Pauline Thoughts about the Holy Spirit and Sanctification: Provision, Process, and Consummation

J. Lyle Story*
School of Divinity, Regent University, 1000 Regent University Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23464, USA
lylesto@regent.edu

Abstract
The Holy Spirit is vitally and dynamically involved in the sanctification of individuals and their faith-communities. An examination of the Pauline terms and texts reveal that sanctification through the Spirit includes: 1) God’s Provision in his gracious call, 2) The Process of sanctification in Christian growth in moral purity and love, 3) The Consummation at the Parousia. To that end, we will provide brief historical and theological arguments as to how the Spirit works in sanctification, primarily within the holiness Pentecostal traditions. Often, various writings highlight one aspect to the neglect of other emphases. The paper argues for the comprehensive role of the Spirit in the past event, present experience, and future hope of the people of God and argues for a consistency between the three activities related to sanctification, including the essential element of love.

Keywords
sanctification, Holy Spirit, holiness, indicative-imperative, love

1. Introduction

12 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

14 And over all these virtues clothe yourselves with love, which binds them all together in perfect unity (Col. 3.12-14).

In these words to the Colossian believers, Paul commands his readers, ‘clothe yourselves’, with garments, which are consistent with the new life they
have experienced. They are who they are (‘chosen people’) by virtue of God’s choice (‘chosen’); they are also addressed as saints (‘holy’) and beloved (‘dearly loved’). In a clear and unmistakable manner, Paul affirms the Colossians new existence and new position. As an outgrowth of who they are, Paul charges them to live in such a way that corresponds to their new life. His ‘clothing’ language reveals the practice of the Early Church, wherein a new baptizand would put on new clothes, symbolizing the cleansed and transformed life. In Paul’s enumeration of the various ‘clothing’ items, he views love as the choicest garment of all, which binds the community together in perfect unity. Divine choice—holiness—love—the three truths are inextricably combined.

For the purpose of our study, we note the Trinitarian-fellowship’s direct involvement as primary agents in the sanctification of believers. In Rom. 15.16, the Holy Spirit is the agent of the believers’ sanctification. In 1 Cor. 1.2, believers are in a sanctified condition in Christ Jesus. In 1 Thess. 5.23-24, God is the one who will sanctify the entire human person. 2 Thess. 2.13 speaks of the engagement of the three different members of the Trinitarian-fellowship since they are each vital in salvation:

‘brothers, beloved by the Lord’ (Jesus),
God chose you to be saved
through the sanctifying work of the Spirit . . .

A similar interchange of terms is found in Rom. 8.9-10: ‘in the Spirit’, ‘Spirit of God dwells in you’, have ‘the Spirit of Christ’, ‘Christ in you’, ‘Spirit of Him who raised Christ Jesus dwells in you’. Thus, while we focus our attention upon Paul’s understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, we cannot be exclusive in our understanding of the other members of the Trinitarian-fellowship, who are similarly engaged.

We will use the terms, 1) Divine Provision, 2) Process, and 3) Consummation, to express the various aspects of sanctification. The discussion builds upon the earlier terminology, indicative and imperative for the first two items. More recently, this pattern is well expressed by Howard,

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Adewuya, and Greathouse, however, the ‘holiness’ word-family also looks forward to the consummation at the time of the Parousia. These terms may capture Paul’s thought in a clearer and more personal way than through the grammatical terms (indicative-imperative). For example, an imperative might well place an undue stress on human endeavor whereas ‘process’ is a term that is open to divine activity in the process, e.g., ‘Now may the God of peace sanctify (ἁγιάσαι) you’ (1 Thess. 5.23). Clearly, God is subject of the wish-prayer (optative) although the wish-prayer emerges from Paul’s heart. Even in the text of 2 Cor. 7.1, ‘bringing holiness [i.e. sanctification] to completion’, Paul states that the Corinthian believers can only do so ‘in the sphere of (ἐν) the reverence of God’, i.e. ‘in the sphere of life where they are surrounded by the awe and wonder of God’s holy presence’. Moreover, in ‘bringing holiness to completion’, they are involved in a process that God has initiated.

