth and maturity are not options for those believers who want to overcome the flesh, they are characteristics of believers as they are overcoming the flesh.

Lutheran View

A concise statement of the Lutheran View of sanctification is Gerhard Forde's assessment, "sanctification is a matter of us getting used to our justification."¹⁰⁶ In the Lutheran schema, sanctification cannot be divorced from justification temporally. Sanctification will naturally flow out God's justification of a believer. So it is necessary, but only in the sense that it is connected intrinsically to justification.¹⁰⁷ As with every other facet of our salvation, the Lutheran view ties all of sanctification to the work and person of Christ.¹⁰⁸

There is one strength observed in the Lutheran position.

The Lutheran position emphasizes the role of faith, the Word, the Spirit, and the Church in the success of sanctification. Scripture identifies these as crucial elements for providing the means of progress in the faith and separation from the world. However, the Lutheran view holds that the Christological factor is the main ingredient for

¹⁰⁵ Lienhard Pflaum, *Jesus Christus, unsere Heiligung* (Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1967), 9. Pflaum asserts, "Heiligung ist nötig. Darum ist sie Gottes Wille."

¹⁰⁶ Alexander, *Spirituality*, 23.

¹⁰⁷ Elmer L. Towns, "Martin Luther on Sanctification," *BSac* 126 (Ap-Ju 1969): 121-122. Luther, however, did occasionally warn of the danger of eternal punishment if sanctification was neglected.

¹⁰⁸ See David Fergusson, "Reclaiming the Doctrine of Sanctification," *Int* 53, no.4 (1999): 384.

sanctification. It is because of the work of Christ that people can now be sanctified. It is solely due to union with Christ that the believer experiences sanctification. And it is entirely based on the work of Christ that God sanctifies and the Spirit equips the saint for service. The Lutheran emphasis on Christ rightly brings attention to Christ in the discussion of sanctification (2 Cor 5:15,17), but this strength is also a weakness.

There are two noted weaknesses in the Lutheran position.

The total christocentric position of the Lutheran view diminishes the full Trinitarian portrait of sanctification. David Scaer explains the Lutheran christocentric focus saying, "Doctrines should not be regarded as separate entities brought together to construct a whole, but perspectives on Christ's person and work (i.e., Christology)."¹⁰⁹ It is right to be Christologically focused; the Scriptures present Christ as central in the work of redemption. However, one must be careful in being so christocentric as to suppress the role of the Father and the Spirit in creation, redemption, consummation, and specifically here, sanctification. Packer explains sanctification as decreed by the Father (1 Thess 5:23), procured by the Son (1 Cor 1:30), and effected by the Spirit (2 Thess 2:13).¹¹⁰ Each person's role is so vital that to lose one would be to lose sanctification as biblically defined. The Trinitarian activity in sanctification must be maintained.

One other flaw in the Lutheran definition is its apparent melding of progressive sanctification into justification. While it is correct to view both justification and sanctification as parts of God's saving grace, it goes too far in not distinguishing, at least

¹⁰⁹ David P. Scaer, "Sanctification in the Lutheran Confessions," *CTQ* 53 (Jl 1989): 166.

¹¹⁰ J.I. Packer, "Keswick," 155. See also R.B. Larter, "The Doctrine of Sanctification," *EvQ* 27 (Jl-S 1955): 146.

didactically, the varied roles of justifying grace and sanctifying grace. Steven Hein writes,

As the Spirit works faith in the heart, we receive and live in a righteous, forgiven relationship with God. This is justification. And, as the Spirit works this same gospel message, the powerful pardon of Christ's righteousness matures us as a new creation in him and empowers us for faithful living. This is sanctification. It is not a separate work of God from justification. Rather, both are simply different aspects of God's saving work through the righteousness of Christ (grace!) that is ours through faith.¹¹¹

Justification is an act of declaration, whereas sanctification is an act of actualization. The two are too different to be classed as the same work.

An example of this is David Peterson's work *Possessed by God*. Peterson's goal is to argue for the biblical emphasis placed on initial sanctification rather than the normal assumption of Christendom to emphasize the progressive nature.¹¹² That is, sanctification is more about God taking possession of us and setting us apart to belong to Him. For support he appeals to texts such as Heb 2:11, 10:10, and 10:14 to demonstrate how sanctification is referring to a one-time action not implying progression and that the sanctified are identified as a particular group within humanity who benefit from Christ's sanctifying work.

Peterson's work is a helpful correction to the understanding of sanctification. The Bible does emphasize the positional aspect of sanctification. However, one should not emphasize positional sanctification to the neglect or denial of progressive sanctification,

¹¹¹ Hein, "Pardon," 21. See also Clarence Tucker Craig, "Paradox of Holiness: The New Testament Doctrine of Sanctification," *Int* 6 (Ap 1952): 161. Craig writes, "... the human task in response to God's salvation should not be confused with his saving work in Christ. One aspect of this [saving work in Christ] is bringing us into nearness to God, which is the essential meaning of sanctification."

¹¹² Peterson, *Possessed*, 13, 15.

and this is Peterson's error. This is clearly the case when Peterson explains Heb 12:14. He argues that "pursue" in the context of Hebrews means something like realizing the practical benefit of what has been given to a believer in Christ.¹¹³ Peterson's definition of "pursue" in essence removes the force of the passage, not to mention that the writer of Hebrews could have used "realize" (eg. Heb 8:11, γνῶθι, aorist, imperative) but did not. Instead, he called his readers to decisive, urgent action; pursue.

It seems then that passivity is also a weakness of the Lutheran view. It is not a Keswick passivity that says, "Let Go and Let God," but rather a settled resting in the work that God will bring about. An example of this would be K. James Stein's explanation of Philipp Jakob Spener's view of sanctification. He writes, "This is why he [Spener] never appealed to Christians in his day to be renewed through self-discipline. This was a work of law and could only lead to inflated pride and hypocrisy. Instead it was through Bible study, prayer, and faithful attendance upon the Lord's Supper that renewing grace would come."¹¹⁴ One might respond by asking, "Are these things not disciplines?" meaning that, in order to partake of activities such as Bible study, prayer, and the Lord's Supper, one must choose to do so and act accordingly.

The Lutheran position is trying to ward off a slide into moralism,¹¹⁵ but it goes too far in not calling for responsible participation and response from the believer. For example, Scaer argues that "preaching will by itself reform the sinner."¹¹⁶ One might

¹¹³ Ibid., 74.

¹¹⁴ K. James Stein, "Renewal: Philipp Jakob Spener's Parallel Word for Sanctification," *AsTJ* 51 (Fall 1996): 10.

¹¹⁵ Scaer, "Confessions," 165.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 169.

inquire in response, “Does preaching through the Scripture not essentially call believers to action?”¹¹⁷ In contrast, however, the Bible portrays the work of God in sanctification as the believer working in faith. In examining texts like Rom 6:19, 2 Cor 7:1, and Gal 5:16, Charles Ryrie concludes, “God’s part in sanctification must never lead to quietism which fails to involve the believer’s activity.”¹¹⁸ Ryle convincingly argues,

The very same apostle who says in one place, “The life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God,” says in another place, “I fight,” “I run,” “I keep under my body”; and in other places, “Let us cleanse ourselves,” “Let us labour,” “Let us lay aside every weight.” ...Moreover, the Scriptures nowhere teach us that faith *sanctifies* us in the same sense and in the same manner that faith *justifies* us!¹¹⁹

In this way, the Lutheran View falls into the same error as the Keswick view even though the two are theological opposites.

Reformed View¹²⁰

The Reformed View begins with its understanding of sin. Because of the fallen nature of humanity, the sin problem is a dual problem. According to Calvin, sin affects

¹¹⁷ See Donald B. Rogers, “Can Education Aid in Sanctification?” *Journal of Theology* 99 (1995): 74. Rogers says that he prefers the Wesleyan position on sanctification because those who emphasize grace allow little if any room “for any human action that contributes, even in a preparatory manner, for becoming Godly in one’s thought and actions.”

¹¹⁸ Ryrie, *Salvation*, 152.

¹¹⁹ Ryle, *Holiness*, XVIII. In comparing Rom 4:5 and Ja 2:17, Ryle later comments, “It is thoroughly scriptural and right to say, ‘Faith alone justifies.’ But it is not equally scriptural and right to say, ‘Faith alone sanctifies.’” (p. XIX)

¹²⁰ For full disclosure in light of the unavoidable theological influence for a discussion of sanctification, the author of this work writes from a Reformed perspective. His desire is that while his theology may guide the discussion, he will allow Scripture and the insight of others to modify his views on sanctification when it is imperative to do so, and this writer does depart from most reformed writers in issuing a call for the necessity of progressive sanctification.

humanity legally and morally.¹²¹ As opposed to the Lutheran View, the Reformed view distinguishes justification and sanctification based on the two assaults inflicted by sin. Justification is the answer to the legal problem, and sanctification cures the moral corruption. In addition, the Reformed View calls for action from the believer in terms of responsible cooperation with the work of God. Like Lutheran theology, Reformed thinking grounds both justification and sanctification in faith christologically.¹²²

The Reformed View of sanctification emphasizes primarily the work of God in a believer's life. As part of God's saving activity with man, sanctification is not an option for the Christian, it is inevitable for the Christian. At the same time, Reformed theology holds that man remains responsible to grow in the likeness of Christ.¹²³ God is the impetus, and He prompts obedience. Jonathan Pratt describes this paradox as "Believers...are responsible to obey the commands of God, but they will do so because of the sanctifying work of God in the believer's heart."¹²⁴ Thus, it is with sanctification as with conversion, a great paradox exists between sovereignty and responsibility.

¹²¹ Calvin, *Inst.* II, 1, 8.

¹²² Ibid., II, 16. See also Marshall, *Mystery of Sanctification*, 243. Marshall's thesis is that union with Christ is the primary secret of our sanctification. It is the how and why. He writes in light of 1 Cor 1:30, Rom 8:1,9, and John 13:8, "If Christ be thine, he will be sanctification as well as righteousness."

¹²³ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 185. The understanding that sanctification is part of God's sovereign grace, calls for the participation of the believer, and is never complete in this life can be traced back to Augustine.

¹²⁴ Pratt, "Dispensational," 105.

There are two observed strengths in the Reformed position.

The strength of the Reformed position is that it does not call for a post-conversion decision or experience; it merely calls for obedience to the scriptural command for holiness. Since sanctification is a given beyond justification due to the work of God's grace, it remains for the believer only to pursue holiness in all aspects of life. This view, then, rightly calls the believer to action based on grace.

A second and more pertinent strength of reformed sanctification is its call for necessity. Jonathan Rainbow concludes from his study on Calvin, "Sanctification is *salvation*, just as much as justification is *salvation*. It is grace. Nor is it optional, or dispensible, but necessary and inevitable."¹²⁵ With sin understood as a dual problem and justification plus sanctification understood as the dual solution, sanctification is necessary for complete salvation.¹²⁶

There is one noted weakness in the Reformed position.

The weakness of this position is its lack of stress on the necessity of pursuing a sanctified life from contemporary writers. Reformed writers will say that sanctification necessarily follows justification, but they do not speak of sanctification itself as

¹²⁵ Rainbow, "Double Grace," 104.

¹²⁶ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 184. The relation of justification with sanctification is essential to Reformed theology. Lewis and Demarest summarize it as follows: "In terms of differences, justification is a legal declaration of right standing before God (imputed righteousness), whereas sanctification makes the believer existentially holy (inherent righteousness). Moreover, justification is an instantaneous event, whereas sanctification is a lifelong process. Finally, justification allows for no degrees, whereas sanctification admits of degrees. In terms of their inner unity, justification issues in sanctification, thereby eliminating the error of cheap grace. And sanctification is grounded in justification, thereby avoiding the error of works-righteousness."

necessary. These are slightly different statements of necessity, but each bear enormous implications. To say that sanctification necessarily follows justification means that every believer *will* exhibit holiness of life. To say that sanctification is just as necessary as justification means that every believer *must* exhibit holiness of life. The one emphasizes sovereignty, the other responsibility; both are essential.

After affirming that holiness is commanded and listing fourteen biblical passages which command and warn the believer to be holy, Packer asks rhetorically, “Can anyone still doubt, after all this, that for every Christian without exception holiness is important.”¹²⁷ Is it just important or is it necessary? In the same way, Jerry Bridges speaks of godliness as not optional, but then uses the categories of duty and privilege to describe it instead of the language of necessity.¹²⁸ This position argues that the use of necessity language is more accurate to the biblical presentation of progressive sanctification. It is also believed that reformed writers hesitate to employ the component of necessity due to their immovable insistence on justification by faith. It seems that if the presence of faith settles the justification issue, then nothing else could be necessary for eternal life. This writer would issue a call to return to Calvin’s presentation of sanctification. If both justification and sanctification are components of salvation, then they must be balanced with each other. As J.C. Ryle writes in his famous work *Holiness*, “Yet, sanctification in its proper place and proportion is quite as important as justification. Sound Protestant and evangelical doctrine is useless if it is not accompanied

¹²⁷ Packer, *Holiness*, 34–37.

¹²⁸ Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1983, 1996), 12.

by a holy life. It is worse than useless; it does positive harm.”¹²⁹ An emphasis on the necessity of sanctification by faith does in no way diminish the necessity of justification by faith. The Bible presents both, and so must the Church.

¹²⁹ Ryle, *Holiness*, XVI.

Summary of Introduction

This dissertation argues for the necessity of progressive sanctification in order to obtain eternal life. In order to properly define sanctification, one must begin by understanding salvation with its full range of aspects as it is presented in Scripture. Like salvation, sanctification too is presented in Scripture with a varying range of aspects. When salvation is understood as an umbrella term encompassing sanctification, sanctification is no longer an optional choice for believers but a necessary component of their salvation.

Sanctification is the process whereby through the enabling grace of God, the accomplished work of Christ, and the sustaining work of the Holy Spirit a believer will necessarily progress in his or her personal holiness towards the goal of inheriting eternal life. While the popular historical perspectives present some of these qualities, there is no contemporary position that presents them with the same understanding and emphasis as does this definition. This is not to say though that this understanding of sanctification is a novelty. Owen and Ryle are examples of theologians who espoused the necessity of sanctification. And most importantly, the neglect or denial of the necessity of sanctification for complete salvation is less than biblical and carries grave consequences.

CHAPTER 2

THE NECESSITY OF SANCTIFICATION IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES

This chapter will examine passages from Romans, Colossians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians to defend the present thesis that personal sanctification is necessary to obtain eternal life.¹ Each passage is discussed in light of the broad context of the book in which it appears and the narrow context of the surrounding verses. This approach is meant to test the validity of the given definition of sanctification through scriptural exegesis. By examining several texts, the ultimate aim is, through the analogy of Scripture, to establish the given definition as adhering to the holistic biblical portrait.

Before the scriptural texts are presented, two preliminary questions should be answered. First, one may wonder if the proposed definition could be strengthened through an appeal to logic. Second, one may raise the issue of why the author is limiting the discussion to the epistolary documents.² In addressing the first question, logical reasoning is certainly utilized with this discussion, but it is so strongly indicated within

¹ A. Andrew Das, "Oneness in Christ: The *Nexus Indivulsus* Between Justification and Sanctification in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *Concordia Journal* 21 (Ap 1995): 173, 186. Das presents a case for the necessity of sanctification from the book of Galatians. In his opening paragraph, he writes, "Where there is justification there is always sanctification." He argues that Paul bases sanctification on union with Christ just as he does justification. He then concludes, "'In Christ' is thus the organic link between our justification and our daily Christian lives."

² Kenneth Arnold Lesta, "The Nature of Sanctification in the New Testament," (Ph. D. diss., Bob Jones University, 1979). Lesta provides a thorough examination of all the texts in the NT that address sanctification directly.

the discussion that there seems little warrant in making it a separate point. If sanctification bridges justification and glorification, then it is logically necessary. If salvation is a process in which sanctification is an integral component, then it is logically necessary. In the end, however, the logical argument becomes a scriptural argument when considering texts like 1 Thess 4:3. “For this is the will of God, your sanctification” It is God’s will, therefore, it is logically necessary. This is, as was observed in the previous chapter, the Lutheran position.

In answer to the second issue, does the author’s understanding of sanctification bear out in the Old Testament and Gospel texts? There are several OT passages which carry the notion of necessity in relation to sanctification. Examples of this are the New Covenant texts like Jer 24:7; 32:40, Ez 11:19-20; 36:26-27.³ These texts state that when God gives an individual a new heart in the New Covenant administration, that person will then live a life that is pleasing to the Lord.⁴

A Gospel example is the Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5-7.⁵ The bulk of the sermon is a contrast between true and false righteousness that is demonstrated through actions. One of the crucial hinge texts of this discourse is Jesus’ statement in 5:20 that unless the righteousness of His listeners surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, they would not

³ Rodney R. Hutton, “Innocent or Holy? Justification and Sanctification in Old Testament Theology,” *WW* 17 (Sum 1997): 312–321. Hutton employs the JEDP theory and sees D defining sanctification as a declaration while P defines sanctification as a standard to which the people should give their allegiance. However, Hutton’s purpose is not to demonstrate opposing aspects, but to show the varied aspects of sanctification.

⁴ Examples of texts dealing with sanctification other than New Covenant passages are Isa 1:16-17; Jer 4:14; and Ps 119:9.

⁵ Hanna Stettler, “Sanctification in the Jesus Tradition,” *Bib* 85, no. 2 (2004): 153–179. Stettler provides an excellent treatment of how Jesus taught sanctification in the Gospel accounts.

enter the kingdom of heaven. The sermon continues then through a list of actions both external and internal that would fall under the domain of personal sanctification (e.g. lust, loving one's enemies, giving, praying, fasting).

In light of such texts, one could rightly assume this is a canonical understanding of sanctification.⁶ Furthermore, any discussion of sanctification quickly turns to the epistles due to the high volume of pertinent texts found in these letters. Hanna Stettler opines, "In Paul, the issue of holiness and sanctification is even more prominent than that of justification."⁷ While some may challenge Stettler on that point, a brief look in any exhaustive concordance would quickly substantiate the claim that "sanctification" and/or "holiness" are frequent themes in the Pauline corpus.⁸ The scriptural analysis will begin with an examination of Romans 6 and 8.

⁶ Another example of a Gospel text indicating the necessity of sanctification is John 8:31. Furthermore, the judgment scene in Matt 25:31-46 calls for necessity of sanctification to obtain eternal life. The separation of those who were to inherit and those who were to depart is entirely based on their deeds, that is, sanctification. The presence of sanctification, then, is the final proof of regeneracy before the bar of God's final judgment. See Ryle, *Holiness*, 27-28. Ryle writes, "I can find no evidence that will be admitted on that day, except sanctification." In addition see Schreiner and Caneday, *Race*, 97. These authors conclude from the judgment being according to deeds, "...because our deeds show what we truly believe, when God judges us he will assess our behavior and, in keeping with that behavior, will either reward us with eternal life or pour his wrath on us."

⁷ Stettler, "Jesus," 153. See also Arnold, *Pauline Doctrine*, 1. Arnold writes, "The Apostle Paul has more to say about sanctification than any other writer of Scripture. As a matter of fact, if one did not have Paul's teaching on sanctification, this doctrine would not be clearly understood, for there would be great gaps in one's thinking on the Christian life. Paul's teaching on the doctrine of progressive sanctification is fundamental to a healthy and prosperous spiritual experience."

⁸ James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1890), 488, 876. Not counting the derivatives of these terms, "holiness" appears 9 times in Paul's writings and 5 times in the other NT documents (including 2 in

Romans

The book of Romans is one of the most theologically rich books of the New Testament. What follows is a brief sketch of the overall themes and movements of the book for the purpose of placing our selected texts from Romans in their proper context. Understanding the main emphases that Paul addresses in Romans will aid in guiding the interpretation of specific passages.

As customary, Paul opens Romans with greetings, thanksgiving, and an expressed desire to come preach the Gospel in Rome (1:1-15). Paul is confident in the success of the Gospel (1:16,17) and his two-fold compulsion to preach the Gospel is God's wrath against unrighteousness and man's state of total depravity (1:18-32). The total unrighteousness of man sets the stage for all that follows in Paul's letter to the church at Rome.

Paul continues his opening theme of depravity and establishes that no one is excluded from this state and practice of unrighteousness. However, God is pleased with everyone who does good. Each individual either stands under the wrath of God or awaits glory and honor based on whether they practice evil or good (2:1-11). Being a Jew does not grant special privilege or provide justification before God. Only those who practice the Law will be justified, whether from the heart or according to the letter. A true Jew, then, is one who keeps the Law from the heart by the Spirit (2:12-29). Without faith, though, it is impossible to keep the Law. Both Jew and Gentile stand condemned and cannot be justified through the works of the Law because the purpose of the Law is to reveal sin (3:1-20).

Hebrews), and "sanctification" appears 4 times in Paul's writings and only 1 other time in the NT (1 Pet 1:2).

At this point, Paul begins explaining the crucial role of faith and develops the doctrine of *sola fide*. Justification only comes to Jew and Gentile alike through faith in Christ because of His atonement (3:21-31). Abraham's justification by faith previous to his circumcision demonstrates that faith alone justifies both Jew and Gentile (4:1-15). The reason justification can only occur from faith is so that the promise can be made to all, whether under the Law or not (4:16-25).

Christ secured this justification for believers through His substitutionary death (5:1-11). Paul presents Adam as a type of Christ to explain how Christ's death is able to save believers (5:21-21). In verse nineteen he writes, "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous." "The many" are made righteous by union with Christ in His death and resurrection. Death with Christ frees believers from slavery to sin, and resurrection with Christ frees believers to live a new life (6:1-7).

Next Paul shows how union with Christ affects the believer. Death in Christ enables believers to be dead to sin and alive to God (6:8-11). Now that the believer is under grace and not the Law, he is free from the mastery of sin and is called upon to not allow sin to reign in the body (6:12-14). Based on the change of heart, the believer is now able to present his members as slaves of righteousness instead of slaves of sin, which results in sanctification (6:15-19). Slavery to sin only produces death, but being enslaved to God produces fruit and ultimately eternal life. This is otherwise known as sanctification (6:20-23).

Through the death of Christ, believers are freed from the Law, which brings condemnation. This freedom from bondage by death is illustrated as when a widow is

free to remarry based on the death of her spouse (7:1-6). However, the Law is not sin; it is actually good because it reveals sin. Sin itself is the problem because it is sin that brings death (7:7-13). Paul reasons that when he does wrong and acknowledges his wrongdoing, he is in agreement with the Law. He continues, however, in wrongdoing because of the sin that dwells in him (7:14-20). It is by his mind or soul that he desires to serve God, but his body, still under the domain of sin, wars against his mind (7:21-25).⁹

Christ therefore has accomplished what the Law could not accomplish. Namely, since Christ has fulfilled the requirement of the Law and is the offering for sin, he has freed the believer from the law of sin and death (8:1-8). Though the body is dead because of indwelling sin, the Spirit who dwells within the believer will bring life to the body just as He raised Jesus from the dead (8:9-11). The Spirit brings life by empowering the

⁹ It is important to note here that the author follows the Reformed interpretation of 7:14-25 that Paul is describing a state of the regenerated man in war against sin. Keswick, Dispensational, and Wesleyan models interpret this passage as descriptive of the unregenerate man, mostly due to the lack of Paul referencing the Spirit in this pericope. However, Paul's first person, present tense language reveals that he is speaking of his experience as a believer. As a Christian, he now delights in the Law and desires to keep it, even while the Law continues to expose his sin. A believer exists with an internal struggle of keeping the Law with his inner self while transgressing it by the compulsion of sin in a fallen body. See John Calvin, "Romans," in *Calvin's Commentaries* Vol. 19 (Grand Rapids: Baker, Reprinted, 2003): 259, 263. Calvin argues that this passage sets forth the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit. He writes, "For regeneration only begins in this life; the relics of the flesh which remain, always follow their own corrupt propensities, and thus carry on a contest against the Spirit." See also Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 196. Lewis and Demarest identify three traits Paul lists in vv.14-25 that are "all responses of a regenerate person; wills the good, delights in the law of God, and hates evil." In addition, see Packer, *Spirit*, 143, Packer, "Keswick," 164-165, Robert L. Saucy, "'Sinners' Who are Forgiveness or 'Saints' Who Sin?" *BSac* 152 (O-D 1995): 400-12, and Paul R. Raabe, "The Law and Christian Sanctification: A Look at Romans," *Concordia Journal* 22 (Ap 1996): 178-85.

believer to put away the deeds of the flesh because living according to the flesh results in death (8:12-17).

This war against the flesh brings suffering, but the believer perseveres through hope in the coming redemption of the body (8:18-25). The aid of the Spirit (8:26-27), the providence of God for His elect (8:28-30), and the confidence a believer has in the eternal, electing love of God (8:31-19) ensure the perseverance of the believer.

Then Paul departs from his doctrine of bodily redemption in spite of sin to unpack the doctrine of election that he has been employing in his discussion. In chapters 9-11, Paul explains how God's eternal election of individuals applies to both Jew and Gentile. He begins by providing an answer as to why the Israelites, as a majority, are not presently part of the elect given that they were privy to so many benefits (9:1-5). Paul's answer is that election is not based on race. Abraham's true descendents, those who are justified by faith, are the people of the promise. God's sovereign will determines who will be elected, not one's ethnicity (9:6-18). In response to God's sovereignty in election, the creature is not in a position to question the judgment of the Creator. God's plan of redemption was ordained in such a way that Jew and Gentile would be included through faith (9:19-33).

The reason Israel is not presently a part of the elect is due to their pursuit of righteousness through the Law instead of through faith in Christ. Everyone, Jew and Gentile, who pursues righteousness through faith in Christ will be saved (10:1-13). Therefore this message of faith in Christ must be proclaimed so that the elect will believe, even though for now many Jews will reject it (10:14-21). Their rejection, however, does not mean that God has rejected them. He has preserved a remnant by grace as He always has done. Paul himself is an example (11:1-6). The remnant believed because they were

chosen. The rest did not believe because they have been hardened (11:7-10). The hardening of the Jews, then, opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. In turn, the reconciliation of the Gentiles will provoke Israel to believe the Gospel (11:11-16).

This does not give the Gentile any room to boast or become conceited. Just as they were grafted in, they can be broken off if they come to reject the Gospel (11:17-24). In fulfillment of His covenant, God will save all Israel. Mercy, then, will be given to all, Jew and Gentile (11:25-32). At this point, Paul breaks out in a praise unto God for His sovereign, merciful, and impartial redemption of man (11:33-36).

In the remainder of the letter, Paul returns to his emphasis on the body. Since believers are united with Christ and enabled to reject the flesh and live unto God, and since living according to the flesh brings death, Paul commands his readers to present their bodies as living sacrifices (12:1-2). The rest of his letter is practical applications of how to present one's body as a sacrifice.

Paul encourages believers to fulfill their individual gifts and callings with humility (12:3-8). Live out a holy love toward one another (12:9-13), always respond in love to friend or foe (12:14-21), and respect the ruling authorities that God has ordained (13:1-7). For love is the fulfillment of the Law (13:8-10).

Paul reminds believers that final salvation draws closer every day, so deeds of the flesh must be cast aside (13:11-14). Believers must not hinder a brother by unjustly condemning him according to his own convictions. Live by one's own convictions, allow a brother to do the same, and willingly give up convictions for the sake of a weaker brother (14:1-23). The strong in faith should remember that this is how Christ dealt with the Gentiles (15:1-13).

Paul begins his concluding thoughts by speaking of his personal ministry in carrying the Gospel to the Gentiles (15:14-21). He plans to return to Jerusalem and then come to Rome on the way to Spain (15:22-33). He then closes with final remarks, personal greetings, and a prayer for blessing and the success of the Gospel (16).

Eight major themes are thus present in Romans: (1) total depravity, (2) justification by faith alone, (3) Christ's provision for the believer, (4) the effects of union with Christ, (5) the relation of the Law, sin, and Christ, (6) the work of the Spirit in the believer, (7) the doctrine of election as realized in Jew and Gentile, (8) and the practical applications of presenting the body as a sacrifice.¹⁰ The issue of sanctification appears in Paul's discussion of the effects of union with Christ for the believer and the Spirit's work in the believer. As it will be argued, in those contexts Paul is dealing with progressive, not positional sanctification.

Romans 6:20-23

(20) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. (21) Therefore what benefit [lit. fruit] were you then deriving [lit. having] from [lit. in] the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. (22) But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive [lit. have] your benefit [lit. fruit], resulting in [lit. to] sanctification (ἀγιασμόν, noun) and the outcome, eternal life. (23) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, "Romans," in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Moises Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 25-27. Schreiner outlines the book of Romans into eight divisions with "righteousness" as the main theme. His divisions are "The Gospel as the Revelation of God's Righteousness," "God's Righteousness in His Wrath Against Sinners," "The Saving Righteousness of God," "Hope as Result of Righteousness by Faith," "God's Righteousness to Israel and the Gentiles," "God's Righteousness in Everyday Life," "The Extension of God's Righteousness Through the Pauline Mission," and "Final Summary of the Gospel of God's Righteousness."

Verse 20 connects this passage with the previous verses by beginning with γὰρ.

William Shedd notes that Paul here clarifies his statement in verse 18 that freedom from sin is slavery to righteousness.¹¹ Verse 20 is then a reversal of verse 18.¹² Slavery to sin is freedom from righteousness. As Calvin notes, “. . . these two things, sin and righteousness, are so contrary, that he who devotes himself to the one, necessarily departs from the other.”¹³ Chrysostom explains “free in regard to righteousness” as “not subject to it, but estranged from it wholly.”¹⁴ This liberty of the flesh, Calvin writes, “so frees us from obedience to God, that it makes us slaves to the devil.”¹⁵ This interpretation would fit soundly with Paul’s contrast of slavery and the opposing freedom to either sin or righteousness. Paul follows this logic in the next verse by equating “free in regard to righteousness” with the dire consequence of death. It is then in verses 22 and 23 where Paul explains the difference for those who have been “freed from sin.”

