

Sanctification

1 Peter 1:15-16

but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." NASB

In the "*ordo salutis*" or **order of salvation**, **sanctification** is that part of **salvation** that begins at **regeneration** and continues until the resurrection, being terminated by **glorification**. It follows **conversion** (faith and repentance), **justification**, and **adoption**, all of which are birthed by regeneration and happened apparently simultaneously. Sanctification then issues forth until death. **Sanctification is that work of God conforming us into the image of Christ progressively over time.** In this process God by the Word and the Spirit, molds us more and more in our whole person so that we take on His very character in greater degree over time. We are said to "*become partakers of the divine nature*" by "*His magnificent and precious promises.*" Through this divinely ordered process, God "*multiplies His grace and peace*" to us "*through the true knowledge of God.*" God **increases His virtue** in us as we come to truly know Him.

2 Peter 1:2-4 - 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. NASB

Not only this, but as a result of God working by the Word and the Spirit in us, He calls us to "*work out our salvation,*" making every **effort** by faith, or "*applying all diligence in your faith,*" cooperating with God because God is at work in you to do His will and pleasure.

Philippians 2:12-13 - 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. NASB

2 Peter 1:5-8 - 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

And this sanctification affects the **whole person** throughout our life, until when we die, when we are ultimately **glorified** in His presence (see page 12). John Murray comments; "*When we speak of sanctification we generally think of it as that process by which the believer is gradually transformed in heart, mind, will, and conduct and conformed more and more to the will of God and to the image of Christ until at death the disembodied spirit is made perfect in holiness and at the resurrection his body likewise will be conformed to the likeness of the body of Christ's glory. It is biblical to apply the term "sanctification" to this process of transformation and conformation.*" **John Murray – Definitive Sanctification**

<http://reformedaudio.org/audio/murray/Murray%20-%20Definitive%20Sanctification.pdf>

Sanctification has at its core the idea of purity or **holiness**. The root idea of the words for holiness and holy is, to be **set apart** for God's own special use. God's people are therefore called **holy**. The biblical term [GK. haggios] "*saint*" by which Christians are called in Scripture, means "**holy ones.**" Christians are God's holy people set apart for His own special use.

I repeat Kevin DeYoung's statement here; *"There is no question that holiness is one of the central themes in the Bible. The word "holy" occurs more than 600 times in the Bible, more than 700 when you include derivative words like holiness, sanctify and sanctification. You can't make sense of the Bible without understanding that God is holy and that this holy God is intent on making a holy people to live with Him forever in a holy heaven. The whole system of Israel's worship revolves around holiness. That's why you have a holy people (the priests), with holy clothes, in a holy land (Canaan), at a holy place (tabernacle/temple), using holy utensils and holy objects, celebrating holy days, living by a holy law, so that they might be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."* end quote ... In the Old Testament the language of holiness is typically reserved for religious and ceremonial practice, although it is used in a moral sense as well. But in the New Testament, it is strictly moral and ethical. Bruce Demarest comments; *"Holiness...In everyday living, inner freedom from evil thoughts and attitudes (Eph 5:27, Heb 3:1), abstinence from immoral acts (1 Thes 4:3-4, 1 Pet 1:15), and a positive commitment to good and neighbor (Col 3:12-14, Tit 1:8). Following Pentecost, holiness manifests itself in the fruit of the Spirit in redeemed lives. Holiness, in a word, is Christlikeness daily manifested in the midst of a godless world."* The Cross and Salvation by Bruce Demarest – Crossway

Holiness in the New Testament concerns our **position** before God based on the finished work of Christ (**Positional Sanctification**), AND how we behave in the practice of the Christian life (**Practical Sanctification**). When we speak about **holiness** we speak about **sanctification**.

Positional and Practical Sanctification

"Sanctification," writes Wayne Grudem, *"is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives."* This of course is a biblically accurate definition of the part of salvation we call **sanctification**. Much of the language of the New Testament speaks of **sanctification** as this **progressive process**. However, it also speaks of sanctification, in certain texts, as a **completed work** which has **already taken place**. This is what we call the **"Positional"** aspect of sanctification, or **Positional Sanctification**. This is because God's people have been cleansed **in the sight of God** or **before Him**, having been made **holy** or **sanctified** by the work of Christ. In other words, we hold a **position before God**, which is **"in Christ"** and therefore we have been cleansed, washed, made holy, and purified by the work of Christ alone, and this has been appropriated to us by faith in Him. The New Testament makes reference to this **Positional Sanctification** in several places.

Hebrews 10:10, 14 - 10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all..... 14 For by one offering **He has perfected for all time** those who are sanctified. NASB

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 - 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, **who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption**, 31 that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." NASB

Colossians 1:21-22 - 22 But now he has reconciled you **by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation** NASB

1 Corinthians 6:11 - 11 And such were some of you; **but you were washed, but you were sanctified**, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. NASB

See in these Scriptures that there is an **aspect of sanctification** which is **already accomplished**. In fact, what Christ accomplished for us was a **perfect righteousness** before God by His perfect life and death, which is applied to us **by faith** when we believe. We were in fact completely **purified** and **cleansed** from our sins, **past, present** and **future** by what Christ accomplished.