God’s provision of sanctification is inextricably bound up with the divine commitment and engagement with the human process of bringing sanctification to consummation at the time of the Parousia. God has preeminently taken in hand to provide for the sanctification of his people and he is very much involved in the life-long process of effecting holiness in their lives (1 Thess. 5.23) through the ongoing provision and dynamic of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 4.8). Thus, the word-family of ‘holiness’ terms belongs almost exclusively to the Trinitarian-fellowship. Elsewhere, Paul uses other terms to express the human response from the ‘saints’, ‘those who sanctified’, i.e. ‘set apart to God’. The human response belongs to the process wherein imperatives and exhortations follow on the heels of statements of divine provision, which also look to completion at the Parousia.

2. Historical and Theological Considerations

It is beyond our purview to relate the Spirit’s role in sanctification to numerous arguments concerning the Pauline center: salvation, ‘in Christ’, justification, reconciliation, adoption, redemption, the new creation, and others. Suffice it to say, that we understand the sanctification language as a metaphor from the Judeo-Christian cultic life that expresses an aspect of the salvation event and experience (past, present, and future), which is certainly the work

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of the Holy Spirit coupled with responsible response from humans. However, since these movements are interconnected we do need to trace various understandings of the Spirit's role in sanctification from the Reformation, Wesleyanism, and the Holiness and Pentecostal streams. To say the least, this period has been characterized by diversity at best, and fractious schism, accusations of heresy, and name-calling at worst. Frequently, one aspect of Paul's 'sanctification-language' is highlighted at the expense of other texts and considerations. 

5 Sadly enough, Paul's (and Wesley's) commitment to the correlation of sanctification and love—is countered by bitter polemics in the rise and development of various leaders, movements, and denominations.

2.a. Reformation Thought

Donald Bloesch argues, ‘What has been removed de jure by Christ (justification) must be taken away de facto by the Holy Spirit (sanctification)’.  

6 The reformers (Luther and Calvin) emphasize justification, the legal metaphor, which expresses a forensic and declarative verdict of being accounted righteous before the divine tribunal. It is both the basis and goal of the Christian life. While the Arminians argued that justification is the forgiveness of sins, the reformers argued that it is the eradication of sin and guilt through Jesus Christ. Calvin moderates Luther’s view wherein he takes into fuller account, ‘the Christian life’. Sanctification is regarded as being engrafted into the righteousness of God, thereby making sanctification always dependent upon justification in the ongoing life of the Christian. 

7 As such, Luther's perspective is pessimistic, ‘In this trial and struggle, the righteous man always resembles more a loser than a victor’. 

8 In this tradition, G.C. Berkouwer argues that ‘The heart of sanctification is the life which feeds on this justification’. 

9 He also states that ‘Genuine sanctification—let it be repeated—stands or falls

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5 For a summary of diverse traditions relative to sanctification, see Melvin E. Dieter (Wesleyan), Anthony A. Hoekema (Reformed), Stanley M. Horton, J. Roberson McQuilkin (Keswick), John F. Walvoord (Augustinian-Dispensational) in M.E. Dieter, et al., Five Views on Sanctification (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).


with this continued orientation towards justification and the remission of sins’. Correspondingly, the work of the Holy Spirit relates Christians to the redemptive suffering and death of Christ, allowing ‘the work of the Spirit to be founded through faith upon the forgiveness of sins: and any sanctification whatever must spring from this forgiveness’. Similarly, Torrance argues that sanctification is the continued unfolding, development, and maintenance of justification. Kuypers notes, ‘It wounds the very heart of Reformed confession when the pulpit aims at sanctification without zeal for justification’.

To be sure, the reformed tradition needs to be understood as a reaction and aversion to the perceived ‘works-righteousness’ of the Roman Catholic Church. However, the danger is to relegate sanctification to the ‘back-seat’ to justification, thereby making the Christian life into a repeated circular movement that ends in humility and repentance, with minimal expression of positive growth, victory, and empowerment by the Spirit for Christian character and charismatic service in ministry. There is a decided absence of victory for the Christian. For example, Berkouwer’s extensive discussion of sanctification is followed by an entire chapter on Humility and Sanctification, whereby any Christian growth necessarily means a corresponding growth of sin and guilt-consciousness.