This passage reveals Paul’s teaching that salvation is a process and not entirely contained in conversion. Salvation began when they were “freed from sin and enslaved to God,” this is the regeneration aspect. The earlier context of union with Christ resulting in death to sin and life toward God distinguishes this terminology as part of Paul’s conversion theology. It is after being “freed from sin and enslaved to God” that one then

¹¹ William G.T. Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1879, Reprint, 2001), 169.

¹² MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 249. Commenting on Romans 6:17-18 MacArthur writes, “He (Paul) saw all believers as essentially obedient—not free from sin or sinless, but free from the tyranny of sin and servants of righteousness.”

¹³ Calvin, “Romans,” 240.

¹⁴ John Chrysostom, “Epistle to the Romans,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, 4th Printing, Vol. 11 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 417.

¹⁵ Calvin, “Romans,” 241.

bears fruit, which is sanctification.¹⁶ It is vital to note that sanctification results from slavery to God, which itself is a result of the new birth. The word for sanctification, ἁγιασμόν, can also be translated “holiness.” Chrysostom understands this text to mean that the fruit is the now present holiness. In keeping with Paul’s contrast set up in verse 20, Chrysostom writes, “Of the former, the fruit was shame, even after the being set free. Of these the fruit is holiness, and where holiness is, there is all confidence.”¹⁷ This now present holiness is in the realm of personal, progressive sanctification because it results from conversion; it is not simultaneous with it. Paul ends the verse with glorification. It is therefore presented as the outcome of a holiness-producing conversion.

Paul concludes this thought with the familiar 6:23, which is used often as a verse to evangelize, placing emphasis on conversion. In context, however, it serves as more of a summary text. Slavery to sin is only going to result in death, but God’s gift results in eternal life, that is, glorification, in Christ Jesus. Death is a wage that is due the sinner, but eternal life is given by grace. It is not earned. The gift of God, however, includes presenting your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. It is not only the declaration of justification, but the warfare of sanctification as well that results in eternal life.¹⁸ The work of actualization is just as much a work of God as declaration (cf. Phil 2:12,13), but the work of actualization involves the participation of the believer. Dallas

¹⁶ Dicker, “Three Models,” 16. Therefore since the Christian has been united with Christ in his death, he or she has the promise of being raised up with him in a new life. His or her present life is one of promise and hope. These things, though future, profoundly alter the nature and structure of life in the present so that one may no longer “yield (one’s) members to sin as instruments of wickedness.”

¹⁷ Chrysostom, “Romans,” 417.

¹⁸ Calvin, “Romans,” 242. “. . . that this gift of God, even our justification and sanctification, brings to us the happiness of eternal life.”

Willard emphatically states, “Spiritual transformation into Christlikeness is not going to happen to us unless we act.”¹⁹ This interpretation is sound when considering the contrast Paul sets up in vv. 21-22. In verse 21, slavery to sin produces shameful fruit and results in death. In verse 22, enslavement to God produces sanctification and results in eternal life.²⁰

Verse 22 is a key demonstration of how Pauline theology carries the weight of the proposed thesis. A close examination of this verse reveals Paul’s understanding of sanctification’s role in salvation. Paul says, “But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God,” which acknowledges that conversion has already taken place. Now based upon that conversion a believer evidences that conversion through fruit bearing; “you have your fruit.” Then Paul interjects here the phrase εἰς ἁγιασμόν, *to* or *into sanctification*. Therefore, sanctification results from the presence of fruit resulting from conversion. It is personal, not positional, sanctification because it is spoken of in distinction from conversion. It is also progressive sanctification in that it appears from the

¹⁹ Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Formation in Christ is for the Whole Life and the Whole Person,” in *For All the Saints*, eds. Timothy George and Alister McGrath (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2003), 47. Willard also writes, “What we must understand is that the spiritual formation is a process that involves the transformation of the whole person, and that the whole person must be *active with Christ* in the work of spiritual formation.”

²⁰ Jonathan Ray Pratt, “The Relationship Between Justification and Sanctification in Romans 5-8,” (Ph. D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1999), 135. Pratt observes from this text, “The contrast between the former and present lives of believers is obvious since Paul uses the very same words to heighten the contrasting situations of the two lives.”

production of fruit.²¹ The end result then of conversion and sanctification is glorification: “and the outcome, eternal life.” Verse 22 contrasts those freed from sin as inheriting eternal life from those in verse 21 who are freed from righteousness. Shedd writes, “The ‘death’ occurs in the same future αἰών with the ‘life.’ Both have precisely the same duration; and the duration is endless because the future ‘age’ or ‘world’ is endless.”²² The consequences of both are great, and there is no middle ground. Those who have sanctification have eternal life. Those who are free from righteousness do not.

The concept of necessity is connected to the establishment of a salvific process. Paul essentially divides humanity into two groups. There are those who are slaves to sin and those who are slaves to God. Both categories are evidenced by the fruits they have. Slaves to God have such fruit that it brings about personal sanctification. That is, one’s lifestyle in Christ progressively sets him apart from the world for service unto God. One’s service eventually ends in eternal service unto God, glorification. Schreiner sets the understanding of necessity within a larger context. He writes, “The thrust of Paul’s argument in verses 16-23 is that being under grace does not encourage believers to sin. For if their lives evidence slavery to sin, then the consequence will be eternal destruction. The power of grace must lead to a transformed life, for holiness of life is necessary for

²¹ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 195. Other texts where Paul refers to sanctification in an experimental, progressive nature are Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:16; 7:1; Eph 4:13,15; Gal4:19; and 2 Thess 1:3.

²² Shedd, *Romans*, 171.

life eternal.”²³ To see this text in any other light would be to have Paul providing an example of the very position he has set out to defeat in this text (cf. 6:15).²⁴

Indeed this understanding of necessity is in agreement with the entire chapter. B. B. Warfield notes, “The whole sixth chapter of Romans, for example, was written for no other purpose than to assert and demonstrate that justification and sanctification are indissolubly bound together; that we cannot have the one without having the other; that, to use its own figurative language, dying with Christ and living with Christ are integral elements in one indisintegrable salvation.”²⁵ Packer asserts, “Romans 6 is not answering the question ‘How may a justified believer have a holy life? But explaining why he must.’”²⁶ There is no mention of some who are freed from sin who receive eternal life without fruit production, that is, sanctification. Furthermore, death to sin is not just a potential for the justified person, but Paul’s very reason that the justified person cannot continue in sin (v.2).

²³ Schreiner, “Romans,” 341.

²⁴ Pratt, “Relationship,” 136–138.

²⁵ Warfield, *Perfectionism*, 568; quoted in William W. Combs, “The Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification in Contemporary Evangelical Theology,” *DBSJ* 6 (Fall 2001): 34. See also Marshall, *Mystery*, 144. “It is the ruin of many souls, that they trust on Christ for the remission of sins, without any regard to holiness; whereas these two benefits are inseparably joined in Christ, so that none are freed from condemnation in Christ, but those who are enabled to walk holily, that is, *not after the flesh, but after the Spirit* (Rom. viii. 1).”

²⁶ Packer, *Spirit*, 159. See also Combs, “The Disjunction,” 34–35. Combs argues that the interpretation of death to sin as only potential does not fit the argument of chapter 6. “Paul’s contrast in Romans 6 is between the justified person, who is a slave to righteousness (v.18), and the unbeliever, who is a slave to sin (v.17).”

Romans 8:12-14

(12) So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— (13) for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (14) For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

In chapter 8 Paul heightens the work of the Spirit in connection with a believer's sanctification. Union with the death of Christ dealt a deathblow to the sin nature. Life in the Spirit chokes out the life of the remaining influence of sin. As Chuck Lowe writes, "The Spirit builds on the work of Christ in justification and complements his role in sanctification."²⁷ The obligation Paul refers to is the fact that union with Christ has resulted in the indwelling of the Spirit within the believer. Though the body is still under the influence of sin, the Spirit has revived the spirit of man, and he is now alive to righteousness awaiting the complete redemption of the body. Therefore, a believer is obliged to live according to the indwelling Spirit not the influence of sin.

Living according to the flesh carries the consequence of death. Paul does not mean physical death here, for that interpretation would not fit the argument he is developing. Everyone faces physical death, whether born again or not.²⁸ Paul is

²⁷ Chuck Lowe, " 'There is No Condemnation' (Romans 8:1): But Why Not?" *JETS* 42 (Ju 1999): 241.

²⁸ Origen, "Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans," in *The Father's of the Church*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, Vol. 104 (D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 6:14.5. In this one quote, Origen explains "death" used in Rom 8:13 as eternal death and sanctification as a process that reaches completion in the glorified state. He writes, "One should, of course, notice that when he speaks of death here, 'For if you live according to the flesh, you will die,' he does not mean that common death, but rather that death of sin. . . . Moreover, we need to realize that this putting to death of the deeds of the flesh should come through repentance, and [it does] not [come] suddenly but gradually. First of all these deeds must grow weaker and weaker in those who are starting out; then when they begin to make progress more fervently and to be filled more fully

contrasting life in the flesh with life in the Spirit (cf. vv. 2-6).²⁹ Walter Marshall points out from referencing John 3:6 that “to be in the flesh is to be in a natural state.”³⁰ As with 6:20-23, life here is eternal life and death is eternal judgment.

In an article appearing in 2001, J. Ayodeji Adewuya established the differences in Pentecostal and Wesleyan theologies of sanctification.³¹ After providing a thorough exegesis of the passage he concludes, “The unbeliever can live only according to the flesh by which he is enslaved. The Christian has a choice. The Christian can live in the realm of the flesh or in the realm of the Spirit.”³² The problem with his conclusion is that he still sees that Christians have a “choice.” He has somehow missed Paul’s emphatic use of “life” or “death” language. If “Christians” choose to live according to the flesh, they choose eternal death. There is more at stake in this passage than living in the Spirit in the sense of submitting to the Spirit’s guidance. Preferred victory is not the issue; the issue is eternal life or death.

with the Spirit, not only will [the deeds of the flesh] grow weaker, but they will even begin to decay. But when they then reach the point of perfection so that no indications of sin whatsoever appear in them, either in deed or in word or in thought, then they should be believed to have put to death the deeds of the flesh and to have completely handed over these deeds unto death.”

²⁹ Pratt, “Relationship,” 200. After referring to Paul’s use of “death” in verses 2 and 6 of chapter 8, Pratt questions those who interpret death in v 13 as physical death, “Why is it necessary to import a new meaning for *death* into the chapter when *death* has already been well-defined?”

³⁰ Marshall, *Mystery*, 56. See also Chrysostom, “Romans,” 440. “. . . so intimating to us that deathless death, punishment, and vengeance in hell.”

³¹ J. Ayodeji Adewuya, “The Holy Spirit and Sanctification in Romans 8:1-17,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* no.18 (Ap 2001): 71–84.

³² Adewuya, “Holy Spirit,” 84.

Living according to the Spirit is primarily the ongoing fight to mortify the flesh, that is, opposing sin's influence to gratify the sinful desires of the body. Paul lays responsibility for this mortification squarely on the shoulder of the believer "you are putting to death," while simultaneously grounding this fight in the power of the Spirit "by the Spirit."³³ In explaining Paul's commands in this passage, Jerry Bridges writes, "It is clear from this passage that God puts responsibility for living a holy life squarely on us. We are to do something. We are not to 'stop trying and start trusting;' we are to put to death the misdeeds of the body."³⁴ It is a work that only the Spirit can accomplish, but that it accomplishes through the human agency.³⁵

Paul's use of the present, active, indicative, 2nd person, θανατοῦτε, solidifies the essential role the believer plays in sanctification. Hence in the present tense, "putting to death" is something that the believer must always be doing. As Lewis and Demarest affirm, "Against most 'victorious life' emphases, Paul affirms that the normal Christian

³³ Walter F. Klaiber, "Sanctification in the New Testament," *AsTJ* 50-51 (Fall-Spr 1995-1996): 16. "The sanctifying action of the Spirit, therefore, is God's own work, the work of his grace and love, coming from *extra nos*, and at the same time it is done with us and in us (*in nobis*) motivating our spirit and enabling our body to be used to the service of God." See also Douglas Moo, "Romans 1-8," in *The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary*, ed. Kenneth Barker (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 528. Moo explains, "... Paul insists that what God has done for us in Christ is the sole and final grounds for our eternal life and, at the same time, insists on the indispensability of holy living as the precondition for experiencing that life. Neither the 'indicative' (what God has done for us in Christ) nor the 'imperative' (what we are commanded to do) can be eliminated."

³⁴ Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, 24th Printing (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1978, 1989), 82.

³⁵ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Oxford University Press, Paperback, 1968), 295. "The flesh is mortified by its relation to the Spirit and by this alone"

life involves struggle against vestiges of indwelling sin.”³⁶ This verse directly opposes theologies that are passive with respect to sanctification.³⁷ It is therefore a visible act of sanctification, namely living in stark contrast to those who are controlled by the flesh and indulge fleshly lusts.³⁸ Paul is stating that only those who live in this warfare against the flesh will live eternally. As Karl Barth states, “Life emerges at the point of mortification.”³⁹

Paul restates this fact in verse 14 to drive home the point that personal sanctification is absolutely necessary. It is only those who are being led by the Spirit, that is, mortifying the flesh, who are the sons of God. Luther explains, “To be ‘led by the Spirit of God’ means to despise and renounce everything that is not of God, even oneself, and ‘to reject the pleasures of this world which are impure and covered with filth’...But this is not the work of our corrupt nature, but the work of God the Holy Spirit in us.”⁴⁰ As

³⁶ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 195–196. Lewis and Demarest identify three passages where Paul speaks of sanctification in the negative (mortification) and positive (vivification) sense; Rom 6, Eph 4:22–24, and Col 3:5–10. One of their comments regarding these texts warrants repeating here. “The two verbs specifying mortification and renewal are present tenses, denoting a continual process.”

³⁷ Calvin, “Romans,” 294. Calvin boldly asserts, “But it is as it were to fight against God, when we extinguish the grace offered us, by contempt and negligence. . . . Let then the faithful learn to embrace him, not only for justification but also for sanctification, as he has been given to us for both these purposes, lest they rend him asunder by their mutilated faith.”

³⁸ C. E. B. Cranfield, “Paul’s Teaching on Sanctification,” *RefR* 48 (Spr 1995): 228. “. . . the many sentences in Romans which convey an imperative (6:13; 13:12b; 12:1; 12:3; 6:12; 15:2) prove conclusively that Paul does not think of the believer’s part as being that of a merely passive spectator of the Spirit’s work.”

³⁹ Barth, *Romans*, 294.

⁴⁰ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1976), 121. See also Schreiner, “Romans,” 422. “The ‘leading’ (ἀγόνται, *agontai*) of the Spirit does not

C. E. B. Cranfield concludes from Romans 8, “Paul takes it for granted that every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (8:9a). If we show in our lives no trace at all of his sanctifying work, that can only mean that we are not yet Christians. ‘If someone does not possess Christ’s Spirit, then he does not belong to Christ’ (8:9b).”⁴¹ Shedd points out, “οὗτοί is emphatic by position, and the emphasis is excluding: ‘these, and no others.’”⁴²

Thus, sanctification is necessary to obtain eternal life; that is the logic of verse 13. This is because only those who are living this way are truly born again, that is conclusion of verse 14.⁴³ Chrysostom points out that Paul does not say those who have received the Spirit are the sons of God, but those who are led by the Spirit are the sons of God. He concludes, “that is, as many as live up to this all their life long, ‘they are the sons of God.’”⁴⁴ Arnold observes from Paul’s writings, “The Apostle Paul does not teach that a person is saved no matter what his practice may be. He warns the believer that if his state after regeneracy does not change to some degree by holiness in sanctification, he may not have the reality of salvation (I Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 5:5-10).”⁴⁵ Hence, the issue is not of conversion but of sanctification. In Paul’s theology then, sanctification is the necessary

refer to guidance for everyday decisions in determining the will of God. It refers to being ‘controlled by’ or ‘determined by’ or ‘governed by’ the Spirit.”

⁴¹ Cranfield, “Paul’s Teaching,” 228.

⁴² Shedd, *Romans*, 245.

⁴³ Calvin, “Romans,” 295. “. . . what he means here is sanctification.” See also Ryle, *Holiness*, 22. Ryles observes from this text, “. . . where there is no holy living, there is no Holy Ghost.”

⁴⁴ Chrysostom, “Romans,” 441. See also Lesta, “Nature,” 96. Lesta comments on this passage, “Only sons of God are being led by the Spirit of God. Thus experiential sanctification is a proof of the believer’s mystical union and positioning in Christ.”

⁴⁵ Arnold, *Pauline Doctrine*, 214.

link between regeneration and glorification; it provides evidence of regeneration, and is essential for glorification.

Colossians

After his opening address (1:1-2), Paul thanks God for the good witness given by the church at Colossae and pledges his continual prayer on their behalf (1:3-11). Paul wishes them to be joyfully thankful to the Father because He is the one who enabled them to share in such a glorious inheritance (1:12).

The middle of chapter one is Paul's explanation of how God accomplished redemption for believers. He has transferred believers to the kingdom of His beloved Son, and it is in the Son where redemption, that is, forgiveness of sins, is found (1:13-14). Verses 15-20 expound on how redemption is found in the Son. What qualifies the beloved Son for such a feat? He is the agent and recipient of all creation, the sustainer of all creation, the head of the Church, the fullness of God, and the one through whom God accomplished reconciliation by means of His cross (1:15-20).

Now the believers at Colossae have experienced this very reconciliation, and as a result are promised the inheritance (cf. 12) as long as they live in accordance with the Gospel they have heard (1:21-23). Paul is a minister of this Gospel and explains how God works through his suffering and preaching to bring the Gospel to others and strengthen them in the faith (1:24-29).

Paul's struggle in the ministry on their behalf is proof of the Gospel's authenticity (2:1-5). Having this confidence, the believers should walk according to the faith they have professed and not be sidetracked by contrary teachings (2:6-8). Their allegiance is to

Christ because He is God in the flesh, He has made them complete and has all authority, and in Him the believers have undergone a spiritual circumcision and baptism (2:9-12).

Baptism means that believers are now alive with Christ and have forgiveness of their sins, in which they were formerly dead. Forgiveness entails complete removal of condemnation and of those who condemn through the atonement. Because of this privilege, believers are not to succumb to legalistic or fanatical condemnation. These things are of the world and are useless when fighting the flesh (2:13-23).

Paul returns to the theme of resurrection in Christ (cf. 2:12) and commands believers as a result to set their minds above and consider their bodies as dead to sin (3:1-5). Giving in to sin was characteristic of their former lifestyle and carries the wrath of God (3:6-7). Now that they are alive in Christ, the believers are to put sin aside and put on the new self, which is renewed in the image of Christ (3:8-11). At this point Paul provides a list of practical examples of how believers put on the new self (3:12-16). He then concludes that section with a summary statement to do all things in the name of Jesus with thanksgiving to God (3:17).

From that summary statement, Paul demonstrates how believers can live in the name of Jesus with thanksgiving to God in various relations; spouses, parents, children, slaves, and masters (3:18-4:1). He begins to bring his letter to a conclusion by calling the believers to pray and to pray for him as he does so for them (4:2-4, cf. 1:9-12). They are to also treat outsiders with wise conduct and graceful speech (4:5-6). Paul promises to send Tychicus and Onesimus for encouragement (4:7-9). He makes some personal greetings and closes with a plea for them to remember him in prison (4:10-18).

In Colossians Paul addresses four major doctrines; soteriology, Christology, ministry, and sanctification. His imperative under sanctification to “put on the new self” is followed by a varied list of applications. Though several passages address sanctification, the selected text builds on reconciliation and emphasizes necessity.

Colossians 1:21-23

(21) And though you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, (22) yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— (23) if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made [lit. became] a minister.

This select passage opens with a contrast very similar to that of Romans 6:20-22, the life and result of the unregenerate as opposed to the regenerate. Verse 21 portrays the unbeliever as alienated (cf. Eph 2:19), hostile (cf. Rom 5:10), and characterized by evil behavior (cf. 1 Cor 6:9-10). This describes how the believers once stood before the Lord as unsaved sinners. The state of the unregenerate is that of separation from God, hostility toward God, and habitual wrongdoing. This characterization is at total odds with the portrayal of a regenerate person in verse 22.

Verse 21 is in the past tense describing a lifestyle that no longer dominates a believer because of what has presently taken place in his life, reconciliation. As verse 20 closes with the general application of reconciliation, verse 22 opens with how this work directly applies to the believer. A born again believer has been reconciled, that is, has been brought into relationship with God, or is now at peace with God (1:20). The work of reconciliation is provided through the atonement of Christ. James Dunn writes, “The divine act of reconciliation had two phases: the means (‘in the body of his flesh through

death') and the objective ('to present you holy . . .')."⁴⁶ Reconciliation is then grounded in the past, has effects in the present, and ensures a reality for the future.

Christ provides reconciliation for the purpose of the presentation of believers. Christ means to present believers as "holy and blameless and beyond reproach." While the blamelessness of believers is a present eternal perspective already (cf. Rom 8:1), this presentation is yet to be realized existentially in the believer at glorification (cf. Eph 1:4, 5:27).⁴⁷ As Curtis Vaughan writes, "There has never been, nor will there ever be, a Christian life that is without blemish in actual conduct. But Christians' identification with Christ is such that his righteousness and his standing before God are theirs (cf. 2 Cor 5:21; 1 John 4:17)."⁴⁸ Therefore, regeneration has taken place, glorification is going to take place, and then Paul interjects a conditional clause, which essentially hangs glorification in the balance.

The εἰ introduces a different argument for necessity in the Pauline corpus. Verse 23 is a description of personal, progressive sanctification. Believers are to "continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel" It should be noted that Paul is not speaking in the passive tense, but calling for the believers to continue and not be moved. Chrysostom succinctly observes, "Here

⁴⁶ James D. G. Dunn, "The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon," in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, eds. I. Howard Marshall, W. Ward Gasque, and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 109.

⁴⁷ Dunn, "Colossians and Philemon," 110. "Also implicit is the suggestion that the presentation has not yet taken place and that it will be the final climax of God's saving purpose through Christ This is borne out by the immediately following note of caution (1:23)"

⁴⁸ Curtis Vaughn, "Colossians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 187.

he strikes a blow at their listlessness.”⁴⁹ Thus, he is addressing responsibility and cooperation. Paul does not endorse a doctrine of sanctification based solely on works, which will be evident when Thessalonians is discussed. But neither does he support a negligent, passive role for believers.

Another observation is that the continuance in the faith of v. 23 is not anything like the description of unbelief in v. 21. Believers live in a vastly different manner than unbelievers. Those who once were “engaged in evil deeds” are to be “firmly established and steadfast” based on the reconciling work of Christ.

A third observation is that Paul is not merely saying here, as he does in Romans 6:22, that sanctification is proof of regeneration. He is teaching that glorification depends on sanctification. Dunn cautions, “The parenetic and pastoral point is that however such persistence must be and is enabled by God through his Spirit (1:11), there must be such persistence.”⁵⁰ The bridge of sanctification necessarily must be attached in both directions. Not only does it serve to affirm justification; it also serves to ensure glorification. Sanctification is necessary in order to inherit eternal life.

Richard Melick is an example of one who does not see the element of necessity in this text. He reasons that while Paul addressed the responsibility of the believers, the use of the first-class conditional sentence in Greek meant that Paul was confident of their perseverance. So a suitable translation could be “*assuming* that you . . .” He provides other examples of first-class conditional sentences in the footnotes, however, they are only further examples of usage, not demonstrations of how this construction conveys

⁴⁹ John Chrysostom, “Colossians,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, 4th Printing, Vol. 13 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 276.

⁵⁰ Dunn, “Colossians and Philemon,” 110.

confidence more than condition. Daniel Wallace states in his Greek grammar that it is better to translate the first class condition as “and let’s assume that it’s true for the sake of argument.”⁵¹ Applying Wallace’s understanding to the text of Colossians then reads, “if—and let’s assume that it’s true for the sake of argument—indeed you continue in the faith” Therefore, the only way Paul can have confidence in the reconciliation of the Colossians is if they meet the condition of continuing in the faith. Paul’s assumption then is not in the faith of the Colossians, but rather in the logic of his argument.

One must be careful not to allow theological presuppositions to alter the plain, literal reading of the text. It should be noted that to make the text say something other than “if” is to force an unusual meaning upon *ἐἰ*. The danger for the interpreter to allow personal preference or theological schema to force understandings upon certain texts is always present. The best means of combating this temptation is to abide by the lexical meaning of the words in accordance with the context.

“If” means contingency; it is a conditional statement. As W. T. Purkiser points out, “The most elementary textbook in logic will inform you that *the consequent of a conditional statement can be affirmed only when the antecedent is first affirmed.*”⁵² It is therefore difficult to understand when one writer says of Col 1:21ff, “But about perseverance in the faith as a condition for final salvation from hell, Paul here says nothing at all.”⁵³ Again, any other interpretation of this passage is going to either soften

⁵¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 310–311. Wallace identifies two pitfalls with the first class condition to be avoided, saying too much and saying too little.

⁵² W.T. Purkiser, *Conflicting Concepts of Holiness: Some Current Issues in the Doctrine of Sanctification* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1953), 95.

the meaning of the conditional “if” or entirely remove a conditional conveyance from the text.

For example, Melick writes, “Paul fully expected them to continue in the faith.”⁵⁴ That may be true, but that is not what he said. Melick continues by proposing three possibilities as to why Paul used the first-class conditional, but fails to mention the necessity of sanctification as one of the options.

Concerning v. 23, N. T. Wright explains, “The hope holds good, if Christians hold on to it.”⁵⁵ Paul believes that true regeneration will end in glorification (cf. Phil 1:6), but he is just as sure that absence of sanctification ends in eternal ruin. The implication is clear that a verbal confession of faith void of a persevering and enduring faith is of no eternal value.

Indeed, the Pauline corpus is replete with this mandate of holiness in contrast to a lifestyle of habitual sin that only leads to eternal destruction. Consider the following passages. 1 Cor 6:9-11 emphatically states, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God” (cf. Gal 5:19-21).⁵⁶ In like manner Paul writes in Eph 5:5, “For this you know with certainty, that no

⁵³ Zane Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege*, 2nd ed., (Dallas: Rendicion Viva, 1981, 1992), 90.

⁵⁴ Richard R. Melick, Jr., “Colossians,” in *The New American Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery, Vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 233.

⁵⁵ N. T. Wright, “Colossians,” in *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, ed. Leon Morris, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 83.

immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of God and Christ.” Paul goes to enormous effort to reiterate that the difference between those who are headed for eternal destruction and those who are headed for eternal life is evidenced via lifestyle. The antidote he provides is the pursuit of holiness in sanctification (cf. Gal 5:25; Eph 5:7).

1 Thessalonians

After the address (1:1), Paul tells why he is so thankful and confident of their election and how their actions have proved their faith (1:2-10). Paul then encourages the believers for confidence in their faith by calling to mind Paul’s methodology in bringing the Gospel (2:1-12) and their valid reception of it (2:13-16).

Next Paul expresses the concern he had felt for the believers during his long absence especially when they received word of his suffering (2:17-3:5). Paul is encouraged though because he sent Timothy to them, and Timothy has returned with a good report (3:6-10). It is now his desire to come again and encourage the church (3:11-13).

In the mean time, Paul admonishes the believers to continue growing in the Lord, especially in the area of sexual purity (4:1-8). He also includes an exhortation to love one another even though they have exhibited great love in the past (4:9-12). In order to quiet unsound anxiety, Paul assures the believers that those who die before Christ comes will be resurrected (4:13-16). In fact, all believers will be changed and will meet the Lord in

⁵⁶ Arnold, *Pauline Doctrine*, 215. Arnold writes concerning the Galatians text, “Here the present tense is used, indicating that they which habitually practice such things, no matter what their Christian profession, shall not be saved and partake in God’s kingdom.”

the air to dwell with Him forever (4:17-18). Now since the Lord is to return, the believers must be on alert so as not to be taken by surprise as will happen to the unbelievers (5:1-11).

Paul begins to bring his letter to a close by providing a list of ways that the believers can stay sober while awaiting the return of the Lord (5:12-22). His final prayer is for God to sanctify them and bring them unto glorification (5:23). He is also confident that God will accomplish this work (5:24). Paul then closes with his greetings and a plea for the intercession of the Thessalonians (5:25-28).

1 Thessalonians 4:1-7⁵⁷

(1) Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. (2) For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of* [lit. through the] the Lord Jesus. (3) For this is the will of God, your sanctification (ἁγιασμός, masculine noun, same as in vv.4 & 7); *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; (4) that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, (5) not in lustful passion [lit. passion of lust], like the Gentiles who do not know God; (6) *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. (7) For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. (8) So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

Verse one of this section clarifies the focus of the passage on the experience of personal sanctification. Paul speaks of their present “walk” or daily conduct as such that

⁵⁷ See Wayne McCown, “God’s Will for You: Sanctification in the Thessalonian Epistles,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 12 (Spr 1977): 26–33 for a comprehensive study on sanctification from these texts.

it is pleasing to the Lord.⁵⁸ However, Paul also addresses the need to progress in one's holiness. He "requests" and "exhorts" the believer to "excel still more." After confirming their obedience to Paul's earlier instruction based on Timothy's report (cf. 3:6), he then instructs them to grow further (cf. v.10). Paul exhorts the believers in this process based on the authority of the commandments they are to follow. As Robert Thomas states, "These were binding because they were given 'by the authority of the Lord Jesus'."⁵⁹

In verse three, Paul makes his exhortation mandatory rather than optional. He says that sanctification, which he has just defined as growing by keeping authoritative instructions, is the will of God. This is not meant as an exhaustive statement of God's will, but rather a specific example of it (cf. 5:18). As Daniel Spross observes, "The absence of the article before [*thelema*] indicates that what follows is not the whole of God's will but a significant part thereof."⁶⁰ This statement carries two significant implications. First, God's will cannot be thwarted; therefore the sanctification of the believers will occur. Second, since sanctification is God's will, the necessity of such is a logical deduction.