This **Positional Sanctification** is very much like Justification and differs from **Practical or Progressive Sanctification** in its nature. The following chart is depicting Grudem's view of the differences between Justification and Progressive Sanctification.

Justification & Positional Sanctification	Sanctification Practical or Progressive
Legal Standing	Internal Condition
Once for all time	Continuous throughout life
Entirely God's work	We cooperate with God
Perfect in this life	Not perfect in this life
The same in all Christians	Greater in some than others

In summary, because **Positional Sanctification** has already been completed by Christ, it is therefore **perfect** and **complete**.

However, the Bible also speaks about **Sanctification** as an **ongoing process**. This is the common use of the word sanctification (and doctrine) which speaks of the Practical or Progressive and ongoing process which continues in our life until the resurrection. As we said earlier, **Sanctification is that work of God conforming us into the image of Christ progressively over time**. But as we have said, it is a **cooperative process** where we are also called to exert effort and diligence to see it come to fruition. Concerning the fact that **sanctification** is a “cooperative” and/or “synergistic” process, consider this quote by JI Packer; *In sanctification, the Holy Spirit "works in you to will and to act" according to God's purpose; what he does is prompt you to “work out your salvation” (i.e., express it in action) by fulfilling these new desires (Phil. 2:12-13). Sanctification, however, is in one sense synergistic – it is an ongoing cooperative process in which regenerate persons, alive to God and freed from sin's dominion (Rom. 6:11, 14-18), are required to exert themselves in sustained obedience. God's method of sanctification is neither activism (self-reliant activity) nor apathy (God-reliant passivity), but God-dependent effort (2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 3:10-14; Heb. 12:14). Sanctification* – Consider how Packer explains how the synergism works. He says that **God prompts us** by the Spirit, having already freed us from the dominion of sin and made alive to God in regeneration, we put forth God-dependent effort. See then that **God is the primary agent and our effort is secondary**. John Murray comments about this cooperation with God. *“While we are constantly dependent upon the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit, we must also take account of the fact that sanctification is a process that draws within its scope the conscious life of the believer.... Neither is the relation strictly one of co-operation as if God did his part and we did ours so that the conjunction or co-ordination of both produced the required result. God works in us and we also work. But the relation is that because God works we work.” Redemption Accomplished and Applied page 148...* Now see how both Packer and Murray are very careful to describe **God** as the **primary worker** in this **cooperative process**. The truth is without God first giving us the Spirit and regenerating us, freeing us from sin's dominion, and Christ having brought about reconciliation through His active and passive obedience, we would be hopelessly lost, remaining dead in our transgression and sin. Let us acknowledge then that God is indeed primary, even in

sanctification, and because of this fact, He gets the glory for it. In fact all three members of the Godhead play a role in sanctification (1 Thes 5:23-24, Heb 12:5-11, Heb 13:20-12, 1 Cor 1:30, 1 Pet 2:21) although the Holy Spirit has the specific ministry of applying redemption to us in sanctification. This is why we say that **sanctification is wholly the work of God**, because He is the **primary cause** of it and the one who determines to what **degree** we will be practically sanctified in this life (Rom 12:3-6). The Bible explicitly states that God is so sovereignly in control in sanctification that He ***“is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”***

Philippians 2:12-13 - 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling; 13 **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** NASB

In fact **God’s role** in Sanctification is emphasized in several places in the New Testament. Peter and Paul both tell us that our being ***“chosen for salvation”*** is **wrought by the Holy Spirit in sanctification**, that is, that our **election** is **applied** by the **sanctification of the Spirit** in the course of life.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 - 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because **God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit** and faith in the truth. 14 And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain 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 us. NASB

1 Peter 1:1-2 - 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **who are chosen** 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, **by the sanctifying work of the Spirit**, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. NASB

And God’s role in sanctification is seen in large degree in the book of Hebrews. In chapter 12 God is seen as a **disciplining Father** working His righteousness in us through the trials and hardships of life, ***“that we might share in His holiness.”***

Hebrews 12:5-12 - 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; 6 **For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.**" 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; **shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?** 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but **He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.** 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. NASB

And in chapter 13 we are told that God both ***“equips”*** us to do His will and is ***“working in us.”***

Hebrews 13:20-21 - 20 Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, 21 **equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight**, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. NASB

Of course we have statements that explicitly tell us that sanctification is wholly of God and entirely brought about by Him.

2 Corinthians 3:18 - 18 But **we all**, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.** NASB

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 - 23 Now may **the God of peace Himself sanctify 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.** NASB

See then that **God** is the **primary cause** and **agent** in Sanctification, He makes us holy.

Our Role – Active and Passive