2.b. Wesleyanism

The Wesleyan movement began as an outgrowth of John Wesley’s conversion experience, his contact with the Moravian pietists, and his subsequent evangelistic work of preaching and writing. In part, Wesleyanism constituted a reaction against the cold Calvinistic approach, creedal rigidity, and a depersonalized attitude to the Christian life. Even before his ‘Aldersgate-experience’ in which he was ‘strangely warmed’, Wesley was fascinated with a saving faith that could bring both holiness and happiness. Subsequently, Wesley sought for a holiness that he believed was possible. In contrast to the Reformer’s commitment to faith as the goal, Wesley argued for love as the end goal of the plan of salvation. Wesley said that love is ‘the end of all the commandments of

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10 Berkouwer, p. 78.
11 Berkouwer, p. 93.
14 Indeed, Berkouwer argues that sanctification is not a ‘process’ or moral process, but it is being holy in Christ, and having part, through faith in his righteousness (Berkouwer, p. 104).
God ... the end, the sole end, of every dispensation of God, from the beginning to the consummation of all things'.  

Genuine freedom is not simply the reformed freedom from guilt, hell and its pangs, but the freedom to love with the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit communicates the experience and life of love through the life of Jesus in the Spirit’s presence and power. The Spirit of Jesus is the Holy Spirit who will finally restore the complete love of God in the hearts of all who believe. The idea of purity is knit together with love and the promise of a new heart and Spirit (Ezekiel 36) and a new covenant (Jeremiah 31), which then lead his people to a will to love rather than to disobey. Wesley preached and wrote of an assurance of a Christian’s relationship with God in love, in a similar way to the experience of conversion when the Spirit bears witness of a new birth. Love is the evidence of sanctification, made experimental through the Holy Spirit.

In his extensive tract, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Wesley argues for an entire sanctification in this age in his question ‘When may a person judge himself to have attained this [entire sanctification/perfection]?’ He answers,

> When, after having been fully convinced of inbred sin, by a far deeper and clearer conviction than that he experienced before justification, and after having experienced a gradual mortification of it, he experiences a total death to sin, and an entire renewal in the love and image of God, so as to rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks... None therefore ought to believe that the work is done, till there is added the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification, as clearly as his justification.

He argued that ‘Scriptural perfection is pure love filling the heart and governing all the words and actions’, a perfection that demanded an increase in love; thus Christians make progress through the Spirit who resides within. While the reformers placed sanctification under the umbrella of justification, Wesley positioned sanctification alongside of justification and viewed it as a still higher salvation. For many later Wesleyans, justification appeared to be nearly absorbed into sanctification. It is important to note that ‘entire sanctification’ did not mean ‘sinless perfection’ but a perfection of motives and desires in which a person is able to live above willful transgression. Wesley accentuates

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Paul’s expression that the core of Christian living is ‘faith working through love’ (Gal. 5.6).

Wesley’s thoughts about sanctification find later expression in theologians, stressing the mystical ‘in-Christ’ language (Schweitzer, Deissmann, Stewart) and the language of the new creation (Hickling), ideas that were part of Methodist teaching.

2.6. Holiness and Pentecostal Streams

The subsequent Holiness and Pentecostal streams continued to grapple with Wesley’s teaching on the Holy Spirit and Sanctification. We can find three major streams of thought relative to the role of the Spirit in sanctification.

2b.1. The Classical Holiness stream

Argued for two primary crisis events, which Synan terms, “The double-cure” 18: 1) Conversion, 2) Sanctification. The work of the Spirit in sanctification was reinterpreted by Wesley’s defender, John Fletcher, who linked ‘baptism of the Holy Spirit’ with Wesley’s ‘entire sanctification’. 19 Phoebe Palmer (1839) understood that the shorter way to perfection was found in her ‘altar theology’, which was understood as a faith-statement for the ‘second blessing’. The later Keswick movement also linked the baptism in the Holy Spirit with ethical behavior. Charles Jones notes, ‘Passing over Wesley’s emphasis on the perfection of love as a process … (Palmer) stressed entire sanctification as a present possibility … Wesley’s followers developed a discipline for seeking perfect love; Mrs. Palmer’s, a discipline for the sanctified life’. 20 While Wesley stressed experiential love, Palmer stressed faith in one’s personal sacrifice, based upon promises in Scripture.

Often, the role of the Spirit as the Fire-Baptizer was accentuated in terms of the refining and cleansing role of the Spirit, most notably expressed through B.H. Irwin, with numerous such ‘effusions’ following. Further, holiness advocates stressed a withdrawal from the world in this inner sanctification, which stressed rigorous standards of personal conduct and self-discipline. A key Pauline text for the holiness stream is found in 1 Thess. 4:1-12, with particular directives for sexual and social ethics. It is interesting to note that while the

Social Gospel advocates directed their compassion to the poor, the holiness advocates (among the poor) rejected such attempts for social justice and decried the worldliness of the culture, by listing numerous ill-effects of culture, e.g., theater-going, etc.