⁵⁸ Leon Morris, "The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians," in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, eds. Ned B. Stonehouse, F.F. Bruce and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991): 115. " 'Walk' " is commonly employed, especially by Paul and John, as a way of referring to the whole of a believer's manner of living (cf. 2:12)." See also Charles A. Wanamaker, "The Epistles to the Thessalonians," in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, eds. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 148-149 and William Hendriksen, "I & II Thessalonians," in *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955), 97. Wanamaker translates περιπατεῖν as "to behave" instead of "to walk." Hendriksen translates it as "to conduct yourselves."

⁵⁹ Robert L. Thomas, "1, 2 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 270.

⁶⁰ Daniel Brett Spross, "Sanctification in the Thessalonian Epistles in a Canonical Context," (Ph. D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987), 34.

The rest of the passage is Paul's application of this statement to a specific area, sexual purity.⁶¹ As Calvin notes, “. . . for nothing is more opposed to holiness than the defilement of fornication, which pollutes the whole man.”⁶² Thus, in order to excel, the believers must “abstain from sexual immorality.” “Sexual immorality” is translated from πορνεία, which means illicit sexual activity. It can have either broad or narrow meanings according to the immediate context in which it is found.⁶³ God's will, then, is to progress in purity, that is, sexual purity.

Paul then explains how the believers can pursue this commandment.⁶⁴ They must regard their own vessel⁶⁵ in sanctification and honor, that is, they are to set apart their bodies as holy to the Lord (cf. Rom 12:1-2). The believers, then, are responsible to realize God's will for them by taking action in order to be pure sexually. Having set apart

⁶¹ Chrysostom, “Thessalonians,” 344. “And why dost thou wonder, if he everywhere writes to his disciples upon this subject . . . For in truth this is an evil pernicious to all.” Chrysostom argues that since impurity is a temptation to all, Paul often warns against it. Other commentators suggest that Paul keys in on sexual immorality because of the pagan, sexually illicit society in which the Thessalonians lived.

⁶² John Calvin, “I & II Thessalonians,” in *Calvin's Commentaries*, Vol. 21 (Grand Rapids: Baker, Reprinted, 2003), 273.

⁶³ For example in Matthew 15:19, when πορνεία is used alongside μοιχεία it means “fornication.”

⁶⁴ Spross, “Canonical,” 33–34. Spross writes, “After exhorting them to continue to walk in the way that is pleasing to God and consistent with His commands in 4:1-2, verse 3 begins with an emphatic *touto* that points ahead not only to the *hagiasmos* but also to the succeeding infinitive clauses by which the *hagiasmos* is defined.”

⁶⁵ Whether “vessel” is interpreted to mean one's own body or one's spouse makes no difference on the implications here for the doctrine of sanctification. That it does refer to the body has support with reference to 1 Sam 21:4,5, Rom 9:22-23 and 2 Cor 4:7. For an argument for the use of σκεῦος as meaning one's wife see Thomas, “1, 2 Thessalonians,” 271. See also Calvin, “I & II Thessalonians,” 274. “As, however, he addresses husbands and wives indiscriminately, there can be no doubt that he employs the term *vessel* to mean *body*.”

their bodies and holding them in honor, the believers will not fall prey to lustful passions like unbelievers are prone to do (cf. Rom 1:24, 26, 28). This phrase adds great force to the text and to the idea of necessity since the contrast of sexual lifestyle is with respect to the presence or absence of faith.

Paul provides even further motivation for sexual purity by solemnly warning the believers that should they disregard this imperative, the Lord is the one who will take vengeance. Sexual promiscuity invades the rights of others, and the Lord will not let it go unpunished.⁶⁶

In addition, the Lord's calling does not end in justification, but in sanctification as well. God's intention in salvation is complete separation from those who are unsaved. Leon Morris notes the significance of ἐντὶ attached to "impurity," while ἐν is attached to "sanctification." He says the former expresses purpose and the latter expresses "the settled condition in which he [God] required them to live out their lives."⁶⁷ Salvation, then, is not finished at regeneration. God's calling to salvation reaches beyond the initial point of new birth into all of life.

Paul's final warning on this subject brings the concept of sanctification into the realm of urgency and necessity. To reject this understanding of sanctification, namely that progressive sanctification entails a pure life separate from unbelievers, is to reject

⁶⁶ Morris, "1 and 2 Thessalonians," 123–124. ". . . it reminds us that all sexual looseness represents an act of injustice to someone other than the two parties concerned. Adultery is an obvious violation of the rights of another. But promiscuity before marriage represents the robbing of the other of that virginity which ought to be brought to a marriage."

⁶⁷ Ibid., 125.

God. In other words, rejection of holiness of life is rejection of God, eternal ruin.⁶⁸

Charles Wanamaker comments, “. . . if God has called Christians to live in holiness (ἁγιασμός), it follows that to live in sexual debauchery (ἀκαθαρσία) constitutes a rejection of God’s call.”⁶⁹ The thrust of this passage is that one cannot be a practicing adulterer or fornicator and enter heaven upon death. Donald Whitney candidly writes, “Sanctification alone doesn’t save, but there is no salvation without it.”⁷⁰ Sanctification is necessary in order to inherit eternal life.⁷¹

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

(23) Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify (ἁγιάσαι, aorist, active, optative)⁷² you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
(24) Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 126. Morris sees this rejection as resulting in “outraging” the Holy Spirit within a believer. This writer believes something more damaging is in mind here because of the use of the word ἄθετέω, which means “reject, refuse, ignore.” The passage could just as easily read “He who refuses this is not refusing man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.” Paul is saying something more drastic than disobedience that would “grieve” the Spirit (cf. 5:19). To “set aside” purity in order to indulge in impurity is to “set aside” God. God is the one who gives the Holy Spirit, which is the means to reject impurity and live sexually pure. When one rejects God, he rejects her only means of living a pure lifestyle.

⁶⁹ Wanamaker, “Thessalonians,” 157.

⁷⁰ Donald S. Whitney, “What Role Does Sanctification Play in Salvation?” (2001) < <http://www.spiritualdisciplines.org/prrole.html> > (accessed October 6, 2005).

⁷¹ Wanamaker, “Thessalonians,” 158. Concerning the present tense of the participle διδόντα, Wanamaker says that it probably means no more than God is the bestower of the Spirit. Also, the word order (τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον) is meant to emphasize the Spirit as Holy in line with the emphasis on holiness in this passage.

⁷² Ibid, 206. Wanamaker argues that the aorist optative embraces the whole process of sanctification, and it is often used this way in prayers.

This passage is included within the Pauline section for the purpose providing a holistic portrait of Paul's sanctification theology. In the preceding passage Paul calls upon believers to progress in holiness by maintaining sexual purity. He has demanded responsibility from believers for their sanctification based on the reasoning that holiness is God's will for their lives and purpose in their salvation. In this passage Paul reveals how he believes that sanctification will take place. God Himself will sanctify the believers completely.⁷³ Thomas paraphrases, "I have simply told you all these things to do, Paul is saying, but God alone has the power to make your efforts a success."⁷⁴ Therefore, Paul has the idea of progress in mind here. Calvin writes, "From this we infer, that we must, during our whole life, make progress in the pursuit of holiness."⁷⁵

This is a prayer of Paul's on their behalf. When the optative mood is used in a prayer it is expressing a wish.⁷⁶ Paul's prayer, his desire, is for the believers to be sanctified. When that occurs, it will be a work of God in their lives,⁷⁷ and it will be complete. Morris notes concerning Paul's use of "spirit and soul and body," "Paul simply uses this graphic form by way of insisting that the whole person, and not some part only,

⁷³ Morris, "1 and 2 Thessalonians," 181. "The essential idea in sanctification is that of being set apart for God, but there is also the thought of the character involved in such separation. In this place Paul has both aspects in mind."

⁷⁴ Thomas, "1, 2 Thessalonians," 294.

⁷⁵ Calvin, "I & II Thessalonians," 303–304.

⁷⁶ Some examples of the optative expressing desire are Luke 20:16; Rom 3:4, 31.

⁷⁷ Hendriksen, "I & II Thessalonians," 141. "May this God *sanctify* you, that is, may he separate you from the life of sin and cause you to be dedicated to him (cf. Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; 7:14; Rev. 22:11 . . .) *through and through*."

is involved.”⁷⁸ This interpretation seems to fit the context since Paul is not making an anthropological statement here, but he has been emphasizing the totality of God’s work in sanctification.⁷⁹ As Lewis and Demarest argue, “The aorist verb in the phrase ‘sanctify you through and through,’ does not attest a crisis experience of entire sanctification prior to death. Rather, the verb is a ‘culminative aorist,’ that focuses on the conclusion or end result of the sanctifying action.”⁸⁰ Therefore, Paul’s idea of complete sanctification not only touches all aspects of humanity, but includes the sense of continuing until ultimate completion at the coming of Christ, glorification.⁸¹

In addition, however, Paul does not end this prayer on the note of a wish but rather on a note of confidence. Paul’s confidence that God will sanctify these believers unto glorification rests upon the faithfulness of God (cf. Ps 138:8, Rom 11:29). “It is profoundly satisfying to the believer,” Morris writes, “that in the last resort what matters is not his feeble hold on God, but God’s strong grip on him (cf. John 10:28-29).”⁸² God’s character would be called into question if His calling could not or would not result in

⁷⁸ Morris, “1 and 2 Thessalonians,” 182. See Thomas, “1,2 Thessalonians,” 294–295 for a defense of a trichotomy position.

⁷⁹ Wanamaker, “Thessalonians,” 207.

⁸⁰ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 197. See also Spross, “Canonical,” 45. Spross writes, “This understanding of the aorist lends itself to a view of sanctification as a process begun that continues unto completion during this present life, viewed from the perspective of the consummation at the return of Christ.”

⁸¹ Morris, “1 and 2 Thessalonians,” 183. “It is a fitting climax to his thought on the sanctification of believers that he looks for them to be preserved blameless not only through the changes and trials of this earthly life, but also on that dread day when they stand before the eternal Judge.”

⁸² *Ibid.*, 184.

final salvation. This is a matter of His faithfulness, His character.⁸³ “Our sanctification,” Kenneth Prior writes, “is as sure as the faithfulness of God himself.”⁸⁴ Wanamaker writes, “The present tense of the participle καλῶν (‘the one calling’) stresses that God does not merely call Christians once and then leave them on their own. Instead God continues to call the followers of Christ to salvation.”⁸⁵

In full view then Paul teaches that both the believers’ responsibility and God’s activity are necessary in the matter of sanctification. Thomas writes concerning God’s faithfulness, “This, however, did not render prayer for them superfluous, as human effort and application also have their place in carrying out the purposes of God.”⁸⁶ Paul does not pit one against the other. It is a matter of both/and not either/or. As Packer concludes, “Hence in the Bible God demands of His people as their duty the holiness which He promises them as a gift.”⁸⁷

2 Thessalonians

Beginning with Paul’s usual blessing (1:1-2), Paul then reveals how he prays for the believers. His prayer has three basic components. First, Paul is thankful that the believers are continuing to grow in their faith and love (1:3). He then encourages them to persevere through their sufferings because God will bring final justice when Christ

⁸³ Chrysostom, “Thessalonians,” 372. “For if He called you to salvation, and He is true, He will certainly save you, in that He wills it.”

⁸⁴ Kenneth Prior, “Sanctification? What’s That?” *Decision* 34, no.10 (O 1993): 25.

⁸⁵ Wanamaker, “Thessalonians,” 207.

⁸⁶ Thomas, “1, 2 Thessalonians,” 296.

⁸⁷ Packer, “Keswick,” 155–156.

returns for the saints (1:4-10). Finally, he prays for God to fulfill them in the faith so that Jesus may be glorified through them (1:11-12).

Paul then spends the bulk of the letter refuting a false rumor and distilling the resulting anxiety. Evidently from the context, word had spread that Jesus had already returned. Paul refutes that teaching by explaining that the man of lawlessness must first be revealed along with the apostasy. When Jesus returns He will slay the lawless one, and all this transpires before the gathering together with Him. That is why Paul can assure the believers that Christ has not returned (2:1-12).

Paul encourages the believers by reminding them of their salvation. They are not of those who will be deluded (2:11); they are those beloved by the Lord. God's purpose for them is salvation by means of sanctification, and He will strengthen and comfort them to this end (2:13-17).

As he begins to close the epistle, Paul requests the prayers of the Thessalonians for the spread and success of the Gospel. He is optimistic that God will continue to strengthen them, and they will continue to grow (3:1-5). Paul then issues a group of warnings. The believers are to keep distance with ones who do not live according to Paul's instructions (3:6-13). Those who refuse Paul's instructions are to be especially noted and admonished to submission (3:14-15). The letter then concludes with blessings and Paul's personal endorsement of the letter's authenticity (3:16-17).

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

(13) But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning⁸⁸ for salvation through [lit. in] sanctification (ἁγιοσμός, masculine noun) by [lit. of] the Spirit and faith in the truth. (14) It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain [lit. to the gaining of] the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (15) So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from [lit. of] us. (16) Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, (17) comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

In consideration of the broader context, this passage is meant to provide encouragement. By way of reminder, Paul contrasts the believers in Thessalonians with the unbelievers whom God will delude. Their salvation from God, its purpose and process, ensures them that they are not forgotten or left behind. Jesus has not returned, and they are destined for the glory of Jesus upon His return.

2 Thess 2:13-17 restates the elements of sanctification presented by Paul in 1 Thessalonians: necessity, culmination, responsibility, and prayerful confidence. The idea of necessity in this passage is somewhat similar to the idea of necessity in 1 Thess 4:3. In that passage, God's will yields necessity. In this passage, God's ordination yields necessity. Basing all of his coming reasoning on the love of God, Paul says the believers are elect for salvation by the means of sanctification, which will occur through the work of the Spirit and faith based on the truth.⁸⁹ Paul argues in this text that salvation is process. Hendriksen explains this process of "through sanctification" as "a process

⁸⁸ Wanamaker, "Thessalonians," 266. There is division over whether this is ἀπαρχήν, firstfruits, or ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, from the beginning. Wanamaker argues that the majority of commentators render it "from the beginning," and that it seems to fit the context of election better.

⁸⁹ "Truth" here means "gospel" or "Word" (cf. vv.10-12; 1 John 1:8, 10).

causing you to become increasingly detached from the world and attached to Christ until his image is completely formed in you.”⁹⁰ Election, salvation from eternity past, is to be followed by sanctification, which is the present state of the believer.⁹¹ Sanctification then is to culminate in salvation. Salvation is here given the connotation of final salvation through the context of verse 14.⁹²

It should be stressed that Paul’s connection between election and glorification in this passage is sanctification, not justification. Calvin suggests that since we cannot investigate eternal decrees, sanctification is given here as essential proof to us of our adoption, and he references Rom 8:14 and 1 John 5:12 as support.⁹³ Therefore, in order to render a full portrait of the *ordo salutis* one would be wise to set this passage alongside Rom 8:29-30. The sanctification spoken of in 2 Thess 2:13-17 cannot be isolated to either positional or personal because of the roles that the Spirit and faith in the Word play in both aspects. Wanamaker writes, “Paul’s thanksgiving is directed to God precisely because his readers have believed in the gospel and experienced the sanctifying activity

⁹⁰ Hendriksen, “1 and 2 Thessalonians,” 187.

⁹¹ The language of “beloved by the Lord” and “chosen from the beginning” is language of election (cf. Deut 7:7,8; 1 John 4:19). See Morris, “1 and 2 Thessalonians,” 238. “The perfect participle, ‘loved,’ brings the two thoughts of an action in time past and a continuing result. This is, of course, very appropriate in proximity to the concept of election.”

⁹² Spross, “Canonical,” 68. Spross concludes from this text, “This salvation is to be understood as salvation in the broadest sense, embracing the prior purpose of God, the past act of His calling them unto salvation, the present reality of that work, and the future implications of its completion in the eschatological parousia.”

⁹³ Calvin, “I & II Thessalonians,” 343.

of the Spirit as part of the process of their salvation.”⁹⁴ It would seem that all three major categories of sanctification are meant in this passage because the elements of calling, persevering, and glorification are all emphasized.

Strengthening this interpretation is Paul’s call for perseverance grounded in God’s purpose for saving through sanctification. God’s ultimate purpose for believers is to gain the glory of Christ; for this reason believers must persevere in the faith. Morris writes, “‘So then’ represents a pair of inferential conjunctions that indicate that what follows is the logical consequence of the preceding.”⁹⁵ The means of perseverance is to “stand firm” and “hold to” the revelation that was given them either by oral or written transmission.⁹⁶ Hence, adherence to sound doctrine is Paul’s prescription for perseverance.⁹⁷

Once again, one sees the interchange of responsibility and sovereignty in salvation because this passage concludes with a prayer of confidence. Paul prays that the God who has “loved us,” that is, elected us, and “given us eternal comfort,” that is, purposed us for the glory of Christ, will also “comfort and strengthen our hearts,” that is, sanctify us. Paul is then praying according to the will of God.

⁹⁴ Wanamaker, “Thessalonians,” 267. See also Lesta, “Nature,” 63. Lesta concludes from this passage, “Indeed, the Holy Spirit enables the Christian to more fully serve the Father. Similarly, truth brought from man the response of faith in the Gospel message. The work of God and the response of man are brought together for salvation.”

⁹⁵ Morris, “1 and 2 Thessalonians,” 241.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 241. “The present imperative here will have the force ‘go on holding’.”

⁹⁷ See Calvin, “I & II Thessalonians,” 345.

Summary of Chapter 2

Before the discussion proceeds to an examination of other epistolary texts, the given definition of sanctification will be briefly compared to Paul's doctrine derived from his letters. Sanctification is here defined as the process whereby through the enabling grace of God, the accomplished work of Christ, and the sustaining work of the Holy Spirit a believer will necessarily progress in his or her personal holiness towards the goal of inheriting eternal life. Progression and process are referred to in Rom 6:22, Col 1:23, 1 Thess 4:1, and 2 Thess 2:13-15. That sanctification is a Trinitarian work is found in 1 Thess 4:1,8 and 2 Thess 2:13-14. The end of sanctification as ending in glorification is derived from Rom 6:22-23 and 2 Thess 2:14. And most importantly, Paul teaches that this personal, progressive sanctification is necessary for obtaining eternal life in Rom 6:22-23, 8:12-14, Col 1:23, 1 Thess 4:3, and 2 Thess 2:13. In a more comprehensive analysis Spross observes, "Throughout the Pauline corpus, salvation terminology tends to be broader and more inclusive while sanctification and holiness terminology tends to be clearly a part of that greater concept of salvation."⁹⁸ This general observation of Paul's use of sanctification throughout all of his writings supports the interpretation given here in a selection of his writings that he believed sanctification to be a necessary part of complete salvation. It is now time to see if this definition of sanctification is found among other New Testament writers.

⁹⁸ Spross, "Canonical," 205.

CHAPTER 3

THE NECESSITY OF SANCTIFICATION IN OTHER NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

Hebrews¹

The letter to the Hebrews begins unusually in that it skips the usual address and greeting remarks and opens with an introduction. The opening verses indicate that this New Testament document is primarily concerned with Christology. In “these last days” God has spoken to man through His Son Jesus Christ (1:1-4). As God’s Son, He is far superior to angels (1:5-14). Since He is superior to angels and has spoken to man, His message must be heeded lest salvation be neglected (2:1-4).

Jesus willingly humbled Himself in order that He might taste death to bring many sons to glory (2:5-13). He had to become fully man in order to defeat the devil, help Abraham’s descendents, become a merciful High Priest, and make propitiation for the sins of the people (2:14-18). Since Jesus was faithful in His house, just as Moses was in his, believers are called to hold fast to their confidence and hope in Him and not turn

¹ This dissertation is not concerned with the authorship of Hebrews. The writer believes Paul authored the book while Luke penned it, just as one finds with the book of Romans where Paul is the author but Tertius penned it (cf. 16:22). This seems to satisfy the Lukan and Pauline influences upon the text. Also, this explanation maintains the affirmation from some of the Early Fathers that Paul was the author of Hebrews (see Athanasius’ Paschal Letter, A.D. 367; Eusebius, *Church History*, Book III, 3, 5; and Chrysostom, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, Summary of the Epistle). However, since the authorship is nowhere explicitly mentioned in the book, Hebrews is grouped with the other NT epistles for this dissertation.

away in the day of trial (3:1-11). Believers must not provoke the Lord through unbelief, as did those who came out of Egypt (3:12-19).

Believers are enabled to enter the rest of God because they heard the good news with faith instead of disobedience (4:1-7). The rest for the believer is yet to come (4:8-13). Believers must then persevere toward the rest ahead and can do so with full confidence because Jesus Christ is the sympathetic High Priest (4:14-16).

Jesus is the great High Priest because He is the Son and has learned obedience through His suffering. He is perfect and is therefore able to accomplish salvation for those who obey Him (5:1-10). There is much more to say concerning Christ, but the readers have not yet matured as they should and are unable to receive it (5:11-14).

Believers must mature and not be as those who have tasted and turned away (6:1-8). Paul has confidence, though, in his readers. God remembers their work, and Paul encourages them to continue by faith so that they may obtain the promises (6:9-12). Abraham serves as an example that the promises of God are good and can be fully trusted because God has sworn by Himself. Jesus, the High Priest, has entered the veil and made the promise sure as well (6:13-20).

The writer then uses Melchizedek as a type of Christ to illustrate Christ's superior priesthood. Christ became such not through physical requirement according to genealogy but according to immanent power. Jesus, then, guarantees a better covenant (7:1-22). Jesus is better than the former priests because He lives forever and therefore forever intercedes for those He saves (7:23-25). By offering up Himself, his offering is superior to former offerings because He had no sin in need of atonement (7:26-28).

Believers in Christ have this Jesus who offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for their High Priest. This is a main point of Hebrews and a great encouragement to its readers. He has entered the true tabernacle, obtained a more excellent ministry, and mediates a better covenant, which is enacted on better promises (8:1-6). The former covenant was faulty, and therefore a new covenant has been enacted which makes void the former (8:7-13). The writer asserts that Jesus entered into the very Holy of Holies, which is the perfect tabernacle of heaven. He sprinkled the altar, not with the blood of animals, but with His own spotless blood (9:1-14). That is why the new covenant is so superior to the former. Since every covenant requires death and blood, when Jesus died and applied His blood in the heavenly tabernacle, His death put sin away forever. He will return a second time for the salvation of those who wait for Him (9:15-28).

The Law is powerless to cleanse, and the blood of animals is not eternally sufficient. However, Christ has accomplished what the Law and sacrifices could not (10:1-10). The priests of the Law have to continually make sacrifices. Christ, on the other hand, made one complete sacrifice. There is therefore no further need of sacrifices (10:11-18).

Since Jesus has achieved all of this for the believer, the Church can have full confidence and entrance into the Holy of Holies. In addition, the believers must encourage one another to do the same through faithfully and frequently assembling together (10:19-25). Those who refuse these blessings and continue in sin are bound to await the terrifying judgment of God (10:26-31). In order to not fall away, the writer encourages the believers to remember the suffering they endured when they came to faith. Those who shrink away fall into destruction (10:32-39). The writer defines faith

and provides a plethora of biblical examples. The illustrations of faith were those whose belief was coupled with obedient action (11:1-40).

Believers, then, have all the more reason to finish the race of faith alongside so many who have run before them, including the Lord Jesus Himself (12:1-3). The trials that believers endure are nothing short of the discipline of God, and God only disciplines His children (12:4-11). Therefore, believers must strengthen each other and themselves so that no one becomes like Esau who through ungodliness lost opportunity for repentance (12:12-17). For believers have come to Zion, which is far superior than Sinai (12:18-24). So believers must not turn from Him who is speaking as Israel did at Sinai, for God is still the same all-consuming God (12:25-29).

The writer then provides a list of ways to rightly serve the Lord with gratitude and awe. Believers are to love the brethren, show hospitality, remember the imprisoned, highly regard marriage, be free from love of money, imitate leaders of the faith, and reject false teaching (13:1-9). The strength for the believer comes through fellowship and identification with Christ not material substance (13:10-16).

As the letter draws to a close, the believers are exhorted to obey their leaders and pray for the authors. A blessing of benediction is offered and a greeting for all (13:17-25).

The purpose of Hebrews is to exhort the believers to persevere in their faith (cf. 13:22). The writer provides a multi-faceted argument meant to spur the readers on to endurance. He compels them to understand the finality and ultimate glory of their faith by demonstrating the superiority of Christ and the new covenant. He buttresses the worth of their faith with several warnings for those who abandon the faith. He finally encourages

them through examples of those who have endured the race before them. The message of the book is simple: Those who persevere by faith in the perfect High Priest, the Lord Jesus, are the recipients of the promise of the new covenant. Those who turn from faith in the Lord are destined for eternal condemnation. Therefore, persevere.

Hebrews 12:14²

(14) Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

This is one of the more strikingly clear statements regarding sanctification's necessity for eternal life as found in the Scripture. W. B. Godbey comments on this text, "We need but one Scripture to prove our proposition, *i.e.*, Hebrews 12:14."³ Godbey's proposition is the same as argued in this thesis. The literal reading of this verse lends itself in defense of this paper's proposal. One is forced to redefine terms and disregard immediate context in order to reduce the author's intended effect. The writer purposed to convince his readers that perseverance in the faith was necessary, and he employed stark warning passages as one of his useful tools to accomplish his aim.

Before investigating the grammar of this verse, it is useful to revisit the immediate context. In verses 12 and 13, Paul is reasoning from his reminder to the readers that their

² There is a rationale as to why only this verse in Hebrews was chosen for this particular dissertation. There are other verses that mention sanctification, *i.e.* 2:11 and 10:14, but 12:14 carries the force of the argument for necessity with it. There are also the warning passages of Hebrews (*cf.* 3:6, 14), but the writer understands these verses as addressing the doctrine of perseverance rather than sanctification. Concerning the warning passages, see Purkiser, *Conflicting Concepts*, 96. "This certainly does not sound as if one single initial act of faith forever secures salvation. It sounds far more as if there is a continuance in faith which is just as necessary as the first believing." These other verses in Hebrews support the exegesis of 12:14 but in a secondary fashion.

³ Godbey, *Holiness*, 5.

suffering was in essence part of God's discipline process.⁴ They should not give up then, but should rather strengthen each other and make their own paths straight. Verse 14 is Paul's practical application of how the readers can accomplish perseverance. Arthur Pink notes three connections to vv. 12-13 for v.14. He sees them as timely aids to perseverance, the truth that pursuing peace and holiness leaves little room for persecution to paralyze the believer, and that suffering provides opportunity to exercise spiritual graces.⁵ It is interesting to note how pursuing peace with men and holiness before God correlates to the first and second greatest commandments (cf. Matt 22:37-40). With regard to sanctification, one cannot pursue sanctification without proper relation to his fellow man (cf. 1 John 4:20).

It would seem then that verse 14 is part of this "straightening of the paths." Far more important, however, for understanding the thrust of v.14 is what comes immediately after v.14, not what is said immediately before. Verse 15 opens with a second command, "See to it" The believers are to make sure no one falls short of the grace of God. Not "the glory of God," for everyone, including believers, are guilty of falling short of the glory of God. But rather "the grace of God," only those offered grace can do this. Falling short of the grace of God might occur through bitterness, immorality, or godlessness. The writer then holds up Esau as an example of one who fell short of the grace of God. Esau, having sold his birthright, later desired the blessing but was rejected. And even though he sought repentance with tears, he did not find it. That is, even though he tried to change

⁴ King, "Climbing," 33. King makes a point to bring out the connection between God's discipline and our righteousness in Hebrews 12.

⁵ Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, Reprint (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 992-993.

his father's mind, the blessing was already given, and Esau was left out forever (Gen 37:30-41). Now while this occurrence has to do with the blessings of the firstborn, the grace of salvation is surely portrayed as well for nowhere does the Scripture mention Esau as being a recipient of the promise. In fact, he is rather mentioned as rejected and reprobate (cf. Mal 1:3; Rom 9:13). Therefore, when one puts verse 14 in the context of vv.15-17, it is certain that salvation is at stake. And when the comparison is made, it is at stake for those who have been exposed to the grace of God.

Verse 14 begins (in the English translations) with the imperative, διώκετε, which is a present, active command. It means, "to hunt," "to follow after," "to pursue." Pink notes the emphatic nature of this word and the tie it makes to the first verse of the chapter.⁶ The believers are exhorted there to "run with endurance the race that is set before us." Lesta notes, "The present tense of the imperative διώκετε indicates the necessity for a constant, eager pursuit of holiness. Indeed, the author warns that without holiness no man shall see the Lord."⁷ Given the availability of other less active commands,⁸ one is pressed to realize the intention of the author was that of force. The writer is calling the believers to cooperative, responsible action on a twofold front.⁹ They are to pursue peace with men, and they are to pursue sanctification (ἁγιασμός). Indeed,

⁶ Pink, *Hebrews*, 995.

⁷ Lesta, "Nature," 138.

⁸ Two examples of available less active imperatives at Paul's disposal are γεννηθήτω "to become" and γνώτω "to know, or be certain."

⁹ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 203. "Although God takes the initiative in sanctification, believers must put forth effort in the quest for holiness (2 Peter 1:5-7; cf. Heb. 12:14)."

it could be adequately demonstrated that the NT is replete with commands for believers to implement holy living in their lives. The numerous biblical injunctions to holiness make sanctification necessary on their own authority apart from the issue of eternal salvation. It is imperative, not optional.¹⁰

It should be noted that the sanctification mentioned here is the personal, progressive type because it is achieved through the participatory action of the believer. Jerry Bridges writes of this verse, “The word *pursue* suggests two thoughts: first, that diligence and effort are required; and second, that it is a lifelong task...as we begin to conform to the will of God in one area of life, He reveals to us our need in another area. That is why we will always be pursuing — as opposed to attaining — holiness in this life.”¹¹ It is not, therefore, positional sanctification acquired through initial faith and repentance. “The ‘holiness’ referred to in our text,” says Pink, “is *not* imputed holiness, for we cannot be exhorted to ‘follow after’ that!”¹² It is the personal holiness, which is

¹⁰ Philip Ashley Blackstone, “Human Responsibility in the Pursuit of Godliness,” (Th. M. thesis, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1978), 87–88. It is worth stating Blackstone’s observation of the frequent presence of the biblical mandate for godliness in the lives of believers. He writes, “The Bible commands godly living. The believer’s practical sanctification is said to be God’s will (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8). Christ reiterated the absolute injunction to love God with all soul, mind, and strength (Luke 10:27). Elsewhere he said, ‘Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect’ (Matthew 5:48). Obedience in view of the example of Christ is commanded in Philippians 2:12. Believers are told to cleanse themselves from all defilement (2 Corinthians 7:1), to lay aside every sin (Hebrews 12:1) to live righteously and godly (Titus 2:12), to be holy (1 Peter 1:15), and to not let sin reign in their bodies (Rom. 6:12, 13). Many, many more commands could be mentioned, but these are sufficient . . . The believer must understand that there really is no choice in the matter, aside from the decision to disobey. There are no equally legitimate options. Christ freely forgives, but then frankly fiats: ‘Go and sin no more.’”

¹¹ Bridges, *Pursuit*, 14–15.

achieved through ongoing faith and repentance. It is that sanctification that is only available to those who pursue it.¹³ This is to be distinguished from the previous uses of sanctification in 10:10, 14. In those instances, sanctification appears in the passive participle construction and is emphasizing the means whereby sanctification is accomplished, the substitutionary death of Christ. It is also worthy of noting that this sanctification is progressive because the believer is called to pursue it not perfect it.

This present, active imperative is then followed by a qualifying phrase that places personal sanctification in the realm of necessity and makes the pursuit of it all the more urgent. “Without which no one will see the Lord” is commenting on sanctification, because “which” is singular. Therefore the result has massive implications for soteriology. Chrysostom sees the same meaning here as found in 1 Cor 6:9-10.¹⁴ The pursuit referenced here is analogous to Paul’s admonition to “put to death” the deeds of the flesh in Romans 8. In other words, Paul is calling the readers to active, urgent involvement in their progress of personal holiness. Pink surmises from this text, “There is

¹² Pink, *Hebrews*, 1000.

¹³ Blackstone, “Human Responsibility,” Introduction. Blackstone’s thesis is similar in some respects to the present author’s. He argues that achieving godliness is possible by aggressively appropriating the means God has provided. His intention is not to lessen God’s primary role in the sanctification of believers, but rather to remind believers of their responsibility in the process, thus, his employment of the word “aggressively” in his thesis. However, the author departs from Blackstone as he develops his thesis. His argument essentially equates “godliness” with “perfection,” and he defines perfection as the ability to achieve constant victory over temptation. This understanding comes too close to Keswick teaching. That is why this presentation employs the term “progress” instead of “perfection.” The “perfection” attained in this life for the believer is in the “progress,” not in the attainment of a state of constant victory over temptation. Attainment is reserved for the stage of final salvation (Phil 3:12).

¹⁴ Chrysostom, “Hebrews,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Vol. 14, 4th Printing (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 504.

only one route which leads to the Country of everlasting bliss, and that is the Highway of Holiness”¹⁵ The writer did not mention the lack of faith in Christ as resulting in separation from God, but the lack of living for Christ as resulting in eternal separation.¹⁶ Also, this is not to be confused with a works-based salvation either, because there is no mention of achieving holiness through moral endeavor. Lewis and Demarest point out that Wesley concluded from this verse “that sanctification is a prerequisite for final justification at the last judgment.”¹⁷ Wesley’s interpretation of this verse wrongly confuses justification with glorification. Justification is not contingent upon sanctification, but glorification is. Salvation is a process. This verse in Hebrews is a call for believers to persevere through progressing in holiness.¹⁸

What remains now is to defend the notion that “seeing the Lord” is a biblical way to speak of the glorified state of believers.¹⁹ A brief examination of three key texts should substantiate this claim. First, Matt 5:8 says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” This is part of what is commonly called “The Beatitudes,” that is, attitudes that are present in a Christian’s life. The usage and placing of αὐτοὶ renders the meaning as

¹⁵ Pink, “Hebrews,” 998–999.

¹⁶ Marshall, *Mystery*, 99. “Yea, holiness in this life is such a part of our salvation, as is a necessary means to make us *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in heavenly light and glory; without holiness we can never see God* (Heb. xii. 14); and, are as unfit for the glorious presence, as swine for the presence-chamber of an earthly prince.”

¹⁷ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 177.

¹⁸ Klaiber, “Sanctification,” 17.

¹⁹ Pink, “Hebrews,” 1000. Pink believes this “seeing” in 12:14 is spiritually not corporeally, that is, “with an enlightened understanding.” In other words, he doesn’t take it as a reference to the glorified state in the presence of the Lord but rather a greater knowledge of the Lord for the believer.

“they and only they” shall see God.” As Leon Morris writes, “. . . no one has a right to expect that vision without that qualification.”²⁰ So the blessing of “seeing God” is reserved solely for those who have pure hearts. The question is who are they? The following two verses under examination clarify the answer to that question.

The second example is found in John 17:24. In the closing words of the High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prays, “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” Jesus is praying for His immediate disciples and all who would believe through their testimony (cf. v. 20). His prayer to the Father is for them to see His glory, which is the Father’s will. Therefore, seeing the glory of Christ awaits those who have believed in Him and followed Him in this life.

The final example is Rev 22:4 where it is said that in the eternal state, the bond-servants of the Lord “will see His face.”²¹ One of the most rewarding and spectacular blessings of heaven, if not the most rewarding and spectacular, is that the redeemed will look upon the face of God. This is then a description of one of the abounding joys of glorification, basking in an intimate presence of God. Eternal life is hence described as viewing the Lord’s glory and seeing His face.

Taking the interpretation that “seeing the Lord” refers to the glorified state of a believer in Heb 12:14, it is those, and only those, who pursue sanctification who will

²⁰ Leon Morris, “Hebrews,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 139.

²¹ See also I John 3:2-3.

enjoy the blessing of glorification, namely to see the face of God.²² As Calvin concludes, “. . . for with no other eyes shall we see God than those which have been renewed after his image.”²³ Examining this passage, MacArthur writes, “When all is said and done, those who are utterly lacking in holiness will be sent away from God’s presence into everlasting destruction (cf. Matt. 25:41). The context of Hebrews 12 confirms that this means practical holiness. Thus the writer of Hebrews . . . confirmed the necessity of righteous works to validate genuine faith.”²⁴ One would only add to MacArthur’s statement that Heb 12:14 argues that righteous works not only validate faith, they assure heaven. Personal, progressive sanctification is necessary in order to inherit eternal life.

James

James begins his letter to the believers who are scattered abroad by encouraging them to persevere in the faith under trial (1:1-4).²⁵ Endurance produces perfection, and believers have access to complete wisdom and humility (1:5-11). The end of perseverance under trial is the reward of life. The major obstacle to perseverance is temptation, which comes from the flesh not from God (1:12-18). Therefore, in order to

²² Kenneth Prior, *The Way of Holiness: The Christian Doctrine of Sanctification* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1967), 19. Prior writes concerning this verse, “Indeed, when we consider the Final Judgment we see that in the last analysis there are only two classes of people, the holy and the unholy (cf. Rev 22:11).”

²³ Calvin, “Hebrews,” 324.

²⁴ MacArthur, *Gospel*, 254.

²⁵ Ron Julian, “A Perfect Work: Trials and Sanctification in the Book of James,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 4, no.3 (Fall 2000): 40. “Trials are truly something to rejoice in, not because they are desirable in themselves, but because they lead to a most desirable outcome: They lead to our sanctification.”

persevere believers must put the Word of God into practice and not become mere passive listeners (1:19-27).

Rejection of partiality exemplifies faith. Showing preference for certain people above others breaks the commandment to “love your neighbor.” The significance of that act is that the breaking of one commandment in essence is the breaking of the whole law. Furthermore, believers must remember that God showed no partiality when He saved them (2:1-13). A faith that is not demonstrated through good works is useless and dead (2:14-26).

At this point James returns to his exhortation for the taming of the tongue (cf. 1:26). Through the illustrations of the horse’s bit, the ship’s rudder, and a small flame, James argues how such a little instrument, the tongue, can accomplish great evil. James then questions how the same tongue can utter praises to God and curses to men (3:1-12).

James returns now to his theme of wisdom (cf. 1:5). One can know whether or not his wisdom is from above or from below. Godly wisdom is not ambitious or jealous, but is pure, peaceable, etc. (3:13-18).

The reason that sin reigns among believers is that they are given to the pleasures that are waging war against them. James proposes that they humble themselves before God and resist the devil. God will exalt those who are humbled before Him (4:1-10). Concerning their relations with each other, believers should not judge one another, because God alone is judge. Should these actions be neglected, James reminds his readers that neglect of what is right is sin in itself (4:11-17). The final warning from James is directed to those who are wealthy (5:1-6).

The book begins to close with several exhortations. Believers are to wait patiently for the coming of Lord even through suffering. As a source of strength they are to remember those who have endured patiently before them and remember the Lord is full of compassion (5:7-11). The proper response to joy is praise. The proper response to suffering and sickness is prayer, and prayer is not meaningless. Believers are to remember the great things Elijah accomplished through prayer (5:13-18). The final exhortation leaves the readers with a sense of urgency to persevere and to assist others in persevering. James says that the one who turns a straying one back to the truth “will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.” (5:19-20).

The book of James is an exhortation to perseverance. Throughout the book James demonstrates how ungodliness is at odds with faith in Christ. Genuine faith is lived out in all areas of life both vertical and horizontal, both external and internal. While some of the passages indicate that ungodly conduct is not befitting a believer, there are those passages found in James that indicate ungodly conduct reveals unbelief (cf. 1:26, 2:26, 5:20). As Ron Julian surmises from the book of James, “Perseverance is the inevitable result of genuine faith under trial, because such faith stays the course and thereby shows itself to be genuine.”²⁶ The passage under investigation comes toward the end of chapter one where James has emphasized the prize and means of perseverance.

James 1:21-25

(21) Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness [lit. abundance of malice], in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. (22) But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. (23) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who

²⁶ Julian, “Perfect Work,” 43.

looks at his natural [lit. the face of his birth] face in a mirror; (24) for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he [lit. and he] has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. (25) But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer [lit. a doer of a work], this man will be blessed in what he does [lit. his doing].

One readily recognizes that this passage, taken by itself, is not a strong argument in support of the stated thesis. There are a couple of reasons why this passage was chosen. First, usually one would revert to James 2:14-26 to support an argument for the necessity of a faith that produces works. Since this passage in James is familiar to this discussion, it seems reasonable to examine another portion of the book. Second, given the broader context of James, this particular passage may carry a greater impact and force than the casual reader would recognize. In sum, this selection will not in and of itself prove the thesis, but in conjunction with other texts, it lends support to it.

Presented in the immediate context of perseverance, it seems evident that James' intention is to provide counsel for perseverance, especially given that verse 21 begins with *διό*, "therefore." The thrust of his counsel is that putting the word into practice is the proper indication that the word has truly been received. His primary example of this in the above passage is "putting aside of all filthiness and wickedness is necessary to humbly receive the word." *Ἀπέξασθε* is the main verb of the verse, which, as MacArthur writes, means, "putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness is a condition for receiving the word implanted."²⁷ This is important given that one's lifestyle is how James differentiates those who hear the word and those who practice the word.

²⁷ John MacArthur, "James," in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 74. There is a rationale for referring frequently to MacArthur's writings throughout this dissertation. As a follower of John Owen,

Crucial to this verse is the relation between the reception of the word and what it is able to accomplish. The implanted (ἐμφυτον) word has the potential, the ability “to save your souls,” σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν. The reason one would reason from this text that the implanted word has the ability to save, instead of declaring its salvific nature as final, is due to James use of δυνάμενον, which means “able.” Δυνάμενον is a present, middle, participle derived from δυνατέω, which means “to display capability, be effective, be able.”²⁸ The implanted word, then, is able in itself to save the soul (cf. 2 Tim 3:15), however, its power to save is not a given.²⁹ James places a contingency upon this work, that is, how the word is received. What makes the word implanted and able to save is the disposition of humility and meekness, which is ready to learn, adjust, and change accordingly (cf. Isa 57:15).³⁰ When the word is received in humility or meekness,

MacArthur serves as a prime contemporary example of one who would agree that sanctification is indeed necessary for eternal life. For quotes from Owen and MacArthur to defend their stance on sanctification, see footnotes # 43 and 46 in chapter one.

²⁸ *BDAG*, 264.

²⁹ Donald W. Burdick, “James,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 175. Burdick reasons that “implanted in you” describes believers so the phrase “which can save you” “simply describes the truth as saving truth.” This interpretation is satisfactory for this verse, but given the context of self-delusion and worthless religion, James is not assuring mere “hearers” that they are genuine believers. *Ibid.*, 177. When Burdick arrives at verse 27, he then summarizes, “The person whose religious experience is genuine will put spiritual truth into practice, and his life will be marked by love for others and holiness before God.” According to context, then, it is difficult to soften the force of verse 21.

³⁰ Calvin, “James,” 295.

πραύτητι, it is able then to save the soul finally and completely.³¹ Therefore, salvation does not come through passivity but through word-based, faith-filled activity.³²

When one is a “doer of the word, and not merely a hearer,” putting away filthiness and wickedness evidences it. Thus the word has been properly received (cf. Luke 11:28). “Doing the word” then is the laying aside of ungodliness to humbly receive the word. And this is not a passive mode for believers. James calls them to “prove” themselves “doers of the word.” Γίνεσθε is in the present, middle, imperative tense meaning a continual action. So believers are to be continually proving themselves doers of the word. Therefore James places responsibility upon believers to provide proof of their reception of the word, namely, a rejection of all ungodliness.

On the other hand, those who merely hear the word “delude themselves.” This self-delusion is what makes this passage lend support to the notion of necessity in sanctification, which is described here as “putting away filthiness and wickedness and humbly receiving the word” (cf. Eph 4:22-24, Col 3:8-10). What is the implication of this delusion? James provides the answer to this question in the form of two illustrations.

First, James illustrates delusion from the reflection of a mirror. A deluded person is like someone who sees himself in a mirror and then forgets what he looks like. Mirrors

³¹ See Peter H. Davids, “The Epistle of James,” in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, eds. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 95. Davids reasons from the context and lexical meaning of verse 21, “Thus the God who regenerates (begets) the Christian by the word of truth, will save him by the same word implanted in him if he receives it.”

³² Hodges, *Free*, 125. In opposition to this understanding of James, opponents to the position of necessity interpret “dead faith” and “salvation” in other than eternal consequences. For example Hodges writes, “. . . the salvation spoken of in James means prolonging of human life by godliness.” See also Hodges, *Gospel*, 27. “James is saying obedience to God can defer death.”

reflect only what is in front of them. They do not deceive or delude. They reflect reality. To forget that reality and imagine a different appearance other than one's reflection is self-deception. One calls to mind the queen in *Snow White* who calls out to the mirror, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?" When the mirror replied with the truth, the queen was unhappy indeed.

On the other hand, the one who looks into the law of liberty, grace in Christ (cf. Gal 5:1), as looking honestly into a mirror, that one will be blessed in "his doing," that is, in his practice of the word. As Davids explains of verse 25, "The contrast implied in $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ at the beginning of v 25 carries one back, not to v 24, but to the beginning of v 23. This person, as the author (James) will explain in the next phrase, is the one who hears and does."³³ One should note here that James adds the notion of perseverance, "and abides by it." Calvin reasons, "... a doctrine merely heard and not received inwardly into the heart avails nothing, because it soon vanishes away."³⁴ There is no blessing then in the mere hearing. The background of $\mu\alpha\kappa\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ is an eschatological blessing for those who are "doing" the law of freedom (cf. Matt 5:1-12).³⁵

Second, James illustrates this delusion by contrasting profession of religion with adherence to religion. One who is only nominally religious, that is, religious only by

³³ Davids, "James," 98.

³⁴ Calvin, "James," 297. See also Davids, "James," 98. The point is that the impression is only temporary."

³⁵ Ibid., 100. See also Andrew Murray, *The Holiest of All* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1996), 497–500 for further elaboration on the relation between right fellowship with man and God and the basis of sanctification as union with Christ.

name, demonstrates their true nature by an unbridled tongue.³⁶ In contrast, one who is genuinely religious practices his religion through caring for the needy and abstaining from the contamination of the world.

The connection of this illustration (vv. 26-27) with the self-delusion of v. 22 is that the nominal religious adherent “deceives his own heart.” This individual is deluded. In actuality, then, the mere profession of religion is “worthless.” Religion that does not result in action is not true religion at all (cf. 2:26). As Bonhoeffer states, “only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes. It is quite unbiblical to hold to the first proposition without the second.”³⁷

Now making the link back to v. 22, the delusion of a mere hearer of the word is that while they profess religion, in reality their lack of expression, “doing the word,” makes evident their lack of religion. MacArthur writes, “Such people, who are merely hearers and not also doers, think they belong to God, when, in reality, they do not.”³⁸ If one is not practicing the word (abstaining from ungodliness and receiving the word), one is not a true believer (the implanted word is not saving the soul). “Conduct,” says MacArthur, “is the visible measure of true discipleship” (cf. Luke 6:46-49).³⁹ Personal, progressive sanctification is necessary in order to inherit eternal life.⁴⁰

³⁶ Julian, “Perfect Work,” 44. “James fears that his readers are abandoning the faith in everything but name.”

³⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 63–64.

³⁸ MacArthur, “James,” 80.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁴⁰ Davids, “James,” 97. “Here it must mean to deceive oneself as to one’s salvation...for that fits best with James’ total view . . . and also with the possibility that

This is not a forced reading of James when one considers his exhortation to persevere (cf. 5:20). Perseverance, which is the completion of ongoing sanctification, is a necessary component of salvation. In chapter five, the salvation of an erring one is contingent upon his restoration through the efforts of the local fellowship. Restoring an erring brother is equated with deliverance from eternal death.⁴¹ James sees more at stake in his letter than a person's testimony. Through his study of James, Ron Julian responds to the belief that God saves and then moral reformation is optional for the believer. He writes, "The model James articulates is very different. The 'works' that emerge through the testing of our faith are intrinsic to the very nature of faith itself."⁴² For James, then, final salvation hangs in the balance.⁴³

Zane Hodges is an example of an alternate interpretation that does not see salvation as the emphasis in this passage. In his commentary, *The Epistle of James*, Hodges argues that 1:21 is not referring to eternal salvation at all. He proposes that when James says the word is able to "save your souls" that the Greek actually means "to save

James is explicating what 1:21 means by receiving the word: it means not simply to hear but to do, and anyone thinking it to be less than that deceives himself that he has received the word."

⁴¹ Calvin, "James," 361.

⁴² Julian, "Perfect Work," 48. He also writes, "Sanctification is not an extra benefit/obligation tacked onto faith; sanctification is faith becoming itself."

⁴³ Burdick, "James," 205. Burdick reasons that this hypothetical wanderer must not have been a genuine believer. But even he admits that the lexical analysis of the Greek in v. 20 renders the salvation from death as a saving of the soul. It may be that such a wanderer was not a genuine professor, but James does not make this point. He says that if one among the "brothers" errs, the others must try to restore him to the faith and as a result, save his soul. See also Davids, "James," 102. "Here as much as anywhere in James the total context of the book must determine the interpretation."

your life.” Therefore, James is saying that the implanted word will bring longer life to the believer, not eternal salvation to the one who perseveres. Hodges writes,

Many readers as well as expositors have an automatic reaction to the phrase *save your souls* in English, which leads them to understand it of eternal salvation from hell. But none of James’ readers were likely to get such a meaning out of this text. The Greek phrase . . . was in common use in the sense of “to save the life.” . . . This is its obvious sense also in Jas 5:20, which refers to the physical preservation of a life *from death*. It may even be said that there is not a single place in the entire Greek Bible...where this phrase signifies deliverance from hell.⁴⁴

In response, the reason why Hodges arrives at this interpretation on this verse and in 5:20 is that he commits the fallacy of addressing salvation entirely in terms of the new birth. He states later in his argumentation, “The readers were already born again (v 18) and are in no need of being saved from hell.”⁴⁵ Once again, such an understanding of salvation renders the other facets of salvation such as sanctification and perseverance as optional and unnecessary. The Scriptures, however, do not present any of the facets of salvation as optional in order to receive eternal life (cf. John 3:3; Heb 12:14; Rev 2:10-11).

Furthermore, what benefit is there for the believer in preserving the earthly life that is destined to end anyway? It would not be too difficult to demonstrate that the NT writers had an eschatological intention in mind when speaking of life and death (cf. Rom 6:23; 8:13). The result of taking a position like Hodges is a gross misreading of some more plain texts. For example, in v. 26, Hodges’ presupposition leads him to understand the one who deceives his own heart with a useless religion as a genuine believer. He

⁴⁴ Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistle of James* (Irving: Grace Evangelical Society, 1994), 41.

⁴⁵ Hodges, *James*, 41.

writes, “James totally dismisses the *religion* of any Christian person who placed no restraint on the use of his own tongue.”⁴⁶ That statement should be carefully weighed. If a “Christian” person has a “religion” that is dismissed, then that person did not have “Christianity.” That renders him an unbeliever, not a “Christian” with the wrong religion. The context of the entire letter seems to indicate that James believes that sanctification is necessary in order to inherit eternal life.

1 Peter

The first epistle of Peter is addressed to the scattered Gentile believers. Its intention is to encourage the believers to endure the present trials for the joy that lay before them. Peter reminds his readers that God has saved them, and that even though the trials may be severe now, glory awaits those who persevere (1:1-9). Their salvation was prophesied by the OT prophets (1:10-12). Having such a glorious salvation, the believers are to live holy as God their Savior is holy (1:13-16). A further reason for holy conduct is that their salvation was secured by the blood of Jesus Christ (1:17-21). Evidence of obedience in the Lord is love of the brethren (1:22-25).

Believers, then, should grow up in the Lord (2:1-3). Coming to Christ, the living stone, makes each believer a living stone in God’s spiritual house (2:4-8). As chosen people, they have received mercy to proclaim the excellencies of the Lord (2:9-10) and to live holy lives before others so that they too may glorify God (2:11-12). Submission to authorities and relations in all aspects of life is one way to accomplish this, as Christ exemplified in his life (2:13-25; 3:1-12).

⁴⁶ Ibid., 46.

Peter encourages the believers to not fear the intimidation of their persecutors. They should live godly, sanctify Christ in their hearts, and remember that Christ too incurred harm for doing good (3:13-22). Believers are to cease from sin and love one another because they have already indulged that lifestyle as unbelievers and the day of judgment is coming (4:1-11). Believers are not to be surprised with their suffering because of their faith. Those who are reviled for Christ will be blessed, and they must trust that God is faithful (4:12-19).

Peter's letter draws to a conclusion with an exhortation for the elders to be examples to the flock and for the young men to respect their elders (5:1-5). He once again exhorts the believers to humble themselves, resist the devil, and trust that God is going to sustain and perfect them (5:6-11). Then with final greetings, he bids them peace (5:12-14).

1 Peter 2:1-3

(1) Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, (2) like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, (3) if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord [lit. that the Lord is kind].

Throughout the preceding chapter Peter has gone into great depth explaining salvation in terms of God's election, the Spirit's sanctification, and the Son's sacrifice (1:2). Founded on God's choice and Christ's provision, the believers are to exhibit holiness toward God and love toward the brethren, i.e. sanctification. At this point in the letter, the above passage is given. It is not an explicit statement on the necessity of sanctification, but its message leads to a logical deduction of necessity.

This passage is similar to the previous selection from James in that the “putting aside” of sin precedes growth in the word. Ἀποθέμενοι means “laying aside” as in the shedding of an old garment. Given here as the aorist, middle, participle, Peter is assuming this action of shedding the sinful lifestyle has already taken place.⁴⁷ It is the word, freed from the prevalence of sin, that results in growth in salvation, or growing “up to salvation.” However, this is not a passive result. Peter calls his believers to desire the word as a newborn baby (they are newborn babes in the Lord) would desire milk (cf. 1 Cor 3:1-2; Heb 5:13).⁴⁸ The word for long, ἐπιποθήσατε, is the only imperative in this passage. Thus Davids concludes, “At the least it indicates an active seeking rather than a passive receiving of proper nourishment.”⁴⁹ This process of worldly attachment and word-centered affection will occur assuming, εἰ, that the readers are genuine believers.

Therefore Peter is not teaching here the necessity of sanctification directly. He is assuming the presence of sanctification if the profession of faith is genuine.

Sanctification is spoken of in this text as growth in respect to salvation. So Peter sees salvation as a process in which the loss of sinful characteristics and the nourishment of the word are key elements. This part of salvation is the personal, progressive aspect of

⁴⁷ Peter H. Davids, “The First Epistle of Peter,” in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, eds. Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 80.

⁴⁸ John Piper, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 109. Piper explains Peter’s use of “milk” in 2:2 as, “he did not mean by the word *milk* what Hebrews 5:12 means when it uses “milk” in contrast to “meat.” What he meant was that the saints should hunger for the Word of God’s grace (1 Pet. 1:25) as much as a baby hungers for milk. For only by feeding on the Word can you grow, and only by growing can you persevere and attain final salvation.”

⁴⁹ Davids, “1 Peter,” 82.

sanctification. Thus, if one has been converted, one will then put forth the effort necessary to exhibit moral purity. Absence of this moral purity indicates absence of having “tasted that the Lord is kind.”⁵⁰

Essential to properly interpreting this passage is Peter’s understanding that salvation is not complete, perfect, or full grown without the nourishment of the word. Davids wisely observes, “Salvation is not spoken of as something that they have already, but, as in 1:5,9, they will receive the reward at the revelation of Christ.”⁵¹ Peter, therefore, presents salvation as an umbrella, process event that is not obtained until perfection. Salvation, according to Peter, is not entirely contained in conversion.⁵²

The following context provides both an encouragement and an incentive for this growing “up to salvation.” Genuine belief is a precious commodity because it places one in the spiritual house of God. Disbelief, evidenced by disobedience to the word, leads only to the destruction to which it was appointed. The importance of rendering this

⁵⁰ This language has Psalm 34:8 as its background with Peter freely meaning Jesus where the Psalm refers to Yahweh.

⁵¹ Ibid., 83.

⁵² Paige Patterson, *A Pilgrim Priesthood: An Exposition of First Peter* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 71. Patterson is an example of one scholar who essentially, in this text, collapses salvation to the new birth. He reasons from this text that εἰς σωτηρίαν would be better translated “because of” salvation. He writes that Peter has already provided his view of salvation as the new birth in 1:23. Therefore, Patterson concludes, “Desiring the milk of the word and growing as a result of that nurture are the consequences of the salvation and not the method of obtaining salvation.” One could respond on two fronts. First, Peter did not say in 1:23 that the new birth was salvation. He merely states that they have been born again, he does not equate that experience with their full salvation. As stated earlier, when Peter does mention salvation, 1:5, 9, he does so in an eschatological sense. Second, Peter’s “growth into salvation” is not presented in the text as the method for obtaining salvation, but rather the process of one who is truly being saved.

interpretation is in order to maintain the force of these passages. Too often interpreters lessen or soften the force of what passages like this indicate by using “should” or “ought” language with respect to growth after conversion.⁵³ When using “should” language, interpreters leave the impression of suggestion. That is, it would be better or more in line with Christianity if one would live this way. This interpretation is “suggesting” that the biblical writers are saying more than that. They are saying that it is “Christian” to live this way. One “should” notice that Peter does not use any “should” language. He uses an imperative and a logical reasoning that true believers will live this way.⁵⁴

2 Peter

Simon Peter addresses this letter to those who are of the same faith, which is granted by the power of God and for His glory (1:1-3). Through His glory and virtues God has made believers partakers of the divine nature and freed them from the corruptions of the world. For this reason, believers are to add all moral virtues to their faith, for these will make them fruitful (1:4-8). Those who lack these things have forgotten their purification. Those who practice them make their calling sure (1:9-11). Therefore, Peter constantly reminds believers of these things in order to stir up their faith

⁵³ See Edwin A. Blum, “1 & 2 Peter,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 228. Blum is an example of the common use of “should” language. Blum uses “should” twice in his commentary on verses 2 and 3.

⁵⁴ An example of this “should” language regarding sanctification in Southern Baptist life is found in the 1963 “Baptist Faith and Message.” The last line in Section B on sanctification under Article IV reads, “Growth in grace *should* continue throughout the regenerate person’s life” (emphasis mine). “The Baptist Faith and Message (1963),” in *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms*, eds. Timothy and Denise George (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996, 1999), 141.

(1:12-15). The believers can be sure of this counsel because Peter himself was a witness of Christ's glory, and they have the witness of the prophets as well (1:16-21).

There are false prophets also who are characterized by sensuality. Now if God did not spare the immorality of the angels, the world at the time of Noah, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, He will not spare these wicked ones either (ch. 2).

Peter again says that his purpose in writing is to stir them up by way of reminding them to remember the words of the prophets and the Lord Jesus Christ (3:1-2). Mockers are coming who will deny the return of the Lord because of the long delay, but one must remember that a thousand years are as a day with the Lord (3:3-8). He has delayed His coming in order that all the elect may come to repentance (3:9). Since the day of the Lord is sure to come, believers must be diligent to be found spotless, knowing that His delay is for their salvation (3:10-16). Peter concludes his letter with another exhortation to guard against unprincipled men and remain steadfast, growing in the Lord (3:17-18).

2 Peter 1:10-11

(10) Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; (11) for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Peter's call for more diligence in verse 10 connects this verse with verse 5 where Peter first mentioned diligence. Beginning in verse 5 Peter lists the kinds of qualities that believers are to incorporate into their lives upon their faith. They are moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. Verse 8 is then key to the proper interpretation of this passage. Peter writes, "For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing (progressive sanctification), they render you neither useless

nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The fact that Peter qualifies this particular knowledge as the “true” knowledge is what introduces the question of necessity. Growing in holiness, therefore, makes one fruitful in the true knowledge. By implication those who are not increasing in these things are not in the true knowledge. The ones who lack these characteristics are blind or short-sighted because they have forgotten their purification from their former sins. In other words, without these virtues regeneration is in name only.

Therefore, believers are to give great diligence in developing these qualities for it is in the practice of religion that one’s assurance is obtained and their sanctification made sure. One should notice that Peter bases assurance on the increasing practice of these moral attributes. MacArthur explains the participle *ποιοῦντες*, “Practice refers to the pattern of daily conduct (cf. Rom. 12:9-13; Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:15; Col. 3:12-17).”⁵⁵ Certainty of regeneration is not supplied through praying the right prayer, but rather practicing the right actions. In this text, “make” (*ποιεῖσθαι*, present, middle, infinitive) means to “make for oneself.” Blum, then, concludes, “So a Christian by growing in grace becomes assured of having been called and elected by God.”⁵⁶ Moreover, in the ever-increasing practice of these qualities one is not just given assurance, but enabled to steadily maintain sanctification. *Οὐ μὴ πταίσητέ ποτε* is an emphatic construction that could be translated as “never in any wise will you ever stumble.” The practice of faith,

⁵⁵ John MacArthur, “2 Peter and Jude,” in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2005), 45.

⁵⁶ Blum, “1 and 2 Peter,” 270.

then, grants believers assurance of regeneration and sanctification. It is in the practice of faith, therefore, that assurance is granted, not in the mere verbal affirmation of faith.

It is essential that the two components of “conversion assurance” and “steadfast sanctification” be achieved; for it is based on those experiences that one is given entrance into the kingdom of Christ. However, Peter is in no way attributing salvation to man’s effort or merit because he has previously stated life and godliness is granted by God (v.3).⁵⁷ It is Peter’s choice of using “entrance” that keeps this text heavy on the necessity of a practiced religion (cf. Acts 14:22). Should Peter have said “rewards” or something of that nature, then eternal life would not be in the balance. However, by using “entrance” Peter is explicitly and clearly making glorification contingent on a visibly demonstrated profession of faith.⁵⁸ Addressing this passage Schreiner and Caneday conclude, “Devoting ourselves to godliness is not merely a good idea or a guarantee of a greater reward; it is necessary to enter the kingdom at all!”⁵⁹ As Calvin comments on this passage, “He (Peter) draws this conclusion, that it is one proof that we have been really elected, and not in vain called by the Lord, if a good conscience and integrity of life

⁵⁷ MacArthur, *Gospel*, 251. While describing salvation as God’s work, Peter “taught that the proof of faith’s reality is the virtue it produces in the life of the believer (vv. 5-9).”

⁵⁸ Ibid., 271. Blum conveys that some commentators see a high Pauline influence in Peter’s writings (cf. 2 Pet 3:15). Therefore, just as perseverance is a necessity in many of Paul’s letters (cf. Col 1:22-23; 2 Tim 2:12-13), that is how this passage in Peter should be understood as well.

⁵⁹ Schreiner and Caneday, *Race*, 290.

correspond with our profession of faith.”⁶⁰ In other words, salvation is a process, and sanctification is just as important as regeneration when the goal is glorification.⁶¹

1 John

John’s first epistle is thematically cyclical in that he keeps returning to the same central themes throughout the letter. John opens his letter by saying that he is proclaiming what he has been witness to (1:1-4). He then launches into one of his key themes, the relation of sin and the believer. Since God is light, true believers do not walk in the darkness, that is, habitually practicing sinfulness. While believers still sin, forgiveness is available upon confession (1:5-10).⁶²

John means to compel his readers to put away any sinful habits and to encourage them as well. The assurance of a believer is gained through obedience to the commandments, but when sin does occur, Christ is our Advocate (2:1-6). John introduces

⁶⁰ John Calvin, “2 Peter,” in *Calvin’s Commentaries*, Vol. 22 (Grand Rapids: Baker, Reprinted, 1999), 376.

⁶¹ Roy H. Hall, “Ministry as Sanctification,” *Memphis Theological Seminary Journal* 31 (Spr-Sum 1993): 39. “The text of 2 Peter 1 describes this process (conforming to the image of Christ) as originating in a divine gift (vs. 3-5) but also depending, in part, on human effort (vs. 5-7).”

⁶² John Murray, “Definitive Sanctification,” *CTJ* 2 (Ap 1967): 9. Some commentators use texts in 1 John to support perfectionism. Murray points out the fallacy in their reasoning. “If John’s intent were to inculcate sinless perfection, then this passage would prove too much. In that event every regenerate person would be sinlessly perfect and only sinlessly perfect persons would be regenerate...If there is provision for sin in the believer, then regeneration does not insure sinless perfection.” See also Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 201. “John, in his old age, acknowledged sins in his life and sensed the need for divine forgiveness (1 John 1:7, 9).”

another theme at this point; love. Keeping the word and abiding in the Light is displayed by love toward the brothers. Hatred is evidence of walking in the darkness (2:7-11).

John groups his readers into three categories and encourages the children, fathers, and young men based on their experiences as believers (2:12-14). One who loves the world does not have the love of God within (2:15-17). There are many examples of those who love the world and deny the Son. These are antichrists (2:18-24). He has promised believers eternal life, He teaches believers to abide in Him, and the practice of righteousness will make one fit for the day of His appearing (2:25-39).

The Father has made believers to be His children and will transform them into His likeness. For this reason, every believer pursues purity, as his Father is pure (3:1-3). Those who practice sin demonstrate that they do not abide in Him or know Him (3:4-10). Believers love one another whereas the world hates believers. Since Christ laid down His life for them, believers should care for one another. It is through the loving of the brethren that believers gain assurance just as they do through godly living (3:13-22). God commands belief in His Son and love toward one another. The one who keeps these commands abides in God and that relation is confirmed by the gift of the Spirit (3:23-24).

Believers are to be aware of the presence of false prophets. False prophets are known by their denial of Jesus' deity (4:1-6). Since God is love and has loved believers, so should believers love one another. It is through love that believers know they abide in Christ through the giving of His Spirit.

The testimony of 1 John is that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world (4:7-14). Those who abide in God make this confession and love one another. If one cannot love his brother, he cannot love God (4:15-21).

As John brings his letter to a close, he intermingles the three major themes of his epistle. Believers confess that Jesus is God. Believers love one another. Believers keep the commandments of God. Whoever does not believe in God's testimony that life is in His Son, does not have eternal life (5:1-13). John assures his readers that those who believe in the Son of God have eternal life. Having assurance of our salvation bolsters their prayer lives. John assures his readers that Christ keeps His people from the enemy and from the influence of sin.⁶³ His final words are an imperative to guard against idols (5:14-21).

1 John 3:1-3

(1) See how great a love [lit. what kind of love] the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (2) Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. (3) And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

In order to set the stage for the examination of these verses, it would serve the purpose well to simply list the similar verses in John's letter as a way of establishing the broader context.

(1:6) If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth
 (2:3) By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.⁶⁴

⁶³ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 203. Remarking on 1 John 5:18 Lewis and Demarest write, "Believers do not persist in a life of sin, for the uniquely begotten Son preserves and keeps them safe from the deadly attacks of Satan (cf. John 10:28; 17:12, 15)."

⁶⁴ The connection between sanctification and assurance will be developed in the following chapter.

(2:4) The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him
 (2:9) The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now
 (2:15) Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him
 (2:17) The world is passing away and also it lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever
 (2:29) If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.
 (3:6) No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him
 (3:7) Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous
 (3:8a) the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning
 (3:9) No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God
 (3:10) By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his neighbor
 (3:24a) The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him
 (4:20a) If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar
 (5:18) We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who is born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him

The above list does not contain the selection for study. Altogether there are 16 statements in this brief letter pointing to the reality that those who are genuine believers support their verbalized faith with a visible faith. Nelson Mink boldly writes, "First John is a deathblow to the old man."⁶⁵ Also, as one can observe, the bulk of these statements are found in the heart of the letter, which would indicate that this is John's primary emphasis. At the least, it is of utmost importance given the plethora of ways in which he makes the same argument. Practicing sin or not practicing righteousness is sheer evidence

⁶⁵ Nelson Mink, *That Ye Sin Not: Studies in First John* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1969), preface.

that one is not truly a child of God. Given this background as context, the doctrine of sanctification and its necessity is made abundantly clear in 3:1-3.

The first verse makes two important statements concerning the basis and effect of salvation. First, salvation is chiefly and solely based on the love of God.⁶⁶ Because God has bestowed His love upon certain individuals, they are now known as children of God. Second, it is primarily because of this new relation with God that an estrangement occurs from the world.⁶⁷ The world does not know children of God. That is, they have no way to relate to them or recognize them due to the presence of God's love in their lives. As Glen Barker writes, "To be hated by the world may be unpleasant, but ultimately it should reassure the members of the community of faith that they are loved by God, which is far more important than the world's hatred."⁶⁸ What this means is that relation with God is enmity with the world.

Separation from the world, however, is of little consequence with what the future holds for the child of God. Believers are given a certainty, "we know," that when Christ appears they will receive their glorification. John says, "we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." Again, the connection is made between "seeing" Him and a believer's final salvation (cf. Matt 5:8, Rev 22:4). Concerning this passage Lewis and

⁶⁶ John Calvin, "1 John," in *Calvin's Commentaries*, Vol. 22, Reprinted (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 202. "This being so great a favour (bestowed love of God), the desire for purity ought to be kindled in us, so as to be conformed to his image; nor, indeed, can it be otherwise, but that he who acknowledges himself to be one of God's children should purify himself."

⁶⁷ Glen W. Barker, "1, 2 and 3 John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 330. "The failure of the world to know God is one of the basic themes of the Gospel of John (5:37; 7:28; 16:3)."

⁶⁸ Barker, "1, 2 and 3 John," 330.

Demarest write, “Only then (at the resurrection) will Christians experience moral purity (v. 3), absence of sins (v. 5), and actual righteousness (v. 7)”⁶⁹ Therefore, verses 1 and 2 have spoken of regeneration (called children of God) and glorification (we will see Him as He is). Verse 3 then explains what takes place in the process of salvation between these two gracious events.

Verse 3 addresses sanctification in progressive, necessary language. This is derived from several observations. First, the verse is exclusive in description, “everyone who has this hope.” It is clear that “this hope” refers to the coming joy of seeing the Lord. That is the blessed hope for the believer (cf. Phil 3:4; Titus 2:13). This means that everyone, no one excluded, who has the hope of eternal life in the presence of God is being described in this verse.

Second, these individuals are described as in the process of sanctification, “purifies himself.” The logic of the passage is that the hope that believers possess provides the motivation needed to live and pursue a holy life in this world. Children of God are different than the world (cf. v. 1). “To live in sin or disobedience to his commands,” Barker writes, “is to abandon any hope in him.”⁷⁰ Therefore, because of who they are, children of God, and because of where they are going, to see Him, believers purify themselves (cf. Heb 12:14).⁷¹

⁶⁹ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 201.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 331.

⁷¹ Calvin, “1 John,” 207. “The meaning then is, that though we have not Christ now present before our eyes, yet if we hope in him, it cannot be but that this hope will excite and stimulate us to follow purity, for it leads us straight to Christ, whom we know to be a perfect pattern of purity.”

Third, this verse clearly falls in the realm of personal, progressive sanctification because it declares that the process of purification is pursued by the individual. It is active, not passive.⁷² Augustine writes, “See how he has not taken away free-will, in that he saith, “purifieth himself,” Who purifies us but God? Yea, but God doth not purify thee if thou be unwilling . . . Therefore, in that thou joinest thy will to God, in that thou purifiest thyself.”⁷³ There is a purity that is given to a believer (positional sanctification), and there is a purity that is pursued by a believer (progressive sanctification). Both are essential; both are part of salvation, and both are based on grace.

Zane Hodges takes a different approach to verse 3, and in essence removes the idea of sanctification completely from this passage in two ways. First, he writes, “The wonderful certitude that we will one day be completely like our Lord Jesus (i.e., both physically and spiritually) is a **hope** that finally purifies the believer.”⁷⁴ So Hodges places the causality of the purification in the hope possessed by the believer instead of from the believer’s pursuit of holiness. Second, Hodges places the purification that takes place entirely in the realm of regeneration. He explains, “When an individual believes in Christ, God counts the exercise of that faith as “righteousness,” not because faith *merits* it but because God imputes righteousness *only on that basis*. Here, too, a man **purifies himself**,

⁷² Theophylact, “Commentary on I John,” in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.P. Migne. (Paris: Migne, 1857-1886), 126:33; quoted in Thomas C. Oden, ed., “I John,” in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, vol. 11 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 196. “Note that John uses the present tense when he talks about our need to purify ourselves. The practice of virtue is an ongoing thing and has its own inner dynamic.”

⁷³ Augustine, “First Epistle of John,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Vol. 7, 4th Printing (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 485.

⁷⁴ Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John* (Irving: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 129. Emphasis Original.

not because of any intrinsic power in his faith, but because the exercise of this faith is the basis on which God cleanses him inwardly.”⁷⁵ While it is true that God cleanses the believer in the realm of regeneration, this verse is clearly not addressing that aspect of salvation. Hodges’ presupposition of salvation contained entirely in conversion forces him to miss the plain meaning of the text. It simply says, “and everyone who has this hope in Him (that is, everyone without exception who is born again) purifies himself (pursues sanctification), just as He is pure.”

To conclude, the language of purification pursued by the believer places this verse in the realm of personal sanctification. The exclusivity of the verse makes this personal sanctification viewed as necessary for eternal life. Everyone who has the hope of being like Christ, progressively becomes purer in this life. As I. Howard Marshall concludes, “Although John has just told us that seeing Jesus will make us like him, it is also true that the condition for seeing Jesus is that we should be morally fit to come into his presence . . . Those who hope to come into the presence of the pure Son of God must themselves be pure.”⁷⁶ This interpretation is strengthened when one considers the following context. The following 7 verses in John’s letter describe children of God as opposed to children of the devil. The major difference being that one practices righteousness while the other does not (cf. v. 10). There is no middle category. Either one is a believer and therefore practices righteousness (cf. “purifying himself) or one is not a believer and therefore practices sin (cf. v. 4). MacArthur argues, “The validation of salvation is a life of

⁷⁵ Hodges, *John*, 131. Emphasis Original.

⁷⁶ I. Howard Marshall, “The Epistles of John,” in *The New International Commentary on The New Testament*, eds. Ned B. Stonehouse, F.F. Bruce and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 173–174.

obedience. It is the only possible proof that a person really knows Jesus Christ. If one does not obey Christ as a pattern of life, then professing to know him is an empty verbal exercise.”⁷⁷ Klaiber ties the characteristic of holiness with salvation when he writes, “To belong to God is the very essence of salvation. Therefore ‘no one will see the Lord without holiness’ (Heb 12:14) points not to a ‘pre-condition’ rewarded by a life in God’s eternal presence, but it is the matter itself. Holiness means to belong to God and is accomplished in the last encounter with him where we will ‘see him as he is’ (1 John 3:2).”⁷⁸

Jude

Jude opens his letter by expressing his initial desire to write to the believers about their common ground of salvation (vv. 1-3). However, a more pressing need had arisen. Evidently, it had come to Jude’s attention that those who only masqueraded as believers had infiltrated the fellowship of true believers (v. 4). The rest of his epistle is a description of these wolves in sheep clothing along with exhortations for the believers to remain in the faith.

The ones who have “crept in unnoticed” are marked by their abuse of grace as licentiousness and thus their denial of the Lordship of Jesus Christ (v. 4). As examples of what becomes of those who portray an antinomian lifestyle, Jude reminds the believers of the destruction of the disbelieving Israelites, the bondage of the unrestrained angels, and the punishment of the immoral cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (vv. 5-7). What is of

⁷⁷ MacArthur, *Gospel*, 218.

⁷⁸ Klaiber, “Sanctification,” 18.

important note here is how Jude correlates belief with obedience. Then Jude compares the infiltrators with these examples in that their offence is just as severe (v. 8).

By way of intensifying their offence, Jude then contrasts their arrogant approach to the supernatural with Michael's humble rebuke of the devil (vv. 9-10). Back to the comparison, Jude next sees these men as making the same fatal errors as did Cain, Balaam, and Korah. He next utilizes analogy and describes the false believers as empty clouds, foaming waves, and stars destined to wander in the darkness (vv. 11-13).

Jude's final condemnation is to make a connection between their ungodly behavior and the judgment coming upon ungodliness prophesied by Enoch (vv. 14-16). The ungodly behavior of those who claim to be part of the church betrays their true identity. They are therefore under the judgment of God.

His exhortation for the believers begins by reminding them that the apostles foretold about ones who would come and follow "after their own ungodly lusts" (vv. 17-19). What follows next is the text under consideration.

Jude 20-24

(20) But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, (21) keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. (22) And have mercy on some, who are doubting; (23) save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. (24) Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, (25) to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever [lit. to all the ages]. Amen.

The heart of Jude's exhortation comes in the above passage and is quite specific.

He calls on the believers (ἀγαπητοί, beloved) to be different in action from the ones he

has just spent 14 verses describing (ὁμοίως δέ). He provides then three lifestyle characteristics, in the form of three imperatives, that differentiate true believers from infiltrators. In contrast to the false professors, believers are commanded to keep (τηρήσατε) themselves in the love of God, have mercy (ἐλεᾶτε) on the weak and on the wayward⁷⁹, and save others (σώζετε). For the purpose of this work, the focus is on the implications and described means of these imperatives, not necessarily the imperatives themselves.

It is readily admitted that this passage does not explicitly declare the necessity of sanctification for eternal salvation. However, there are key ingredients in this text that support the overall thesis of necessity, and therefore support it implicitly. It is for that reason this text was chosen as a supportive role.

First, Jude is calling these believers to an active, responsible pursuit of holiness. He uses the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτοὺς twice. The crucial factor in that point is in noticing what he calls on them to do themselves. They are to build themselves up on their most holy faith (cf. Acts 20:32; Eph 4:11-12; Col 2:6-7), and they are to keep themselves in the love of God. For sure these admonishments would seem to fall into the category of divine activity rather than human responsibility. For examples, an increase of faith is often attributed to Christ (cf. Mark 9:24; Luke 17:5), and preservation in the love of God is often attributed to the Father (cf. John 10:29). So if anything, Jude's exhortation may

⁷⁹ Edwin A. Blum, "Jude," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 395. "The final group of people (referred to above as the wayward) appears to be deep in the immorality of the false teachers. Their very clothing is 'stained by corrupted flesh.' Perhaps the figure is that their depravity has made them infectious. Christians are to show mercy as in the first case (the weak), but now they are to be fearful lest the infection spread to them."

sound unusual, but it is true, inspired Scripture nonetheless. Therefore, believers are to be demonstrating an exertion after conversion for the purpose of “building themselves” up in order to “keep themselves” in the love of God. In that sense, then, these exhortations fall into the realm of personal, progressive sanctification.⁸⁰

Second, it is important to take a closer look at what surrounds the first imperative, “keep yourselves.” There are three participles which provide the immediate context for this command. They are building up (ἐποικοδομοῦντες), praying (προσευχόμενοι), and waiting (προσδεχόμενοι). They are all present participles meaning that these activities are to be contemporaneous in the believer’s life. In conjunction with the imperative then, a believer keeps himself in the love of God by the ever-present means of building, praying, and waiting. In addition, while the first participle is in the active voice, the second and third are in the middle voice. This means that they carry the same connotation by themselves that “building up” carries with the added reflexive pronoun. That is, these activities are the responsibility of the believers to conduct.⁸¹

What now becomes evident is the umbrella pattern of salvation in this text. Jude assumes the conversion of his readers by calling them “beloved” and exhorting them to build upon their “most holy faith.”⁸² His motivation for them to “keep themselves” is

⁸⁰ MacArthur, “2 Peter and Jude,” 200–201. MacArthur describes the three participles along with the first imperative as elements of sanctification.

⁸¹ Lesta, “Nature,” 149. Lesta observes from v. 20, “This present tense (building yourselves up) indicates the continued action involved in personal sanctification.”

⁸² ἁγιώτατος is the superlative case, which lends the translation “most holy faith.” The writer believes this expression to be a reference to the objective truth that has been handed down (v. 3) and now subjectively embraced (ὑμῶν πίστει). So “the faith” has now become “their faith.”

their anxiously awaited glorification, “waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.” Their lives during the span between conversion and glorification are to be lived out in following his directives, “keep,” “have mercy,” and “save others.” Furthermore, the means Jude gives the believers as to how they “keep” themselves is found in the three participles. They build themselves up on their faith, they pray in the Holy Spirit, and they anxiously await their glorification. Therefore this “in the mean time” activity is personal, progressive sanctification.

In sum then, sanctification is given in this text in its progressive nature. The implied necessity comes in the immediate and broader contexts. Immediately, sanctification is expressed as a crucial description of the believer’s life. In broad terms, the qualities of believers in verses 20-23 are what distinguish believers from false professors. Holiness then will be present in the life of one who truly believes and who sincerely awaits the Lord Jesus. Sanctification is then necessary in order to inherit eternal life. In this passage, not necessary in the sense of directly stating it in those terms, but necessary in the sense of being the dividing mark between authentic and inauthentic faith. Still, however, it cannot be assumed that this holiness comes by way of mere passivity since God faithfully sustains His children. Rather, in addition to this, Jude has called his readers to action.

One final observation is of utmost importance for this topic. When Jude begins to bring his letter to a close, he prays that God may “keep” his readers. He has just commanded his readers to “keep” themselves, and then he closes by praying for God to “keep” them from stumbling. They are to exert every effort to persevere, yet in the end it

is the Lord who will preserve them.⁸³ This apparent paradox, as with many seemingly theological dilemmas, is resolved through a both/and application instead of an either/or solution. The readers are to work as if their perseverance in the faith all depended upon them when in actuality it is the Lord who brings it about. One way to explain this seeming paradox is by stating it in the following way: Those who keep themselves in the love of God (v. 21) are the ones whom God is keeping (v. 24).⁸⁴ There are then two important implications here; assurance and evidence of faith. The very fact that one is striving and fighting to maintain the faith and grow in holiness is sheer proof that God is at work and that salvation is present.⁸⁵

⁸³ Blum, "Jude," 396. " 'With great joy' (*agalliasei*) is the response of Christians for their completed salvation."

⁸⁴ John Calvin, "Jude," in *Calvin's Commentaries*, Vol. 22 (Grand Rapids: Baker, Reprinted, 1999), 449–450. "However, the other reading ("you" instead of "them") is what I prefer; in which there is an allusion to the preceding verse; for after having exhorted the faithful to save what was perishing, that they might understand that all their efforts would be in vain except God worked with them, he testifies that they could not be otherwise saved than through the power of God. In the latter clause there is indeed a different verb, φυλάξει, which means to guard; so the allusion is to a remoter clause, when he said, *Keep yourselves*."

⁸⁵ MacArthur, "2 Peter and Jude," 206. "The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints . . . connects inseparably with the other doctrines of salvation." MacArthur goes on to mention and scripturally connect the doctrines of election, justification, and sanctification with the doctrine of perseverance.

Summary of Chapter 3

Whether stated explicitly or implicitly, the above texts are directed to the doctrine of sanctification. They portray personal sanctification as progressive and the believer as responsible in the pursuit. The element of necessity is derived through sanctification's role in the process of salvation, in the distinction from unbelievers, as evidence of justification, and as assurance of glorification. Sanctification is defined in this work as the process (1 Pet 2:2-3) whereby through the enabling grace of God, the accomplished work of Christ, and the sustaining work of the Holy Spirit a believer (James 1:22) will necessarily progress in his or her personal holiness (Jude 21) towards the goal of inheriting eternal life (Heb 12:14; 2 Pet 1:10-11; 1 John 3:3).

CHAPTER 4

SELECTED OBJECTIONS WITH RESPONSES TO THE NECESSITY OF SANCTIFICATION

To be sure, the thesis presented here raises a number of objections for a variety of reasons. First, although this understanding of sanctification was presented historically, it has been absent in some evangelical camps. For example, when writing on sanctification, Charles Hodge affirmed the basic unity of Protestants on the doctrine. He then described it by stating, “The Protestants while rejecting the Romish doctrine of subjective justification, strenuously insisted that no man is delivered from the guilt of sin who is not delivered from its reigning power; that sanctification is inseparable from justification, and that the one is just as essential as the other.”¹ This is not the unified understanding in the present day.

For this reason it might appear to be a new approach to sanctification for some, and any time an explanation of key doctrines sounds “new” it is sure to draw objections, and rightly so. “New” insights should be rigorously tested to ensure proper theological orthodoxy. However, this presentation of sanctification is not a novel development but rather a fresh retrieval of what was once held as true in the evangelical world.² It is then a

¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 3rd Printing (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 238.

² A selected chronological list of evangelical theologians who have espoused the view of sanctification’s necessity for salvation are Martin Luther (*Commentary on*

call to return to a more biblically balanced view of the doctrine of sanctification, which addresses a more balanced view of salvation as well.

Second, because sanctification in terms of necessity will not fit into some theological molds, this thesis will be rejected from the outset. In which case, one would only ask for a fair hearing of this presentation based on scriptural exegesis rather than theological framework. Encountering a different understanding of a doctrine is difficult, but it should not be jettisoned from a pure appeal to a system. If it is faulty, it should be demonstrated as so through scriptural analogy and hermeneutics. Theological systems, though profitable and necessary, should give way to sound interpretation and be held loosely at times or even discarded when appropriate.

The following list of six objections is by no means meant to be exhaustive, but is representative of objections that have been encountered either through experience, discussion, or research. They are divided into two categories, textual and logical objections. An attempt will be made to provide adequate responses and thereby demonstrate that these objections do not necessarily nullify this thesis.

Biblical Texts Raised In Objection

Texts Dealing with Regeneration Like Romans 10:13

Although there are other texts similar to Romans 10:13, for the purpose here there is only the need to investigate one such text in light the objection raised against the thesis. Used often as an evangelistic text, Romans 10:13 says, “for ‘Whoever will call on the

Galatians, 1535), John Calvin (*Institutes*, 1536), John Owen (*The Mortification of Sin in Believers*, 1805), Walter Marshall (*The Gospel Mystery*, 1859), J.C. Ryle (*Holiness*, 1877), and Gordon Clark (*Sanctification*, 1992).

name of the Lord will be saved.’” The argument is then that salvation is granted, full and complete, upon one’s conversion. The very use of the biblical terminology, σωθήσεται, gives credence to such an objection. It is reasoned then that according to Scripture, salvation is guaranteed to those who “call on the name of the Lord.” Once “genuine” belief occurs expressed through verbal profession of faith, one is truly born again and no further evidence of or expression of faith is required in order to obtain eternal life.

This point of view is represented well by R. T. Kendall in his book *Once Saved, Always Saved*.³ After admitting, “We are resting our case almost entirely upon Romans 10:9-10,”⁴ Kendall later concludes, “I knew I was eternally saved, *no matter what I did in ensuing years*.”⁵ In fact, Kendall writes that even if a previous professor of faith were to die in a “condition of sin,” he would still go to heaven.⁶ This is indeed a logical and consistent conclusion to an understanding of salvation as contained entirely in the new birth. Therefore, to propose that sanctification as well as the new birth is necessary for eternal life would seem to deny such passages as Rom 10:13.

A response to the claim that texts like Rom 10:13 opposes this thesis.

The initial response is to challenge this objection based on the presentation of Scripture itself that salvation entails more than the new birth and is more of a process in nature rather than an instant temporal occurrence. The rebuttal is that faulty reasoning lies in the understanding of salvation as merely the new birth, which results in a less than

³ See fn. 8 in chapter 1.

⁴ Kendall, *Once Saved*, 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 120. Emphasis added.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

scriptural emphasis on sanctification. As presented in chapter 1, even though Scripture uses salvation terminology to describe conversion, it also uses it to describe sanctification, glorification, and the entire process of salvation. The error in the above teaching is that salvation is defined in only one of its many components coupled by not taking into account the other phases of salvation. It is all the parts considered collectively that result in a holistic, complete portrait of biblical salvation.

This error is easily committed, especially by those who place due authority in Scripture, because Scripture emphasizes regeneration and because Protestants rightly give justification a high priority in soteriology. In proportion to the other facets of salvation, it does seem that there are more biblical references to salvation in terms of the new birth than there are in terms of sanctification and glorification.⁷ Yet, just because fewer instances appear in Scripture in no way vindicates a “loose” translation or a redefining of biblical terms. The surrounding context of the “salvation” term usually provides the needed information to determine which aspect of salvation the verse refers to.

In addition, the danger of slipping into this error often comes as a result of well-intentioned evangelism. When guiding an unbeliever into the faith, a counselor will frequently utilize texts like Rom 10:13, and rightly so. However, to then counsel the new professor that he is now “once saved, always saved” is to go beyond the scriptural pattern of making “certain about His calling and choosing you” (2 Pet 1:10).

⁷ Strong, *Concordance*, 880. For example, the term “saved” appears 27 times in the NT epistles. A casual reading renders 1 reference to sanctification, 4 references to salvation in its entirety, 5 references to physical deliverance, 5 references to glorification or final salvation, and 12 references to regeneration. Regeneration is described by “salvation” language and does seem to appear more frequently than the other aspects. However, one must not read “regeneration” into the other categories of salvation that are described with the same “salvation” language.

Take the following as an example. Those who would sympathize with Kendall's teaching may quote John 3:3 as their defense. Jesus says to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." So one may conclude, according to Scripture the new birth is all that is required in order to enter heaven.⁸ But this is a faulty conclusion. Jesus said one must be born again to see the kingdom of God, He did not say that *all* a person must do is be born again to see the kingdom of God. Thus, while there is emphatic agreement that in order to go to heaven an individual *must* experience the new birth, that is not all that the individual must experience. If one does not have conversion, one does not have anything in terms of salvation. However, if one has conversion, one does not have everything in terms of complete, holistic, biblical salvation, and this is not an argument based solely on silence from John 3:3.

As studied earlier, Heb 12:14 says that one must pursue holiness in order to see the Lord. The same mistake would be made of this verse if one then concluded that all one has to do in order to go to heaven is to "pursue peace with all men and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." It is true, according to this verse, that one must pursue sanctification, but that is not all one must do. He must first of all be born again. Therefore, these texts, which speak of necessity but in regard to different components of salvation, must be held in balance not in opposition. They are both true; they are both concerning final salvation. Hence, they must both be taught. Should priority and proportion be yielded to the conversion texts? Absolutely. The Bible presents these

⁸ Ibid., 131. Although Kendall himself defines the kingdom of God as "heaven below."

texts with priority. Yet at the same time, the texts that address sanctification and glorification as aspects of salvation should receive due attention and proper definition.

Furthermore, elevating sanctification in this sense may appear to be a weakening or even denial of the doctrine of justification. Again, the only biblical solution is proper balance. The necessity of sanctification does not detract from justification. To stress the necessity of personal, experiential holiness in a believer's life does not take away from the status of positional holiness or imputed righteousness conferred upon a believer at the moment of conversion. They are inseparably linked in terms of soteriology as a doctrine, yet they are existentially separate in terms of human experience. In fact, sanctification augments justification. A doctrine of "justification alone" that is left alone inevitably leads to an antinomian objection. It is reasoned that justification complete, perfect, and irrevocable by faith alone is "inimical to the interests of holy living." To which John Murray replies, "In a nutshell the answer to the charge is the doctrine of sanctification."⁹ Perhaps this is the very motivation that drove the New Testament authors to lay such intense stress upon sanctification, and therefore, in order to avoid the same error, contemporary pastors and teachers should do the same.

1 Corinthians 3: The Carnal Christian Argument

This thesis is sure to be rejected by those who hold to a doctrine of the Christian life that includes the possibility of what is termed "Carnal Christianity."¹⁰ This position

⁹ John Murray, "Basic Christian Doctrines: Sanctification," *Christianity Today* 6 May 11(1962): 30. The preceding quote is from Murray as well.

¹⁰ Lewis Sperry Chafer, first president of Dallas Theological Seminary, first gave full expression to this doctrine in 1918 in his work *He That is Spiritual* (Chicago: Moody Press). Brian Borgman writes that in his work Chafer "asserts that a regenerate man may have his objectives and affections completely untouched by the regenerating grace of the

finds its strongest support in 1 Cor 3:1-3. Paul writes, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?” The term for flesh in this passage, σάρξ, means “flesh,” “physical body,” “living being with flesh,” “human nature,” or “the outward side of life.”¹¹ It is from this term that the word “carnal” is derived.

The argument would proceed as follows. Paul is addressing fellow believers in this passage, “brethren.” He describes those Christians as living in a state that is characterized by human nature (fleshly), and as a result, these believers appear to be no different than the unbelievers around them (are you not walking like mere men). One proponent of this position, Charles Ryrie, defines “carnal” as meaning “to have the characteristics of an unsaved life either because one is an unbeliever or because though a believer, one is living like an unsaved person.”¹² Therefore with carnality as a class of Christians, Ngundu concludes,

[I]n the πνευματικός realm, there are three possible groups of believers: The σαρκίνοι or νηπιοί (babes in Christ—an expected, stage of spiritual babyhood), the σαρκικοί (carnal or fleshly Christians—an unexpected, abnormal spiritual stage) and the τελειοί (mature Christians—the ethically and intellectually disciplined believers who are obedient to the imperatives of faith in living out the Christian life).¹³

Spirit!” See Brian Borgman, “Rethinking a Much Abused Text: 1 Corinthians 3:1-15,” *Reformation and Revival* 11, no.1 (Win 2002): 72.

¹¹ *BDAG*, 914–916.

¹² Ryrie, *Salvation*, 155.

Since Paul addressed these readers as believers, they were to inherit eternal life even if they died in their present state of carnality. Therefore, to propose that sanctification is necessary in order to obtain eternal life is to deny Paul's admission of carnal Christianity.

A response to the carnal Christian objection.

There are two direct responses to the doctrine of carnal Christianity, which will indirectly answer the charge against this thesis. If carnal Christianity is actually a faulty and dangerous interpretation, then the objection falls together with the doctrine. One implication of embracing a doctrine of carnal Christianity is that it renders the aspects of growth, holiness, and disciplines, within the Christian life, as mere options for the believer. Believers can either progress in their faith or remain "carnal" because eternal life is not at stake. The problem with this implication is that the New Testament writers never speak of growth, holiness, or disciplines as optional. They never tell their listeners that these things are up to them whether to pursue them or not. They, instead, always exhort and/or command their readers to implement holy living into their lives. They may address their readers as immature, but they are never satisfied or comfortable with that assessment.

Another dangerous result of this interpretation is to create two classes of Christians and thus three categories for humanity: unbelievers, carnal Christians, and spiritual Christians. The problem with this conclusion is the same as what William Combs points out as a problem with second-blessing theology, that is, ". . . Scriptures

¹³ Onesimus Annos Ngundu, "Toward a Pauline Model of Progressive Sanctification," (Th. D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1988), 114.

actually know of only two *distinct* classes of men—believers and unbelievers”¹⁴

Indeed Paul, the writer of 1 Corinthians, commonly divides humanity into only two categories (cf. Rom 8; Gal 5:19-25; Eph 4:8). According to the Scriptures, believers and unbelievers are visibly distinguished based upon their way of life. Believers are known by their holiness; unbelievers are known by their sin. This does not mean that believers do not sin. They most certainly do, but when they do, it is unacceptable behavior. Sin, although present in a believer, is not to be his dominant trait. A carnal Christian, therefore, is not another class of Christian. Jim Elliff writes, “We have, in error, made the ‘carnal Christian life’ a sort of permanent state. The doctrine implies that one can live like the world and still go to heaven, a teaching strictly forbidden in the Scriptures (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 6:7-8; Eph. 5:5-6; 1 John 3:4-9, etc.).”¹⁵ Carnality is better understood as a phase in a believer’s life or a fault in respect to a specific area in his life. It is then a broad or narrow quality, not a category. As Gleason points out from 2 Cor 3:18, “even the ‘carnal’ Corinthians were experiencing some measure of spiritual growth.”¹⁶ A carnal Christian is a believer who is being, in one area or phase of life, dominated by sin instead of the Spirit.¹⁷

¹⁴ William W. Combs, “The Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification in Contemporary Evangelical Theology,” *DBSJ* 6 (Fall 2001): 37.

¹⁵ Jim Elliff, “Revival and the Unregenerate Church Member,” *Reformation and Revival* 8, no. 2 (Spr 1999), 54.

¹⁶ Randall Gleason, “Sanctification,” 255. See also Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 221. “The claim (carnal Christians) also disrupts Christian unity to divide a church into two mutually exclusive ‘classes.’”

¹⁷ Combs, “Disjunction,” 42. “Every single Christian can be called a carnal Christian because every single Christian is carnal to some degree, but there is no distinct category of carnal Christian.”

A final danger to mention is of pastoral significance. Jim Elliff writes, “The impression that one can be a Christian and consistently live in rebellion to God as a “carnal Christian” plays a major role in our retention of the unsaved in our churches.”¹⁸ However, as Elliff points out, this not only is damaging to the church as a whole but also to individual attendees. He states, “Its greatest danger is that of deception. If lost, under this doctrine, the “carnal Christian” is bound to always opt to remain as he is: a deceived, unregenerate man who believes himself to be a true believer merely living a sub-standard Christian life.”¹⁹ This implication carries enormous, eternal consequences, which was also a major motivational factor for this dissertation. If one’s interpretation is that there is a category of carnal Christianity or that sanctification is unnecessary proves to be wrong, the responsibility for purporting those “deceptive” ideas as truth falls squarely on the shoulders of those who taught them.

A second response, and most important, would be that there is sound reason to believe that the doctrine of carnal Christianity is a result of error in interpretation. There are many doctrines that may be termed “dangerous,” but they are nonetheless exegetically verifiable. For example, it has been proposed by some that the doctrine of election should be avoided from the pulpit because it is dangerous. However, a doctrine must not be discarded on the basis of dangerous implications alone, but primarily on the basis of sound hermeneutics. Brian Borgman rejects the category of carnal Christian based on his exegesis of 1 Cor 3:1-15.²⁰ The following describes his findings.

¹⁸ Elliff, “Revival,” 54.

¹⁹ Ibid,” 54.

²⁰ See fn. 9 for bibliographical material. See also Lewis and Demarest,

After providing a brief history of the teaching and its main conclusions, Borgman launches into his examination of the text. He observes that “Paul’s initial concern regarding the Corinthian church was an arrogant party spirit (1:10-17).”²¹ This division eventually manifested in a “preacher partiality” (3:4). Paul, according to Borgman, attacks the Corinthian division by three means. First, he demonstrates the glory of the cross in the gospel (1:18-2:5). Boasting is reserved for the gospel alone, not themselves or their favorite preacher. Second, Paul explains how a dividing spirit is contrary to wisdom and spirituality (2:6-16). Real wisdom is in the gospel, and the “spiritual” ones understand this, the “natural” ones do not. Third, being divided over preacher partiality is unspiritual, that is, carnal (3:1-4). The Corinthian believers need a proper perspective on Christian ministers (3:6-9) and on the church (3:10-15).²²

In the specific context of 3:1-3, Borgman sees a nuanced difference in meaning between the adjectives ending in *-ικος* (fleshly) and those ending in *-ινος* (of the flesh). The latter refers to substance whereas the former refers to likeness. Borgman quotes Moulton’s English examples of leathery, leathern; earthy, earthen. Therefore, Paul was saying that they were acting like “carnal” people; he was not saying that they were “carnal” people.

This interpretation is strengthened when one considers that Paul has already provided his categories of people as either *ψυχικὸς* (natural) or *πνευματικὸς* (spiritual), see 2:14-15. Therefore, what Paul means in 3:1 is that when he was with the Corinthians,

Integrative, 220–221.

²¹ Borgman, “1 Corinthians 3,” 75.

²² *Ibid.*, 75–76.

they were at that time babes in Christ. Being such, they were not yet adapted to their new life of Spirit-illumination. In that state, they were just like men of flesh (cf. the natural man, 2:14), not able to understand the things of the Spirit of God. Paul is then chastising them “because their attitudes were childish, completely incompatible with the fact that they were people who had the Spirit of God.”²³

Borgman summarizes,

Nevertheless, Paul does not imply that their carnality is universal, but rather localized to one serious and destructive area, their arrogant party-spirit. Paul is not saying that they are completely carnal, he is pointing out that in this area they are acting like normal men (3:3b-4). He is telling them that they have the characteristics of the flesh. He then points out that this is the source of their jealousy and rivalry. In acting like this Paul could ask, “*are you not being only too human?*” (3:4b, NJB).²⁴

The startling implication of understanding this passage in this light is that what Chafer, Ryrie, and others have termed the “carnal Christian” is actually not a Christian at all. Being “fleshly” in one area of life is entirely different than being a “carnal Christian.” A “carnal Christian,” as described by its proponents, can exist in a state completely like an unregenerate person with no change in life or affections. That same person has just as much certainty of heaven as the “spiritual Christian” who is pursuing a life of holiness.²⁵ As quoted by Elliff above, the Scripture itself rejects this teaching. In the end, there is no such thing as a “carnal Christian,” only Christians who at points and at times look carnal.

²³ Ibid., 79.

²⁴ Ibid., 79. See also Elliff, “Revival,” 54. “Paul’s use of ‘carnal’ in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 is a way of saying that those individuals are acting ‘like mere men,’ or, that they are acting just like unconverted people in the area of partiality to preachers. Otherwise, he commends them (1:4-9).”

²⁵ Borgman, “1 Corinthians 3,” 87.

This objection, then, bears little consequence to the teaching that sanctification is necessary in order to obtain eternal life.

Logical Arguments Raised In Objection

The Author's Thesis Results in a Works-based Salvation

In similar fashion to the first biblical objection, this objection follows from it. The argument is that if any type of human endeavor or effort whatsoever is attached to simple faith in Christ, the doctrine of salvation crumbles into a works-based approach and grace is nullified. The legitimacy of this objection is its refusal to embrace any soteriology that would appear to be Roman Catholic instead of Protestant. Indeed, that is one of its more forceful appeals. The history of Protestant theology is grounded in the five *solas* of the Reformation, *sola fidei* being the central cry that divided the Church in the 16th Century. To suggest, then, that ultimate salvation is tied to a personal progress in holiness sounds strikingly similar a synergistic soteriology. The hallmark text for this position is Romans 11:6, “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.”

A response to the works-based salvation objection.

There are a couple of answers to this objection. First, the word “works” needs further clarification. To define “works” as any type of human endeavor or effort is damaging to the very position that objects to this thesis. One might ask, “Are faith and repentance not works?” When someone “places” faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin and “changes” their thinking concerning sin and God, are these not

actions? In fact some preachers state that all God requires is for the penitent to cry out to Him, and He will do the rest. God requires people to do the only thing they could do for their salvation, ask for it, and then He grants it. This is another way to state the proverbial, “If you take the first step, God will take the other 99.” If this is one’s position, it must be challenged by asking, “Are not the acts of “crying out” or “taking the first step” actions of human endeavor or effort, thus works?” In order to be consistent with the definition of works, one would have to say, “Yes.”

To begin with, “works” needs to be defined in the biblical sense according to the context in which it is found. Paul writes in Rom 3:28, “For we maintain that man is justified by faith apart from the works of the Law.” So “works”, in this sense, is works of the Law. In the context of Romans 3, Paul teaches that those who are under the Law are accountable to God. No one can be justified by works of the Law because the Law only brings knowledge of sin (cf. vv. 19-20). However, the righteousness that God requires is apart from the Law and available through faith in Christ on the basis of Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice (cf. vv. 21-26). Therefore, justification is by faith alone apart from the works of the Law. This means then that no one can be saved or has ever been saved by adherence to the Mosaic covenant. The “works” of Romans is then the striving to obtain favorable and acceptable status before God based on perfect application of OT Law.

Therefore, when one comes to the book of James, there is no contradiction. James writes in 2:24, “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” “Works” in the context of James is something different than “works of the Law” in Romans. James illustrates his meaning through the examples of Abraham and Rahab. Abraham’s work

was the willingness to sacrifice Isaac. Rahab's work was the reception of the messengers. These are not "works of the Law." These are works of faith. It is this same type of "works" that is meant in the doctrine of sanctification.

The error within the above objection occurs when one allows Paul's meaning of "works" to be equated with James'. When this happens, a misunderstanding of James always surfaces. For example, Kendall writes, "James' statement about being justified by works was not with reference to salvation at all; it referred to an indiscriminate love for all men. Faith without works does nothing for the other person."²⁶ This interpretation grossly diffuses the force of James' "dead faith." A more biblically accurate, historical understanding of faith and works is expressed in the 1609 Short Confession of Faith. It reads, "That faith, destitute of good works, is vain; but true and living faith is distinguished by good works."²⁷

Rightly understanding the biblical distinction between Paul and James yields a vastly different interpretation. One cannot be justified before God if he is attempting to satisfy God through the observance of some moral code of conduct. On the other hand, neither can one's faith be perfected or alive if it is not the kind of faith that results in faith-filled obedience to God. However, when one obeys the Lord by faith, it is pleasing to God (Heb 11). Thus, these kinds of works, prompted by faith (cf. Rom 14:23b, 2 Thess 1:11-12), are not meritorious but rather obligatory Christian duties.²⁸ This understanding of works that forces necessity upon sanctification was articulated centuries ago by

²⁶ Kendall, *Saved*, 170.

²⁷ John Smyth, "Short Confession of Faith," in George, *Confessions*, 33.

²⁸ MacArthur, *Gospel*, 249. MacArthur explains, "Paul was saying that human works cannot earn favor with God, and James was saying that true faith must always result in good works."

Goerge Major, pupil of Luther and Melancthon. Hodge explains his position when he writes, “He said he did not teach that good works were necessary as being meritorious, but simply as the necessary fruits of faith and part of our obedience to Christ; nevertheless, he maintained that no one could be saved without good works.”²⁹ The “works” Major speaks of refers to James’ argument, not Paul’s. Therefore, the “works” of faith, repentance, mortification, and vivification are not enacted to obtain salvation but rather to express, affirm, and continue it.

Furthermore, any of these good “works” are never attributed to the self-determination or autonomy of man, but are rather attributed solely to grace. In that light, then the Bible accurately describes faith and repentance as granted “works” as well as any human effort in the realm of sanctification. While salvation is completely due to grace, faith-filled “works” are produced as evidences of God’s gracious work in, upon, and through the individual. God is the initiator in salvation. He takes the first step, and enables the believer to take any other steps. The believer “works” because God is “working” in him (cf. Phil 2:12-13). Therefore, to see the human responsibility in sanctification as a biblically optional “work” is to misunderstand the nature of how grace exposes itself within an individual. True genuine faith cannot remain hidden and private; it always goes public. As J.I. Packer writes on this subject, “Holiness by habit forming is not self-sanctification by self-effort, but is simply a matter of understanding the Spirit’s method and then keeping in step with him.”³⁰ Jack Arnold explains, “There is no question about the fact that the total process of sanctification is a work of God, but God works not apart from the human will but through it; therefore man’s part in experimental

²⁹ Hodge, *Systematic*, 239.

³⁰ Packer, *Spirit*, 110.

sanctification is active, and apart from responsibility there would be no sanctification.”³¹ Seeing “works” in this light, one can say that faith and repentance are works as are the actions in personal sanctification. William Shedd writes, “Sanctification is both a grace and a duty,”³² and that could be said of faith and repentance as well. Just as faith and repentance are necessary for conversion and thus salvation, so the subsequent pursuit of holiness is necessary for sanctification and thus salvation.

Second, to use Rom 3:28 or Rom 11:6 to argue that “works” cannot be incorporated into soteriology is to misuse those texts. The context of Romans 3 is the issue of justification. Romans 11 is concerned with the issue of election. Paul does not mention the term for salvation in either text. He is addressing specific aspects of salvation, not salvation in *totum*. Man’s “works” do not justify nor do they influence God’s sovereign election of His people. That is Paul’s meaning. To take those texts and conclude that any human endeavor or effort has no place in biblical salvation that is by faith alone through grace alone is simply misleading. Ryle bluntly writes, “Others are so much afraid of ‘works’ being made a part of justification that they can hardly find any place at all for ‘works’ in their religion.”³³ On the other hand, as Calvin stated, “Faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone.”

One may question whether or not Eph 2:8-9 will support this reasoning with regard to works. Although quite familiar in these discussions, it bears repeating here for the purpose of analysis. “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of

³¹ Arnold, *Pauline Doctrine*, 165. Emphasis Original.

³² William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 555–556.

³³ Ryle, *Holiness*, 18.

yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” First, one will notice that σεσωσμένοι is a perfect, passive, participle, which places this verse in the realm of the aspect of regeneration. This is supported by the context of Ephesians 2 where Paul is describing God’s role in an individual’s life to bring them to salvation. Left on their own, individuals are “dead in trespasses and sins” (v. 1). The merciful God, prompted by His love, makes one “alive together with Christ,” raises one “up with Him,” and seats one “with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (vv. 5-6). This is what Paul means when he says believers have been saved by grace (v. 5). God works in this way so that His grace may be displayed throughout the ages (v. 7). Regeneration, then, precedes faith and repentance so that God receives all the glory and credit for the salvation of man.

Second, Paul, however, does not leave out the element of faith because it is surely an essential component of one’s conversion. He is quick, though, to call faith a gift, so that even the exercising of faith cannot be attributed to man. Thus salvation, regeneration in this context, is entirely a work of God in which man has no place for boasting (v. 9). Therefore, salvation, that is, regeneration, is not a result of works (v. 9). What kind of works? “Works” is taken here to be a broad application for works that is referring to works of merit, works of the Law, or any type of good works. Since individuals are “dead in trespasses and sins,” they are unable to perform any type of work at all that would result in their acceptance before God. God must act first in spite of their present unworthiness. This is grace, which is the point of the text.

Third, works that are acceptable to God, however, quickly come into Paul’s theology. The very next verse states the purpose in regeneration. As God’s workmanship

who have been “created in Christ Jesus,” good works are the outflow of regeneration in a believer’s life. It is understood here that Paul is referring to the good works that occur in the arena of sanctification (cf. 4:17-6:9). Therefore, Paul’s meaning here is that any works preceding regeneration are of no value in regard to salvation, but those that follow after regeneration are to become the believer’s way of life (cf. v. 10b, “so that we would walk in them”).

To suggest from Ephesians 2 that Paul means to disavow any human endeavor or effort in respect to salvation is to divert attention away from Paul’s point. His point in Ephesians 2 is to divert any credit being given to man or boasted in from man for his regeneration. The same apostle makes another point about the relationship between works and salvation in Romans 8. As studied in chapter 2, Paul is speaking of post-conversion experience in this text and clearly states that genuine effort to destroy sin must and will accompany genuine belief. Therefore, from Paul’s perspective, works are useless for regeneration but present and essential for sanctification. As stated in the Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1742) 16:2,

These good works, done in obedience to God’s commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith; and by them believers manifest their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the Gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, *that having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end eternal life.*³⁴

The objection against the necessity of sanctification as being a works-based salvation may come from understanding the mandate of holiness as making eternal life conditional, and thereby nullifying grace. As part of salvation, progressive sanctification

³⁴ “The Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1742),” in George, *Confessions*, 73. Emphasis Added.

cannot inherently be viewed as a works-based salvation. The description of progressive sanctification given here assumes that regeneration has already occurred and that growing in holiness is the assurance that glorification will occur. In addition, as has already been stated, salvation in its entirety is of grace, even the works that believers accomplish are given by God. Schreiner and Caneday conclude their work stating,

God did not elect us because he saw any good works in us, nor because he saw we would exercise faith, nor because he saw we would do good works in the future, nor because he saw that we would persevere in the faith. His election and calling produced in us faith and good works and perseverance. Thus, any idea that conditions for salvation amount to works-righteousness can be confidently waved aside. The good works we do are the work of his grace.³⁵

Jerry Bridges elaborates on the connection of condition with holiness, “Holiness, then, is not necessary as a *condition* of salvation – that would be salvation by works – but as a *part* of salvation that is received by faith in Christ.”³⁶

A hallmark passage for seeing the relation between our effort and God’s work within us is Phil 2:12-13. Hoekema writes, “The harder we work, the more sure we may be that God is working in us.”³⁷ Packer explains this relation in the process of sanctification when he writes, “What from one standpoint is our cooperation with the process is from another standpoint a part of the process itself.”³⁸ A believer’s very effort is a God-ordained means whereby one demonstrates sanctification.

The believer’s effort is not works-based salvation, for he is not putting forth effort to be saved but because he is saved. The good works themselves are a result of grace.

³⁵ Schreiner and Caneday, *Race*, 331.

³⁶ Bridges, *Pursuit*, 39.

³⁷ Hoekema, *Five Views*, 71.

³⁸ Packer, *Holiness*, 94.

Schreiner and Caneday state, “. . . God’s grace and love precedes and creates all human faith and obedience (Eph 2:10).”³⁹ In the same vein Peterson writes, “Human effort is required, but not apart from, nor distinct from the activity of God’s Spirit”⁴⁰ Dallas Willard further explains, “Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning.”⁴¹ Thus, the language of works, effort, and condition is biblical if kept in proper perspective as part of salvation, not as required to obtain salvation.⁴² As part of salvation, then, holy living is necessary. The opposing interpretation logically results in the jettisoning of sanctification. A. W. Tozer once remarked of that position, “To escape the error of salvation by works we have fallen into the opposite error of salvation without obedience.”⁴³ Both errors can be avoided if “works” are kept in proper perspective with regard to regeneration and sanctification.

The Author’s Thesis Results in a Loss of Assurance for the Believer

This argument usually comes from those who also reject the necessity of sanctification as a works-based doctrine. To remain with the same example, Kendall argues in *Once Saved, Always Saved* that a person will go to heaven by faith whether accompanied by works or not.⁴⁴ What moved Kendall to this position was the sense of

³⁹ Schreiner and Caneday, *Race*, 206.

⁴⁰ Peterson, *Possessed*, 113.

⁴¹ Willard, “Spiritual Formation,” 50. See also Lowe, “Condemnation,” 247. He writes, “. . . righteousness is a necessary, but not meritorious, prerequisite for life.”

⁴² Lowe, “No Condemnation,” 236. In this same line of reasoning, when Lowe explains Romans 6 he writes, “. . . eternal life is conditional upon a righteous lifestyle, which is in turn grounded in union with Christ in his death and resurrection.”

⁴³ A. W. Tozer, *Gems from Tozer* (Harrisburg: Send the Light Trust, 1969), 25.

⁴⁴ Kendall, *Saved*, 19.

insecurity that he felt under a theology that taught the possible loss of salvation. He writes that he knew he “must remain faithful or I would lose my salvation.”⁴⁵ When Kendall arrives at a proper understanding of justification, he goes too far in placing assurance completely within its realm.⁴⁶ So he, and others of like theology, would argue that to make sanctification necessary for eternal salvation would promote insecurity. A believer, it would be argued, would never know if he had progressed enough in the faith to be assured of heaven.

A response to the loss of assurance argument.

Kendall’s aim was to refute those who believe you can lose your salvation, but he erred in not taking into account where the Bible places much of our assurance. There are two New Testament books that clearly refute the notion that a believer’s assurance of heaven is completely wrapped up in justification. In fact, these books stress the need for sanctification to be present if a believer is going to have any real measure of assurance.

John’s first epistle addresses this issue in a clear, straightforward manner. Just as with the study of 1 John in chapter 3, John is repetitive in his first epistle, and the connection between sanctification and assurance is frequently made. This initially appears in 2:3. John writes, “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.” There are a couple of points to be observed. First, notice that John speaks of having assurance, “we know,” in the new birth, “have come to know

⁴⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁶ Ibid., see Kendall’s reasoning and conclusion in his fifth chapter, “Justification by Faith.”

Him.” Assurance for the believer is more than just being assured of heaven through the doctrine of justification. A believer must also find assurance in that justification.

Second, notice that John grounds assurance of justification in the presence of sanctification, “if we keep His commandments.” John contrasts the believer in verse 3 with the unbeliever in verse 4. In verse 4, a person who claims conversion but has no sanctification, that is, “does not keep His commandments,” is then called “a liar.” Therefore, sanctification serves to assure the believer of his justification. This is restated when John writes in vv. 5b-6, “By this we know (assurance) that we are in Him (conversion); the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked (sanctification).” Again it appears in 2:29 where John says, “If you know that He is righteous, you know (assurance) that everyone also who practices righteousness (sanctification) is born of Him (conversion).” Also, John 3:14a states, “We know (assurance) that we have passed out of death into life (conversion), because we love the brethren (sanctification).” Finally, 3:19 says, “We will know (assurance) by this (sanctification by loving in deed and not just word, cf. v.18) that we are of the truth (conversion), and will assure our heart before Him . . .” Ryle observes from 1 John, “In a word, where there is no sanctification there is no regeneration, and where there is no holy life there is no new birth.”⁴⁷ It is clear through the sheer repetition of John that having assurance of one’s conversion is essential, and it is only achieved through the presence of sanctification. But admittedly, this is not the only aspect of assurance that John discusses.

⁴⁷ Ryle, *Holiness*, 21.

Twice in John's letter he grounds assurance of conversion in the indwelling presence of the Spirit (3:24, 4:13). It is because the Spirit abides in the believer that the believer can know he abides in God, for the Spirit is God (cf. Acts 5:3-4). Therefore, assurance of conversion is twofold for John. There is a subjective element in that true believers experience the indwelling of the Spirit. However, there is also an objective, visible element in that true believers demonstrate their belief through the keeping of God's commandments. And for John, the commandments of God can be reduced to belief in Jesus that is ongoing and loving one another (3:23). Therefore, regeneration and sanctification work together to provide believers with full assurance of the authenticity of their faith. But for John, both regeneration and sanctification must be present if believers are to have assurance. Hence to argue that insistence on sanctification destroys assurance is to argue against the whole of 1 John. But there is even stronger evidence of this in John's epistle.

For intentional reasons, 5:13, which also addresses assurance, was reserved to be discussed now. 1 John 5:13 states, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." The hinge factor for this verse is the opening word, Ταῦτα, translated "these things." The "these things" refers to the previous section of verses, 5-12. Verse 12 is a summary statement that concludes the section. It reads, "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." Therefore, John is saying that he has written this to those who believe in the name of the Son of God (he who has the Son) that they may have assurance of their glorification. John is clearly grounding assurance of heaven

in the realm of conversion, but where does he ground assurance of conversion? He ties it directly to sanctification throughout the entire book.

In summary fashion, John has been telling them over and over that believers are distinguished from unbelievers in that they love one another (4:20) and that they keep God's commandments (2:3). If they are loving one another and keeping God's commandments, God abides in them. This "abiding" is further evidenced by the indwelling of the Spirit. Thus, by being internally and externally different from unbelievers, they have assurance of justification. At the same time, those who believe on the name of the Son of God can know that they have eternal life. John's first epistle in effect argues against the position that assurance is bound up in justification.⁴⁸ As Godbey concludes from his observation, "Hence, there is no present assurance of heaven without present sanctification."⁴⁹

The second book, which argues against this objection, is the book of James. In his article on James, Ron Julian sees 1:12 as the key statement of the entire book.⁵⁰ It reads, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." This is why a believer can "consider it all joy" when he encounters various trials. James then describes how a believer's faith will be tested so that maturity will result (1:2-12). This

⁴⁸ MacArthur, *Gospel*, 253. MacArthur summarizes John's epistle in the following manner when he writes, "His (John's) counsel to those struggling with assurance was not that they should pin their hopes on a past incident or a moment of faith. He gave instead a doctrinal test and a moral test, and reiterated them throughout his first epistle. The moral test requires obedience . . . The doctrinal test that John gave relates to Jesus' deity and lordship"

⁴⁹ Godbey, *Sanctification*, 96.

⁵⁰ Julian, "James," 47.

process of testing resulting in maturity is descriptive of a believer's sanctification. With perseverance under trial as the backdrop for this epistle, Julian concludes, "James makes a case for assurance through sanctification . . . The connection between assurance and sanctification is sobering; salvation comes to those who have a living faith."⁵¹ In order to prove that arguing for the necessity of sanctification defeats assurance, one would be forced to conclude that James and John misled their readers.

As Schreiner and Caneday observe, "The objective signs of growth in our lives provide subjective assurance that our faith is genuine, that we are not deceiving ourselves about our relationship with God."⁵² Understanding the biblical necessity for progressive sanctification does not give one the leisure to rely solely on a past experience for salvation while demonstrating no desire for holiness or repentance of habitual sin. Jerry Bridges writes, "It is not those who profess to know Christ who will enter heaven, but those whose lives are holy."⁵³ MacArthur states,

Real salvation is not only justification. It cannot be isolated from regeneration, sanctification, and ultimately glorification. Salvation is the work of God through which we are "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom 8:29; cf. 13:11). Genuine assurance comes from seeing the Holy Spirit's transforming work in one's life, not from clinging to the memory of some experience.⁵⁴

Therefore, for those who are striving to live a godly life, assurance of salvation is found in the fact that their desires have been changed, not just their Sunday morning routine. As

⁵¹ Ibid., 49.

⁵² Schreiner and Caneday, *Race*, 292.

⁵³ Bridges, *Pursuit*, 43.

⁵⁴ MacArthur, *Gospel*, 29.

Paul says in 2 Cor 5:17, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

Concerning the notion of “insecurity” after conversion, Paul Cefalu provides a great history as to how Calvin and other Calvinists viewed the proper role of “fear” in the process of salvation.⁵⁵ Godly fear was divided into two categories; servile and filial. Servile fear was what one experienced pre-conversion when coming to the realization of God’s omnipotent power and exacting justice. Filial fear came post-conversion and was a means God uses to provoke righteousness in the believer. Therefore, filial fear is actually healthy and profitable toward the pursuit of holiness in sanctification. This writer believes that the “sense” of fear that some experience post-conversion should not be explained away by a removal of sanctification’s necessity, but rather with a more balanced perspective on the “use” of such godly fear.

The Reality of Deathbed Conversions Nullifies the Author’s Thesis

The argument would proceed as follows. If sanctification is defined as the bridge that connects justification with glorification, what happens when there is no bridge? Furthermore, if one insists that sanctification is necessary in order to obtain eternal life, that position assigns all deathbed conversions as eternally insignificant. The hallmark example would be the thief on the cross who was crucified along with Jesus. This narrative is found in Luke 23:39-43. One of the two criminals crucified alongside of Christ joined in with the crowd and hurled insults upon Jesus. The other one, however, rebuked his contemporary and requested for Jesus to remember him when he came into

⁵⁵ Paul Cefalu, “Godly Fear, Sanctification, and Calvinist Theology in the Sermons and ‘Holy Sonnets’ of John Donne,” *Studies in Philology* 100, no. 1 (2003): 71–86.

His kingdom. Jesus replied, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

It is clear from the words of Jesus that glorification awaited the criminal upon his death.

It is also clear that he did not live out any kind of lifespan of sanctification. It is concluded, then, sanctification is in fact not necessary in order to receive eternal life.

A response to the deathbed conversion objection.

This is one of the more clear-cut rebuttals of the author’s position. The response is twofold. First, the author would reply with a familiar rule of thumb—the exception does not change the rule. The normal pattern for a believer’s experience of salvation is to undergo conversion, spend the rest of his life in the process of sanctification, and then upon death, enter into the glorious state. However, there are a few instances, the thief being one, in which a believer does not have the opportunity to struggle through the process of sanctification because death follows quickly upon the heels of conversion. In those cases, which are clearly exceptions, demonstrable growth is not required for eternal salvation. On the other hand, those who do experience conversion with a span of time existing before their glorification, are required to demonstrate a visible faith. So the conclusion would be if one is given the opportunity to progress in holiness, he must take it. If there is no opportunity for growth, there is no requirement for it.⁵⁶

Take the case of infant deaths as an illustration of this point. Most evangelicals would affirm that for one to be born again, he must repent and believe in the Lord Jesus

⁵⁶ This line of reasoning can only be utilized in post-conversion circumstances however. In other words, someone objecting to this position could not argue that given this argument then an unbeliever who had no opportunity to believe would not be required to believe. Romans 1 and 2 stands in opposition to any such defense for an unbeliever, even those who “seem” to have no opportunity to believe.

Christ. At the same time, most evangelicals hold that infants who die are in heaven. Infants cannot repent or believe, therefore, they are an exception to the norm. However, the exception does not change the norm. Adults do have the responsibility to repent and believe, and so they must in order to experience the new birth. In like manner, then, those who are regenerated at the moment of death are not the norm. They do not have the opportunity to grow in holiness. Most converts who come to Christ, however, do have such an opportunity. If that opportunity is not taken, it is a demonstration of the unregenerate state of their souls.

Second, to say that sanctification was not present in the criminal's life who died on the cross is actually somewhat misleading. As soon as the thief experienced regeneration, he also experienced positional sanctification. At conversion he was set aside from the world for the purpose of glorifying God and, in union with Christ, was seated in the heavenly places. Sanctification is one thing with three aspects; positional, personal, and final. Therefore, those who die soon after conversion do, in fact, possess sanctification. Furthermore, since sanctification is a whole composed of parts, theoretically even the deathbed convert possesses personal sanctification. Deathbed conversions, then, do not nullify the author's thesis.

J.C. Ryle's analysis of deathbed conversion from the thief on the cross.

Ryle makes several points when discussing the thief on the cross. One of which is to point out the many evidences of the Spirit's work in the man's life. He writes, . . . whether He (the Spirit) converts a man in an hour . . . or whether by slow degrees . . . the

steps by which He leads souls to heaven are always the same.”⁵⁷ He then lists three evidences: a strong faith, a right sense of sin, and brotherly love.⁵⁸ All this is to say that sanctification was present in the thief’s life before he died.

The Author’s Thesis Creates a “How Much” Problem for Believers

This objection is similar to the objection of loss of assurance. The argument is that if the progressive nature of sanctification must be present in a believer’s life in order to obtain eternal life, at what point would a believer know he has obtained eternal life? In short, there would always be a troubling concern of “how much.” As Gordon Dicker writes, “It [progressive transformation] can easily give rise to an unhealthy introspection intent on measuring how far one has progressed in sanctification.”⁵⁹ The reasoning is that if this understanding of sanctification is true, then there must be a time during the process of sanctification that there is not ample progress. Therefore, how could a believer have any assurance that they have progressed sufficiently?

A response to the “how much” dilemma.

There are at least two replies for this objection. First, the very nature of the question presupposes a doctrine of perfectionism. The “how much” objection is looking for a point in the process in which sanctification has reached a certain goal. This is a flawed view of sanctification. Personal, progressive sanctification is a lifetime pursuit. Sanctification is never complete until the Christian life is complete, that is, until glorification occurs. Therefore, there is never a point in the process of sanctification in

⁵⁷ Ryle, *Holiness*, 224.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 224–226.

⁵⁹ Dicker, “Models,” 16.

which the believer has arrived at a goal of completion. As even the Apostle Paul would testify in Phil 3:12, “Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.” “How much” is simply the wrong perspective on sanctification, and it is also the wrong question as well, which leads to the second reply.

Second, the doctrine of perseverance is the biblical answer to the “how much” objection. Progressing in personal holiness is not, nor is it meant to be, a quantitatively measurable process. As Brondos observes, “Faith is not measurable by scientific standards nor manageable by scientific methods.”⁶⁰ The question of “how much” should be replaced with two biblical questions. First, one should ask if sanctification is present at all. The Bible requires the presence of progressive sanctification (Heb 12:14), not a certain measure of progressive sanctification. Thus, the question is not how much progress needs to be present, but if progress is present at all. There is therefore not a designated level to achieve in order to find assurance. There is only the need to pursue holiness. That being the case, one has assurance of heaven because one has sanctification. The inherent nature of sanctification will produce its process, progressive aspects. However, biblically this question should be followed by another.

The second question to ask is if sanctification has lasted one’s entire life. That is, has the bridge between justification and glorification extended over the entire gulf. Perseverance is the answer to the “how much” objection. The question is not does one’s sanctification stack up high enough, but rather has one’s sanctification lasted long enough. The question is not how far did you get; the question is did you go and keep

⁶⁰ Brondos, “Sanctification,” 437.

going to the end. In short, “how much” is answered by saying, “Until your life is over.” In order to obtain the eternal bliss of glory, one must be able to say with Paul at life’s fleeting moments, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7). Therefore, sanctification has reached the level of “how much” when it reaches its completion in final sanctification, namely, glorification. So the believer must not place undue emphasis on his achievements in the faith but rather pay much attention to his maintaining of the faith. As Jesus declared in Matthew 10:22b, “. . . but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved” (cf. Matt 24:13; Rev 2:10b; 13:10b; 14:12). In commenting on this verse Schreiner and Caneday write, “Jesus’ words say nothing about the possibility of losing one’s salvation; that is not the function of his conditional promise. Rather, his words function to assure you that you will be saved, if you persevere.”⁶¹ The Scripture does not supply its readers with a measuring stick to mark off accomplishments until a satisfactory level is achieved. It only promises its readers that those who pursue sanctification will see the Lord.

In sum then, with reference to assurance, a believer’s assurance comes from three sources; conversion (1 John 5:13), sanctification (1 John 2:3), and perseverance (Matt 10:22). A believer then can take comfort in conversion, but full assurance is only for those whose faith has been tested and proven true and subsequently whose faith endures to the end. This in no way decreases a believer’s assurance. In fact, it is more substantial. In this way, a believer is provided with assurance at every stage in the process of salvation. On the opposite end, it also provides motivation to grow in the faith and keep the faith.

⁶¹ Schreiner and Caneday, *Race*, 152.

Summary of Chapter 4

The purpose of this chapter was not to change the minds of objectors, but only to demonstrate that these possible objections do not sufficiently dismantle the thesis. As far as the biblical objections raised from certain texts, the texts that deal with regeneration do not adequately refute this position because the Bible speaks of salvation in terms of process. The processes or stages of regeneration and sanctification carry with them both the qualities of assurance and necessity. To boil either salvation or assurance down to the stage of regeneration is to come far short of the biblical presentation. The second biblical objection, the carnal Christian argument, does not find sufficient support in the Bible for its own assumptions, and therefore does not succeed in refuting the necessity of sanctification. The whole of the NT classifies humanity in two categories, believers and unbelievers. It seems to be more in compatibility with the Scriptures to see carnality as a phase or stage not a classification.

Concerning the logical objections, there were four mentioned. The “works-based” salvation objection does not suffice when one takes into account the difference in “works” that are Christian, faith-filled duties and “works” that are works of the Law or moral standards pursued in hopes of merit before God. The loss of assurance objection fails in that it does not take into account the passages in Scripture that place assurance in the other realms of salvation beyond conversion. The deathbed conversion objection does not refute the necessity for sanctification because sanctification is one thing with three aspects. Therefore, sanctification is present in the positional form in deathbed conversions, and, as Ryle contended, evidenced as personal as well. Finally, the “how much” question is simply a wrong perspective on progressive sanctification. The Bible

never requires a measurement of sanctification, only a presence of sanctification.

Sanctification itself is personal and progressive. Therefore, if it is present, the believer is personally progressing in holiness. So the question is not “how much” is present, but if it is present at all, and if so, does it endure?

It is concluded then that these objections do not sufficiently refute the claim that the Bible speaks of personal sanctification as necessary in order to obtain eternal life. In fact, the only proof that this position is incorrect would be either a text of Scripture that directly states sanctification as unnecessary for eternal life and/or an exegetical outline of each text in chapters 2 and 3 that identifies the given interpretation as inaccurate. If this is not achievable, then evangelicals must learn how to incorporate this understanding of sanctification into ministry and church life. This is the content of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

SELECTED IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM EMBRACING THE NECESSITY OF SANCTIFICATION

There are numerous and radical consequences that would result should this teaching of sanctification's necessity for salvation be embraced. The implications of incorporating this doctrine into the life of the church would have positive effects in the areas of teaching, evangelism, and the visible church body. The following is a discussion of those implications.

Implications for the Preaching/Teaching Ministry

Bible-centered Ministry¹

A desired and necessary implication for the office of pastor/teacher in the church (cf. Eph 4:11) would be a greater focus upon the Word of God as foundational for the salvation, life, and health of every listener. In John 17:17, Jesus prays for His followers by beseeching the Father to "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." Jesus calls on the Father to perform this work of sanctification, and He specifically mentions the instrument whereby God accomplishes it, the Word of God. It is indeed the case that the Word is not the sole instrument for the sanctification of believers. For example, 1 Pet 1:2 attaches the work of sanctification directly to the Spirit. So then, it could be accurately

¹ This is not to say that other perspectives of sanctification yield less attention to the Scripture. The point stressed here is that given the necessity of sanctification and the intrinsic role that Scripture plays in sanctification, then an emphasis on biblical exegesis is sure to follow.

reasoned that the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God is intrinsically essential to the believer's sanctification.² Another instrument for the sanctification of the believer is union with Christ (2 Cor 5:17). However, those examples are intangibles. That in no way decreases their infinite value or necessity in achieving sanctification. It merely places them in another realm for the believer. The Word of God, on the other hand, is a tangible. That is, through the possession of Holy Scripture, believers are enabled to hear, study, memorize, read, and meditate upon the Word of God. Ironside states the relation of the Spirit and Word for sanctification by saying, "The Spirit works within us. The Word, which is without us, is nevertheless the medium used to do the work within."³ In that way, then, the Word of God is the primary instrument whereby God sanctifies His people.⁴

If pastors understand the gravity of ignoring sanctification and understand the means given by God for the sanctification of His children, then the pastor/teacher will inevitably become more Bible-centered in his life, pastoral ministry, and especially in his pulpit ministry. Indeed, the purpose in Bible saturation is the production of sanctification.

² Arnold, *Pauline Doctrine*, 203. Arnold connects the Spirit with the Word in sanctification. Taking 1 Thess 2:13 where Paul says the word "also performs its work in you who believe," Arnold writes, "The primary agent of sanctification is the Holy Spirit, but the means He employs to accomplish progressive holiness is the Word of God." See also Berkhof, *Systematic*, 535. "The truth in itself certainly has no adequate efficiency to sanctify the believer, yet it is naturally adapted to be the means of sanctification as employed by the Holy Spirit."

³ H.A. Ironside, *Holiness: The False and the True* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, n.d.), 67.

⁴ In support of the assertion that the Bible is the primary means God uses for the sanctification of believers are texts like John 15:3, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you," Psalm 119:11, "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You," and 1 Tim 4:5, "for it (creation) is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer." See also Shedd, *Dogmatic*, 555. Shedd categorizes the means for sanctification as internal and external, faith and the Scriptures.

As Paul writes in 2 Tim 3:16-17, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” Therefore, if the Word is given for the express purpose of “training in righteousness,” it is the Word that must be explained and presented to the fellowship of believers (Neh 8:8). God Himself promises to fulfill the purpose of the Word when it is sent forth. Isa 55:11 says, “So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.”

Once a pastor understands that it is the Word that accomplishes sanctification, sermons produced by this pastor will tend to be more textually driven and exegetically sound. This type of sermon preparation and delivery is called expository preaching.⁵ Bill Bennett defines expository preaching as “the exposition of a passage (or passages) of Scripture, either short or long, based on a sound exegesis of the text. The passage is viewed within its contextual setting, organized around a dominant theme, illustrated for clarity, and applied compellingly to the hearers.”⁶ The issue with much contemporary preaching is that it is no more than the pastor’s own counsel to his listeners with scriptural passages attached here and there in order to in some way validate what he is

⁵ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 25. Dever lists expositional preaching as the first mark of a healthy church. He explains, “It is not only the first mark; it is far and away the most important of them all, because if you get this one right, all of the others should follow. This is the crucial mark.”

⁶ Bill Bennett, *Thirty Minutes to Raise the Dead* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 56–57. Bennett also distinguishes expository sermons from textual or topical sermons. “A textual sermon is based on a verse or two from the Bible, with the general theme of the sermon coming from the text. More often than not, the text is but a springboard into whatever the preacher wants to say . . . A topical sermon is built around a subject which may be taken from the Bible or outside of the Bible. The preacher may use the Scriptures to support his arguments, but he generally expresses his own views or the views of others.”

saying. The hermeneutical error committed in this type of topical sermon is that often a different meaning is attached to a verse of Scripture other than the biblical writer's; that is, the verse is utilized as a proof-text instead of due regard being given to context. The result of this type of sermon is that the audience hears from the pastor, not the Bible.

Understanding that the Word will produce sanctification is essential for the pulpit ministry of the church. Therefore, if sanctification is necessary, it is the Word and the Word alone that should be presented to the congregation. As Robert Dabney has said, "Where there Word is not, there is no holiness."⁷ The logic is simple; if God uses the Word to sanctify His people, then the more the Word is taught, the more productive believers will be in their pursuit of holiness.⁸ This is in line with Paul's thought when he connected the sanctification of the Church with the Word in Eph 5:26 by saying, "so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word."

Doctrinally-focused Ministry

Alongside this implication of becoming more biblically focused in ministry would be the accompanying result of becoming more theologically minded in ministry. Gordon Clark writes, "Theology is the road to holiness."⁹ Essentially this means that not only is correct exegesis essential for sanctification, but having a framework whereby to construct

⁷ Robert Lewis Dabney, *Syllabus and Notes of The Course of Systematic and Polemic Theology* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1890), 666; quoted in Richard Ngun, "A Survey of the Role of the Law in Sanctification Among Selected Calvinists," *STJ* 8, no. 1 and 2 (May-Nov 2000): 66.

⁸ Arnold, *Pauline Doctrine*, 204. Arnold writes, "When the spoken word is heard and applied to life, experimental sanctification results. The use of the Word by the Christian brings conviction of sin and leads the saint to the cross for cleansing. There is a sanctifying power in the Word of God when it is in a believing heart. Growth in holiness depends upon a constant assimilation of the Word."

⁹ Clark, *Sanctification*, 6.

a holistic picture of biblical doctrines is necessary as well. A pastor must not only be able to explain a given text, but he must also be able to explain how that text fits into the whole of the biblical message. In this way, his listeners become enabled to see the harmony of Scriptures. Core doctrines are understood as interwoven and not distinct, separate ideas. The relation of justification with sanctification is a primary example. Jonathan Rainbow, in writing about Calvin, observed how the emphasis on theology, specifically justification and sanctification, was a pastoral matter for Calvin.¹⁰ He writes, “Like Luther, Calvin often bemoaned what he perceived to be the sad moral state of the reformed churches. So it was essential for him that Christian obedience rest on solid theological ground. It is on this pastoral background that his effort to integrate justification and sanctification theologically should be understood.”¹¹ Thus, when

¹⁰ Kenneth Leroy Friesen, “A Study of the Doctrine of Holiness in the Thought of A.W. Tozer,” (M. Div. thesis, Western Evangelical Seminary, 1971), 23–24. It has often been the case throughout history that an emphasis on holiness grew out of a pastoral concern. A.W. Tozer is a classic example. Friesen observes, “Tozer was concerned for the relationship between knowing the doctrine of holiness, experiencing holiness, and propagating holiness. Hearing about truth and hearing it inwardly are two different things, and evangelical churches are suspected of having many professors of Christianity who only know saving truth second hand.” Tozer contributed greatly to issuing a call for holiness in the church, but this writer believes he came short of an adequate call for the necessity of sanctification. Tozer defined sanctification as becoming as pure as one knows how to be in order to enjoy intimate communion with God (p. 56). With some revision, one would better say sanctification is necessary for any communion at all. In fact, sanctification is the communion.

¹¹ Rainbow, “Double Grace,” 100. Calvin’s solution for confronting lax morals in the church was teaching that embracing Christ means embracing justification and sanctification. The faith that appropriates justification also appropriates sanctification. They are never disjointed. Rainbow concludes with this implication of Calvin’s view, “Pastorally, this means that the believer is driven to the person of Christ for both righteousness and holiness, and that the preacher’s proclamation of free forgiveness and exhortation to obedience both rest on Christ.” (p. 104) Theologically, then, the pastor and the people become more Christ-centered, which is most profitable for sanctification.

sermons provide doctrinal cohesiveness, knowledge of God is increased, which should produce an increase of love toward God affecting an increase of holiness in life.¹²

Gospel-centered Ministry

Similar to greater focus on exegesis and theology would be greater and more frequent emphasis on the message of the gospel. Understanding the gospel of salvation as encompassing more than regeneration would give rise to incorporating the language of salvation in matters of discipleship, maturity, and perseverance instead of only in reference to the new birth. Therefore, the gospel message would be understood as referring to more than conversion and the gospel message would be applied to all stages of Christianity.

The long-term health of the church will suffer if the congregation is continually exposed to an exclusive message of salvation as contained in the new birth. As William Wilberforce lamented in the 1787,

And it is not unusual for the very ministers who preach the gospel's truths with faithfulness, ability, and success, to be themselves guilty of talking only about the initial steps to salvation. Over and over, their congregations hear this message, but they never learn how to discover the secret motion of inner corruption; they get no advice on the practical aspects of Christian warfare; they are not taught how to best strive against each selfish tendency of their hearts, and they receive no instruction for cultivating each grace of the Christian character.¹³

The author would only add to Wilberforce's observation that those missing elements in the pastors' sermons are actually vital to convey salvation's full, biblical portrait.

¹² Stein, "Renewal," 10. Stein observes in Philipp Jakob Spener's methodology how theology played a role in Spener's teaching on renewal, that is, his term for sanctification. For example, Spener utilized theology to make the connection between suffering and renewal. Stein concludes, "... in our congregations people need to hear doctrinal preaching alongside inspirational preaching."

¹³ William Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, abridged and updated by Ellyn Sanna (Uhrichsville: Barbour Books, 1999), 282.

Unlike the previous points of a Bible-centered and a doctrinally-focused ministry where the necessity of sanctification does not necessarily improve those emphases, the gospel does matter more in this understanding of sanctification. If not rightly preached in its holistic manner, the listeners are susceptible to far more than Christian immaturity. A false view of salvation leads to a false profession, which results in a false assurance. This can be eternally devastating.

It is of utmost importance then in this view of sanctification that the pulpit ministry is built around the full, biblical presentation of the gospel. The resulting positives are that the gospel is rightly preached and continually cultivated in the life of the congregation. Congregants would hear more about salvation than the call to be born again, and they would hear these things more often.

Urgency to Deliver the Message

A closely related implication to a gospel-centered ministry would be the weight upon the pastor to teach his congregants the necessity of sanctification for their eternal inheritance.¹⁴ An urgency to convey this message surfaces alongside this understanding of sanctification. With so many laity understanding sanctification as an optional category related to discipleship, the pastor must take on this task with a sense of urgency and direct appeal to Scripture. To reorder the way people conceive of sanctification is no easy task. Packer writes, “Pastorally, the first battle is to convince Christians that holiness is necessary.”¹⁵ This “battle” can only be won over time by means of constant appeal to

¹⁴ This chapter is simply making an appeal for pastors to preach the full biblical portrait of sanctification. For an example of how to implement sanctification in the preaching task see Richard H. Warneck, “Notes on Preaching Sanctification.” *Concordia Journal* 25 (Ja 1999): 56–64.

¹⁵ Packer, *Spirit*, 122.

scriptural authority. As stated earlier, it is the Word that will then bear the fruits of repentance and holiness.

The initial step in this “battle” is presenting the fellowship with a full presentation of biblical salvation. The pastor must help his listeners understand that salvation entails much more than a public profession of faith in Christ. Their salvation only begins with a verbal confession. The fullness of their salvation includes their life after confession and their eternal joy at the end of this life. Seen in this light, then, hearers should be exhorted to salvation in professing faith, daily pursuing holiness of life, and persevering to the end in faith.

In 1880, Methodist minister S. P. Jacobs sounded the alarm for his fellow ministers to recover the necessity of sanctification in their preaching with a work entitled *How to Preach Sanctification*.¹⁶ His thesis was that “sanctification is to be preached to saints and sinners.”¹⁷ He was distraught over the lack of holiness he observed among his Methodist contemporaries. So in his attempt to awaken his generation to the necessity of sanctification for eternal life, he turned to Scripture and to the denomination’s own historical documents. Arguing from Lev 11:44, Jacobs asserts, “The only salvation to preach to sinners was sanctification, a complete salvation.”¹⁸ One example of his historical evidence was the words he discovered recorded from the General Conference of 1832. From that document and others, it was easy for him to prove his point that “we find these leaders in Methodism urging the church to make sanctification as prominent as

¹⁶ S. P. Jacobs, *How to Preach Sanctification* (St. Joseph: Southwestern Holiness Association, 1880).

¹⁷ Jacobs, *Preach*, 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

justification.”¹⁹ This is no longer an isolated problem in the Methodist church, but evangelicalism, as a whole, seems to have relegated sanctification to such a secondary status that it is not even viewed as important, much less essential.

Given the biblical teaching that one’s view of sanctification is intrinsically connected with one’s salvation, the only proper approach for the pastor to assume is one of urgency. Richard Baxter spoke of the urgency that should accompany the pastor’s sermon. He said,

It is no small matter to stand up in the face of a congregation, and to deliver a message of salvation or damnation, as from the living God, in the name of the Redeemer. It is no easy matter to speak so plainly, that the most ignorant may understand us; and so seriously that the dearest hearts may feel us; and so convincingly, that the contradicting cavilers may be silenced...To speak slightly and coldly of heavenly things is nearly as bad as to say nothing of them at all.²⁰

If the eternal salvation of his listeners hinges in part upon their embrace or rejection of personal sanctification, then surely the pastor will plead earnestly with his people and do away with lighthearted, self-help speeches. In one of his recent works, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals*, John Piper commits an entire chapter to this point, “Brothers, Save the Saints.”²¹ While Piper is addressing perseverance in this chapter, its relation to sanctification in terms of eternal life produces the same motivation for the pastor to be passionately clear in his preaching on salvation. Looking at texts like 1 Tim 4:16, Piper states, “What is at stake on Sunday morning is not merely the upbuilding of the church

¹⁹ Ibid., 10.

²⁰ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1974, Reprinted, 2005), 117.

²¹ See Chapter 3, footnote #37 for bibliographical info.

but its eternal salvation.”²² Not only must the pastor be clear, however, he must also be comprehensive about salvation in order to get this message across. Piper presses,

So I say again, the way to save yourself and your hearers (1 Tim. 4:16) is not to arrest the growth of your people by a meatless diet of “salvation messages.” (messages that speak of full salvation in terms of conversion) This had sent the “Hebrews” straight backward toward destruction (Heb. 5:11-14). The way to save the saints is to feed them all the Scriptures, for it is the Scriptures “which are able to make you wise *for salvation*” (2 Tim. 3:15).²³

The whole counsel of Scripture must be presented in order that the church may receive the whole picture of salvation and the whole picture of sanctification.

Willingness to Confront and Correct

With eternity at stake, there is one more implication for preaching that necessitates a hearing, namely that the pastor must be able and willing to correct error whether it comes in the form of false teaching or in the form of sinful lifestyles among his members. This is not just a suggestion, but rather it is a biblical mandate for the office of elder. Paul instructs Titus that the kind of men he selects as elders for the church at Crete must be men who are “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). The pastor must be astute in his knowledge of the Bible in order to properly care for and to protect his flock. He must be able to adequately demonstrate the fallacies of unbalanced or unbiblical soteriologies and bold and courageous enough to confront sinning members for the salvation of their souls (James 5:19-20).

²² Piper, *Brothers*, 106. See also Schreiner and Caneday, *Race*, 51. Schreiner and Caneday comment on 1 Tim 4:16, “Persevering in godly behavior and sound teaching are necessary to obtain salvation, both for Timothy and those to whom he ministers.”

²³ *Ibid.*, 110.

Biblically confronting sinful behavior within the membership is much more beneficial in the long run than for the preacher to resort to guilt-ridden manipulation in order to correct his congregants. The method of laying guilt upon the conscience may have positive results, but they are sure to be temporary. When the guilt is gone, so is the commitment. Jim Elliff points out that the forerunners of our faith did not resort to guilt but rather to soteriology when confronting unrepentant sin. When recounting the sermons of Whitefield and Tennet, Elliff writes, “To them revival preaching was not so much asking how Christians can be victorious in their lives, as it was asking, ‘How can you live like this and call yourself a Christian?’”²⁴ Confronting sin on the basis of eternity is much more effective as is attested by the revivals of their day.

Jonathan Rainbow points out, “It [the relation of justification with sanctification] becomes, in the end, a church question, and a question for the preacher, who must both proclaim remission of sins through Jesus Christ and exhort the people of God to holy living.”²⁵ The doctrine of sanctification, as well as any doctrine of Scripture, then, is not merely a mind exercise, but makes a difference in the lives of all who properly understand and embrace it. Ideas have consequences; doctrine matters.

Embracing a theology that incorporates sanctification into the process of salvation and includes with it the aspect of necessity will motivate the pastor to be biblically focused in his sermons, urgent in his message, and willing to confront and correct error. Not only the pastorate, however, would be affected, noticeable changes would soon develop in the areas of evangelism and missions.

²⁴ Elliff, “Revival,” 45.

²⁵ Rainbow, “Double Grace,” 99.

Implications for the Tasks of Evangelism and Missions

For the purpose of this work, evangelism and missions are considered together as having the same purpose, that is, to spread the message of the gospel of Christ so that unbelievers may become believers. What is considered here, then, is what should be included in the basic message of the gospel and what should be involved in the task of evangelizing. Four implications for evangelism and missions will be considered, three matters of presentation and one item of procedure.

Presentation

The presentation must include sanctification's necessity.

In light of holistic eternal salvation, the presentation of the gospel message should include the necessity of holy living after conversion. One could say this is the "Lordship salvation" issue in the post-conversion realm. A candidate or prospect for the gospel message is entitled and should know all that salvation entails and the ramifications of following Christ. This, by the way, was how Jesus evangelized.

Luke's account of the gospel records a challenge Christ presented one day to a crowd that was following him around. He turned to them and said, "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?" (Luke 14:28) In that same conversation, Jesus spoke of a king properly preparing for battle, carrying a cross, selling possessions, and hating all other relations as well as one's own life. Jesus said these things were necessary if they wanted to be his disciple. In other words, they must be knowledgeable of the cost and willing to pay it in order to follow Christ. As Ryle plainly asserts, "A cheap Christianity,

without a cross, will prove in the end a useless Christianity, without a crown.”²⁶

Commenting on Jesus’ call to take up the cross, MacArthur writes, “Jesus is not asking people to add him to the milieu of their lives. He wants disciples willing to forsake *everything*.”²⁷ That message of counting the cost before “deciding” to follow Christ, while even though it was the example Christ gave, appears to be entirely lost in today’s evangelism strategies.

The point here is that holy living should be discussed with an individual as a component of his decision to become a Christian. The very word “Christian” means follower of Christ. So how does the “following” part get excluded from evangelism? In some gospel presentations, becoming a Christian means only that one’s sins are forgiven, his life will be better than before, and he gets to go to heaven. The salvation message itself is often condensed to merely placing trust in Jesus and turning from sin. Aside from the fact that conversion is not complete salvation, these things are true of being a Christian and true of being saved, but they are not fully true. If this is the only message one receives about Christianity and salvation, the individual has received only half of the message. Who wouldn’t want to be a Christian if the results were only “personal benefits” and the only requirements to receive them were an agreement with biblical facts about Jesus, a baptism, and a name added to a church role? Those requirements sound vastly different from Jesus’ statement in Matt 16:24, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.” This chapter is simply suggesting that if the gospel presentation is going to be biblically balanced, the necessity

²⁶ Ryle, *Holiness*, 86.

²⁷ MacArthur, *Gospel*, 226.

of holy living should be afforded due emphasis alongside the due stress upon faith and repentance.²⁸

The presentation must include the scriptural two-pronged assurance.

The second item of presentation resulting from this view of sanctification would be the proper balance of where a believer finds assurance. The usual offer of assurance comes either from the doctrine of eternal security or from a brief lesson on justification. After receiving the promises of assurance, the confessor is encouraged to grow as a believer. Ultimately then, his growth, discipleship, and/or maturity have nothing to do with eternity and could be conceived as optional. Why endure the struggle with holy living if heaven is already guaranteed? If salvation and assurance are completely tied to conversion, this is the conclusion many would reach and, sadly, many have. The Bible has a cure for this lax regard for holiness by placing a believer's assurance both in and beyond conversion. Consider Rom 15:4 where Paul writes, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance (ongoing sanctification) and the encouragement of the Scriptures (promises attached to regeneration) we might have hope (assurance)."

While eternal security for the true believer is affirmed and justification upheld as a fundamental anchor of assurance for believers, the Bible presents another foundation of

²⁸ Ryle, *Holiness*, 82. Ryle mourns, "I grant freely that it costs little to be a mere outward Christian. A man has only got to attend a place of worship twice on Sunday, and to be tolerably moral during the week, and he has gone as far as thousands around him ever go in religion. All this is cheap and easy work: it entails no self-denial or self-sacrifice. If this is saving Christianity, and will take us to heaven when we die, we must alter the description of the way of life, and write, 'Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to heaven!'"

assurance that, if left neglected, will be detrimental to the believer's growth and possibly his eternal destiny. The Bible exhorts believers to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12) and to "be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you" (2 Pet 1:10). The context of those verses make clear that the means of working out salvation is obedience and the means of making certain one's calling is by putting away sin. It is in that manner of living, then, that the believer obtains full assurance of the new birth. 1 John 2:3 states, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commands."

So what is the purpose of this two-pronged assurance presented in the Scripture? A believer needs the comfort of knowing that justification is forever because it is based on Christ's righteousness, not one's performance. However, in addition to that assurance, a believer needs the comfort of knowing his conversion was genuine. This comes through a life of obedience to God and warfare against the flesh. In other words, sanctification is the guarantee of regeneration, and regeneration is the guarantee of glorification. One cannot be assured of glorification, if one is not assured of regeneration, and one cannot be assured of regeneration, if one's life is absent of sanctification. This is the Bible's cure for the false professor who is merely after "fire insurance" or who merely desires the benefits of Christ as an addition to one's self-absorbed lifestyle. Therefore, prospects must be challenged to live godly in order that they may be assured of their conversion; and being assured of their conversion, they can rest assured of their eternal life.

The presentation must carefully employ “salvation” language.

There is no need to expound upon this implication. By this point of the present discussion, it is hopefully clear that salvation is a process and not contained in a one-time decision. Therefore, evangelism plans and strategies should carefully describe salvation in terms of its parts and not as composed of only conversion. In a recent evangelism handbook produced by the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, *The Net*, salvation is spoken of in terms of the new birth and is referred to as the “salvation experience.”²⁹ The error committed in this type of presentation is that according to Scriptures, salvation is not “experienced” completely in conversion, and the prospect or convert needs to know this. This “experience” would be better identified as the “new birth experience,” and the convert would be better served in knowing that his salvation is ongoing, calling for obedience and ending in life eternal.

Procedure

A final implication for evangelism and missions concerns procedure. With sanctification being so essential for the believer, the tasks of evangelism and missions are not complete until proper follow-up of converts has been established. In this respect, discipleship is really post-evangelism evangelism. Teaching a convert the necessity of growth and how to utilize the means of growth becomes just as important for the evangelist and missionary as presenting a “plan of salvation.” In many instances, a convert may receive no further instruction than that he should now be baptized, join a church, and read the Bible. This is good, sound advice, but the newborn in Christ needs

²⁹ *The Net: Evangelism for the 21st Century*, Mentor Handbook (Alpharetta: NAMB, 2000), 34

further instruction and needs to know the vital importance of growing and remaining steadfast in the faith.

Often the fault of mass evangelism efforts is that those who make new professions of faith in Christ are basically left on their own to take the initiative for growth and church involvement. It should be noted that even in the “mass evangelistic” campaigns of the Bible, (cf. Acts 2), converts were immediately added to the church. Believers were always addressed as being members of a local church. Mentorship, then, is a good, needed companion for evangelism and missions. That is essentially what one finds in the NT epistles.

The writers of the epistles are essentially providing follow-up in a mentorship style relationship. They encourage believers in the church and instruct them as to how they must behave and think as believers in Christ. To fail in follow-up is to fail in evangelism and missions, for inevitably false teaching and ungodly living soon arise if believers are left to their own. In today’s evangelical world, this failure of follow-up would be viewed as sorrowful, but having no eternal effect. For the NT writers, this would be a case of spiritual shipwrecking in regard to the faith (1 Tim 1:19).

Critique of Sources

In order to substantiate the loss of these ideas in present-day evangelism, several evangelistic tracts were consulted. Research was conducted by simply walking into a local Christian bookstore to see what evangelistic tracts were available and how those tracts addressed the issues of sanctification and assurance with respect to salvation. The question asked was, if a believer wanted to share the gospel with a friend and obtained a gospel tract from his local bookstore, what presentation of the gospel would the

companion receive? Therefore, the following tracts were obtained when the researcher entered a local Christian bookstore.³⁰

The first tract is entitled *How to Have a Full and Meaningful Life*.³¹ The tract presents salvation in five points.³² First, “God loves you. He offers you a full and meaningful life.” Thankfully, the tract includes eternal life as part of the abundant life. Second, “This life is made possible by Christ’s death and resurrection.” Third, “You enter this life through a spiritual birth.” Fourth, “Failure to turn yourself over to Jesus Christ is sin.” Fifth, “This life becomes yours when you turn from sin and accept Christ as your Lord and Savior.”

The plan is followed by a section on assurance and then a plan for growth as a believer. The assurance offered is based on Christ’s promise, the individual’s commitment, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. The plan for growth contains no hint of necessity.

Taking this observation into consideration, a convert from this tract would not know the necessity of holiness for assurance or salvation. The plan for growth becomes mere suggestions. The tract speaks of conversion as “turning your life over to Christ,” but nowhere does it indicate that part of “turning one’s life over to Christ” is persistently and steadfastly living for Him.

³⁰ It is readily admitted that tracts are simplistic presentations of the gospel. However, essential points must be made in order for a proper understanding of salvation to be conveyed.

³¹ *How to Have a Full and Meaningful Life*, 9th Printing (Nashville: Lifeway, 2005).

³² These tracts are only being critiqued in terms of their portrayal of sanctification and assurance, not other areas of strength or weakness.

The second tract for consideration is *HeartTalk*.³³ This tract has a four-point presentation of the gospel. First, “God has great plans for you. Hope in Him.” Second, “God loves you. Believe in Him.” Third, “God will forgive your wrongdoings and clean your heart. Turn to Him.” Fourth, “God will give you a new heart. Call on Him as Lord.” Assurance of heaven is then based on 1 John 5:13, and follow-up is to share with others, join a church, pray, and read the Bible. As with the previous tract, salvation is presented as entirely contained in the new birth, which renders sanctification as optional and assurance as less than the full biblical portrayal.

The final tract for survey is called *Welcome to God’s Family*.³⁴ This tract is specifically designed for follow-up with those who have professed faith. More than the other two, then, this tract should be more specific in regard to sanctification and assurance. It is composed of five points. First, “You entered God’s family by a spiritual birth.” Under this point, eternal life is assured because “birth is a one-time experience,” the individual’s commitment, God’s record, and God’s promise. Second, “God’s Word is essential for spiritual growth” Third, “Prayer is essential to spiritual growth” Fourth, “The church is essential to spiritual growth” Fifth, “Communicating your faith to others” Again, growth is presented in terms that are optional, and assurance of eternal life is completely wrapped up in a profession of faith.

These tracts, and others like them, are missing several inherently crucial aspects of presenting salvation to an unbeliever.³⁵ First, salvation should be presented as a

³³ *HeartTalk* (Alpharetta: NAMB, 2001).

³⁴ *Welcome to God’s Family*, 11th Printing (Nashville: Lifeway, 2003).

³⁵ The methodology used in this litmus test was certainly not extensive. As stated in the discussion, the question was could a full presentation of salvation be found during

process that is initiated in the new birth, not completed. Second, sanctification should be presented as an aspect of salvation, which would make it necessary. At this point in the tract, the suggestions for growth could be given. Third, the reader should be instructed that assurance of genuine faith comes as a result of genuinely living for the Lord. Fourth, and finally, the fact that eternal life or eternal condemnation hangs in the balance should receive greater emphasis in any evangelistic presentation. The faulty thinking in these and other common contemporary evangelistic tools is too hard a distinction between “salvation” and “discipleship.” “Salvation” includes “discipleship.” If being a disciple means following Jesus, then in essence to disciple is to evangelize.

Therefore, this presentation is advocating a new terminology for evangelism and missions that would speak of salvation in its full scope, sanctification as a vital component, and assurance as also gained through holiness. There are good sources available with these emphases. Though it is not a tract, *Tell the Truth* by Will Metzger is an excellent source for evangelism that demonstrates how to present the full portrait of salvation and assurance in evangelistic encounters.³⁶

a casual visit to a local Christian bookstore. Sadly, the finding was not positive. Maybe, and hopefully, there are evangelistic tracts available that do present salvation in its complete picture and speak of holiness in terms of necessity. There certainly appears to be a need for the production of new tracts that include sanctification in the discussion of salvation. For an example of a book-length treatment that includes holiness in salvation and helpful applications, see the following footnote.

³⁶ Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002). An example of a book treatment that has the same errors as pointed out in the tracts is Darrell W. Robinson, *People Sharing Jesus* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995).

Implications for the Corporate Church and the Individual Saint

*Corporate Church*³⁷

If the church could recover a biblical portrait of salvation, not only in theory but in practice as well, internal and external changes would soon appear. Internally, the church would be better equipped to distinguish genuine and false belief. Externally, the church would present a better witness to the world.

The church would be able to distinguish believers and unbelievers.

With the presence of sanctification being the determining factor distinguishing believers from unbelievers, time would reveal whether one's faith is true or false. Attendees would understand what is expected of one who professes faith and unites with the church, and members would know what is expected of each other as fellow congregants. Over time, then, as this doctrine is taught, conversions would be considered more carefully and thoughtfully, which would produce a fewer number of unregenerate church members. This might mean slower growth for the church, but the church must decide if it wants quicker, higher growth comprised of a greater mixture of false professors among true believers or does the church desire a healthier fellowship comprised mostly of believers.³⁸

³⁷ Henry H. Knight III, "Worship and Sanctification," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32 (Fall 1997): 5–14. Knight provides a thoughtful link between corporate worship and personal sanctification. He argues that worship composed of praise and thanksgiving sanctifies because it is centered on God and raises the affections toward God.

³⁸ This is not to be confused with attendance. Attendance should be comprised of a mixture of unbelievers and believers, but membership should be, as far as the church can control, composed of believers.

“Rededication” teaching would be replaced with “regeneration” teaching.

Rededication theology becomes more prevalent in congregations where sanctification is not taught as necessary for salvation or at the least vital for growth. When churches discover that a good number of their membership live in ungodliness, the leadership will often appeal to guilt-ridden sermons or emotion-tugging stories to prompt members to “rededicate” their faith. As stated previously in this chapter, this was not the historical or biblical solution to moral laxness within the church. The message needs to be “repentance” of sin not “rededication” of faith.

The Bible clearly presents ungodly lifestyles as more than lapses in faith. The lack of holiness indicates a lack of belief in Christ. If a church understood the necessity of sanctification for eternal salvation, then “lost” members would not be manipulated into recommitting to their original decision. Rather, all who display ungodliness would be shown from Scripture that they either need to be born again or demonstrate repentance of indwelling sin, whether members or not, and that refusal to do so carries enormous and devastating eternal consequences.

The church would maintain a purer witness to the world.

The loss of presenting sanctification as necessary for salvation results in an unregenerate membership that then results in a tainted witness to the world. One only has to appeal to the statistics of divorce within the church and the standard accusation of hypocrisy from without the church to substantiate that claim. When the membership of the church behaves as those outside of the church, there is no such thing as a true, biblical church. Sanctification is at the heart of what makes the church, the church. If the church

members are not “set apart” for service unto God and demonstrating visibly “holy” lives, the church is nonexistent, at least in that particular local expression.

The biblical answer for maintaining a godly witness of a pure church to the world is the practice of church discipline. What once was considered a mark of the true church is strangely absent from most evangelical churches today.³⁹ The result is that in order not to offend or lose a few members, the church loses its vital witness for the gospel in the community. The church needs to hear afresh J. L. Dagg’s warning issued in 1858, “It has been remarked, that when discipline leaves a church, Christ goes with it.”⁴⁰ A recovery of proper stress on sanctification would soon yield a recovery of proper, biblical church discipline. This, in the end, would yield a healthier church with a more credible witness of the true gospel that actually changes lives, not just destinies.⁴¹

Individual Saint

The individual would have a clearer perception of his relation to God.

One of the most, if not the most, tragic consequences of neglecting a biblically sound doctrine of sanctification is that individuals are deceived into thinking that their

³⁹ Baxter, *Pastor*, 104. Writing in 1656, Baxter called for pastors to utilize all means in order to restore an offender. He knew the correct purpose, method, and necessity for public discipline. He advised pastors, “. . . after the aforesaid private reproofs, in more public reproof, combined with exhortation to repentance, in prayer for the offender, in restoring the penitent, and in excluding and avoiding the impenitent.”

⁴⁰ J. L. Dagg, *A Treatise on Church Order* (New York: Arno, 1980): 274. Dagg devoted an entire chapter to the subject of discipline, and he believed discipline began with the act of admission into the church.

⁴¹ Dever, *Marks*, 174–176. Dever lists five reasons to recover the practice of church discipline. “(1) For the Good of the Person Disciplined (2) For the Good of the Other Christians, as They See the Danger of Sin (3) For the Health of the Church as a Whole (4) For the Corporate Witness of the Church (5) For the Glory of God, as We Reflect His Holiness.”

mere profession of faith has secured eternal life for them. It is terrible enough to think that one's post-conversion lifestyle has no bearing on his eternity; it is even more terrible when people hold to that type of theology because they have been taught to do so.

However, if the church presented sanctification as an integral part of salvation and necessary for eternal life, fewer people would be resting their eternal destinies on a false hope. Yet this is exactly the case when church members continue in rebellion against God's will with no thought for their afterlife. If church attendees were made aware that the Bible describes habitual sinners as unbelievers, at least they would be better equipped to perceive their standing before God and not enter eternity with false assurance.

The individual would naturally pursue holiness subsequent to conversion.

One of the obstacles facing the evangelical church is the resistance of its members to move beyond the "new birth" experience. Again, this is due in part to a weakened view of sanctification and a reductionistic soteriology. Bonhoeffer describes the effects of such teaching when he writes,

The Christian life comes to mean nothing more than living in the world and as the world, in being no different from the world, in fact, in being prohibited from being different from the world for the sake of grace. The upshot of it all is that my only duty as a Christian is to leave the world for an hour or so on a Sunday morning and go to church to be assured that my sins are all forgiven.⁴²

Why go further in Christianity if one does not have to? The usual reply is because that is what you are supposed to do or should do, and those replies are simply not sufficient.

On the other hand, if prospects knew upfront that embracing Christ includes embracing the cross, then the impetus for holy living would already be instilled in the

⁴² Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 51.

heart of one who becomes a new convert. The pastor would not have to resort to brow-beating in order to keep his flock maintaining an appearance of holiness, but rather by referring to Scripture could correct error and provide tools for growth in the faith. An example of how to instruct congregants as a pastor in this matter is “Direction VIII” in Walter Marshall’s *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*. He writes, “Be sure to seek for holiness of heart and life only in its due order, where God hath placed it, after union with Christ, Justification, and the gift of the Holy Ghost; and, in that order, seek it earnestly by faith, as a very necessary part of your salvation.”⁴³ If the new convert understands his pursuit of holiness post-conversion is as essential as was his faith and repentance in conversion, the motivation for sanctification would no longer have to be pressed in from without. The individual’s desire for godliness would come internally and naturally being understood to be a component of one’s salvation subsequent to conversion.

This point is really the background of all the implications in this chapter. If personal, progressive sanctification is the middle link in salvation, those things once considered as optional become vital. Discipleship, for example, would cease to be only for those who want to return to church on Sunday evenings. It would be viewed as essential to the Christian life. Whether pursued at Sunday evening study courses or in private learning, it would be present in some form in the believer because it is essential for more than growth and knowledge; it is essential for assurance of heaven.

⁴³ Marshall, *Mystery*, 96.

The individual would be prone toward due allegiance to the Word of God.

The biblical illiteracy among average evangelicals is astounding.⁴⁴ It is not uncommon for the average believer to only come in contact with the Word of God on Sunday morning during the worship service, and, sadly, sometimes not even then does such an encounter occur. With the Bible as the believer's guard against sin (Ps 119:11), the illumination for life (Ps 119:105), and the offensive weapon against Satan (Eph 6:17), why is it that most adult believers are only able to quote one verse of the entire Bible, i.e. John 3:16?

Since most Christians have not been taught the necessity of internalizing the Word of God, biblical illiteracy has surfaced. If sanctification is necessary and the Bible is the primary means for sanctification, then personal study of the Scriptures becomes an essential part of the believer's life. On the other hand, if growth is optional, why bother? One can be satisfied with only hearing one sermon each week if sanctification is a choice. However, if congregants are taught the necessity of holiness and that their primary source for pursuing holiness is knowledge of, obedience to, and love for the Scriptures, biblical illiteracy becomes less and less of an issue. Lewis and Demarest confirm this logic from their observation of 2 Peter 1. They write, "God's 'divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him' (2 Peter 1:3). The context specifies that the knowledge in view comes from the prophetic Word (vv. 12-21).

⁴⁴ Michael J. Vlach, "Crisis in America's Churches: Bible Knowledge at All-Time Low," < <http://www.theologicalstudies.citymax.com/page/page/1573625.htm> > (accessed October 30, 2007). Vlach's article compiles quotes from scholars and statistics from Barna Research to substantiate his thesis that biblical knowledge is lacking in American churches. One of the more startling findings quoted in the article is that the saying "God helps those who help themselves" is the most widely known Bible verse, however, that phrase is not actually in the Bible.

Wisdom for maturing in Christlikeness is found in the Spirit-inspired and Spirit-illuminated Word of God.”⁴⁵

An unhealthy understanding of sanctification allows for neglect of any or all of the means God has provided for a believer’s progress in holiness. This is why so many church members consider personal or corporate disciplines as simply optional. They are not aware that these activities are granted by God to be used by Him for their advancement in the faith, nor are they aware that such progress is a necessary component of their salvation. Don Whitney writes, “God uses means of grace to sanctify us, chief of which are the personal and corporate spiritual disciplines.”⁴⁶ Neglect of these disciplines is directly connected to an unbalanced soteriology that relegates sanctification as a choice.

Simply put, internalizing the Word is essential for sanctification, and sanctification is essential for salvation. In that line of reasoning Bible reading, then, falls right into place and practice. Consider the following two quotes. Arnold writes, “It may be seen, then, that there is a direct relation between devout reading and application of the Word, and growth in holiness.”⁴⁷ Emery Bancroft provides wise counsel for the

⁴⁵ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 207.

⁴⁶ Whitney, “What Role Does Sanctification,” 1. See also Donald B. Rogers, “Can Education Aid in Sanctification?” *Journal of Theology* 99 (1995): 72–89. Rogers argues that holiness is “a legitimate and essential goal of Christian education.” His thesis is that “being literate in the wealth of the languages of faith, be they hymn or prayer or scripture or creed or any of the many others, is an essential contributing condition for growth in holiness.” In addition Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative*, 233–234. These writers provide examples of private and public disciplines that should be utilized for progress in sanctification.

⁴⁷ Arnold, *Pauline Doctrine*, 205.

relationship between the individual believer's sanctification and the Word of God. He writes,

The Word of God cleanses from the presence of sin, separates us from it, and sets us apart for God. As we bring our lives into daily contact with God's Word, the sins and imperfections of our hearts and lives are disclosed; as we put them away, we become increasingly separated from sin unto God. Our sanctification is limited by our limitation in the knowledge of, and our lack of obedience to, the Word of God. For by the Word sin is made known, conscience is awakened, the character and example of Christ are revealed, and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit is placed at the believer's disposal. There is no power like that of the Word of God for detaching a man from the world, the flesh, and the devil. The Book will separate you from sin, or sin will separate you from the Book.⁴⁸

Borrowing terminology from the above quote, if believers knew that sanctification is necessary and their personal sanctification is limited according to their personal limitation of Scripture, the laity would become a Bible-centered people alongside their pastor.

The individual would truly experience the abundant life.

In 2 Cor 6:10 Paul describes he and his fellow workers as "sorrowful yet always rejoicing." Everyone is familiar with Paul's admonition in Phil 4:4 to "rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" Where does this "joy in the Lord" come from which circumstances are not able to deter? This writer submits that the root of a joyful Christian life is found in a godly Christian experience.⁴⁹ Holiness yields happiness.

⁴⁸ Emery H. Bancroft, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2nd Revised Edition, 1976), 268.

⁴⁹ John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters: Multnomah, 1986, 1996), 18. Piper's thesis is that God commands us to find joy in Him. He terms this Christian Hedonism. He writes, "But now it started to dawn that this persistent and undeniable yearning for happiness was not to be suppressed but was to be glutted — on God!" See also Bridges,

Returning to the passage in Corinthians, before Paul describes his company as always rejoicing, he describes them as pursuing holiness. 2 Cor 6:6-7 says of Paul and his entourage that they were “in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the word of truth, in the power of God.” The reason that holy living produces holy joy is because when a person pursues holiness, he is afforded the opportunity to enjoy the presence of God. Ps 16:11 says, “In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.” When an individual draws near to God and experiences God drawing near to him (Jas 4:4), the experience of fellowship with God is accompanied with great joy (Jas 4:10). The presence of holy joy is part of the abundant life that believers experience in their lifetime. Pursuing sanctification yields joy, and, in truth the pursuit of sanctification is a pursuit of joy.

The presence of sanctification reveals the hope within a believer.

Peter admonished his readers in 1 Pet 3:15 to “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you” This verse makes a clear connection between sanctification and the visible presence of hope within a believer. Believers do possess a great hope in living and persevering with the anticipation of being reunited with their Savior (Titus 2:13). Now this “blessed hope” is one aspect of the abundant life in Christ. What sustains a believer through the struggles of this life is the hope he has in what is to come.

Practice, 109. Bridges agrees, “Christian joy is essentially the enjoyment of God, the fruit of communion with Him.”

What makes this internal hope externally obvious is the presence of sanctification in the daily life of a believer. When a believer “sets apart” Christ as Lord, the individual becomes “set apart” in life; a believer is different than those without Christ around him. This difference is what prompts curiosity from unbelievers. Of course, the reverse is true as well. If there is no sanctification, there is no external curiosity. Furthermore, the absence of sanctification also indicates no real hope within (1 John 3:3). This relationship of sanctification with eternal hope is the basis for another work by John Piper, *Future Grace*.⁵⁰ Piper writes, “I will try to show from Scripture that saving faith means, in its essence, *prizing the superior worth of all that God is for us in Jesus*. And I will try to show that *this* faith is not just the key to heaven, but also the key to holiness. Which is why the Bible can teach that there is no heaven without practical holiness (Hebrews 12:14), and yet heaven is reached ‘by grace through faith’ (Ephesians 2:8).”⁵¹ So part of the abundant life is the overflow of inward hope that is channeled through sanctification. A believer’s witness to the world and level of hope is directly tied to one’s understanding of sanctification.

Having a full-fledged assurance of faith bolsters the abundant life.

It is suggested here that the more assurance a believer contains, the more abundance of life a believer experiences. Full assurance of salvation affords the believer strength to overcome the challenges, trials, and heartaches of life. Having a sure eye on eternity enables one to weather any present, temporary adversity. Since sanctification is

⁵⁰ John Piper, *The Purifying Power of Living by Faith in Future Grace* (Sisters: Multnomah, 1995).

⁵¹ Piper, *Future Grace*, 14.

what grounds a believer in their faith, it is a crucial ingredient of the abundant life in Christ.

Summary of Chapter 5

There are many positive implications for the church if the necessity of sanctification were recovered in doctrine and practice. Pastors would become greater expositors of God's Word, evangelistic efforts would better assure true converts, the church body would be composed of fewer false professors, and individual saints would pursue holiness for their happiness and salvation. These are just a few of the many implications that would result if the Church would return to a biblically balanced perspective on salvation and sanctification.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has argued for the necessity of progressive sanctification in order to inherit eternal life. Sanctification is defined as the process whereby through the enabling grace of God, the accomplished work of Christ, and the sustaining work of the Holy Spirit a believer will necessarily progress in his personal holiness towards the goal of inheriting eternal life. For the purposes of this work, there were two secondary supports and one primary support for the thesis. The secondary supports were the biblical portrait of salvation as a process and the logical reasoning resulting from such a process. An examination of biblical passages using the language of salvation revealed that the Bible uses the same word(s) to signify regeneration, sanctification, glorification, or the combination of all three. It was then concluded that biblical salvation is more of a process than a one-time event. Seen in this light, it is logical to conclude that each component is necessary in order for the goal of salvation, eternal life, to be obtained. The primary support was the exegesis of pertinent passages in the New Testament epistles. The studies conducted in chapters two and three found that the New Testament writers considered personal, progressive sanctification as an essential part of one's eternal salvation.

Given the perception that viewing sanctification as necessary for eternal salvation would be met with opposition, a defense to provide adequate replies for familiar objections was attempted. The six objections addressed were texts that deal with regeneration as salvation, 1 Cor 3 and the carnal Christian, the promotion of a works-based salvation, the result of loss of assurance, the reality of deathbed conversions, and the creation of a "how much" problem for the believer. The author sought to provide

answers for each of these objections that would at least demonstrate their inability to nullify the thesis.

In the same way, an attempt was made to provide some of the positive implications that would result in the fields of the pastorate, evangelism, and church life from embracing a strong doctrine of sanctification. Five positive implications were discussed for the pastorate: a Bible-centered ministry, a doctrinally-focused ministry, a Gospel-centered ministry, an urgency to preach, and a willingness to confront and correct. For evangelism and missions, presentation and procedure would undergo changes. The presentation of the gospel would include the necessity of sanctification and the two-pronged path of assurance given in the Scripture. The procedure of evangelizing the unsaved would consider discipleship just as important as witnessing. For the church, positive results were identified for the corporate body and the individual saint. The church would be better able to distinguish true believers from false professors, rededication teaching would receive less focus, and the church would present a purer witness to the world. The individual saint would have a better understanding of his relation to God, a natural inclination and desire to pursue holiness and obey the Word of God, and an increased opportunity to experience the abundant life.

The aim of this dissertation has been the hope that contemporary evangelical churches would adopt a more biblically balanced view of salvation and a more urgent plea for sanctification, which, working together, would produce a “sanctified” church composed of saints who have “come out from among them” to be a separate, holy people.

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Suggested Resources for Further Research
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1. Corporate Church and/or Church Discipline –

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