J. A. Wood, building upon Wesley’s understanding, proved to be a father of the Holiness movement. In his response to the question, Woods argues that perfect holiness is attainable in this life with no apparent distinction between that which is exhorted and the promised and consummate perfection of holiness at the Parousia: ‘He who seeks a gradual sanctification, seeks necessarily something less than entire sanctification; that is, he does not seek entire sanctification at all’.  

The holiness movement was later embraced by the Nazarenes, Wesleyans, Salvation Army, Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), and several later Pentecostal groups. These bodies emphasized a progressive and entire sanctification to be realized in this life, which is understood to be the baptism in the Spirit. The Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) further subdivides sanctification into cleansing, consecration, calling, and convincing evidence. The supportive texts for linking the Holy Spirit with sanctification are selectively drawn from Pauline texts, without probing into the full orb of Pauline thoughts about the crucial role of the Spirit in sanctification (provision, process, and consummation). As Dieter notes, the strong theme of the holiness movement ‘was the strong primitivism which was present in all holiness concepts of the church’. The holiness churches were determined to return to the power and purity of the Early Church at Pentecost.

2.b.2. The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement

As a direct result of the impact of the Azusa-Street Revival (1906), leaders and members of countless churches were forced to reckon with the power of the Holy Spirit, with particular attention to the charismata of the Spirit. The term ‘holiness Pentecostal’ reflected the holiness movement of the late nineteenth century (National Holiness Movement) and the Pentecostal revival of the early twentieth century. The extensive movement combined and preserved the Wesleyan tradition of sanctification, while advocating the Pentecostal


22 Their statements on sanctification can be found on their websites.

experience. In part, this was due to the fact that the majority of Pentecostal leaders grew out of the holiness movement. The sanctifying activity of the Spirit in the ‘second-blessing’ thus prepared and cleansed persons for the baptism in the Spirit as a third work of the Spirit. J.H. King (1917-1946), one of the earliest proponents for this movement wrote an influential book, *From Passover to Pentecost.*

Although King uses a very subjective allegorical-hermeneutic, he argues for the doctrine of the Spirit’s entire-sanctification (removal of ‘inbred sin’), which leads to the powerful baptism in the Spirit as King reflects upon various narratives in the book of Acts. Other movements and denominations played a key role in Pentecostal-Holiness movements, stressing the ‘second work’: Church of God (Cleveland—A.J. Tomlinson) and Church of God in Christ (C.H. Mason). These groups emphasized the Spirit’s role in salvation, cleansing, and empowering the believer. It is interesting that in the International Pentecostal-Holiness Church, their Doctrinal Amplification contains a section on the Holy Spirit, with no mention made of the role of the Spirit in sanctification; however, there are two further Amplifications concerning both Sanctification and Entire Sanctification. Supportive texts for the Spirit are drawn solely from the Paraclete passages in the Fourth Gospel.

2.b.3. *Pentecostalism*

In the early Pentecostal churches, a schism was initiated by W.H. Durham (1914), when he promoted ‘The Finished Work’, which assigned sanctification to the salvation experience, grounded on Christ’s finished work on Calvary to be followed by the Pentecostal baptism in the Spirit. Followers of the ‘finished work’ approach became organized, leading to the establishment of the Assemblies of God (E.N. Bell 1914) and the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (1906-1923 with Aimee Semple McPherson). Sanctification or the role of the Spirit in sanctification receives bare mention in these movements. In the AG’s ‘16 Fundamental Truths’ (1916), there is no fundamental truth that explains the nature and role of the Spirit, although it does include truths relative to God the Father, and Jesus Christ; at the same time, initial evidence (tongues) is one of the 16 truths. Sanctification is one of the 16 truths, but is expressed as separation from evil, life of holiness, power for becoming holy, with identification with the death and resurrection of Christ.

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25 The development of the ‘Jesus Only’ movement within Pentecostalism will be outside the sphere of our concern in this article.
Stanley Horton expresses the Pentecostal perspective of a two-fold work of sanctification: 1) positional/instantaneous, 2) practical/progressive.\textsuperscript{26} The Holy Spirit’s part is to be complemented by a believer’s part.\textsuperscript{27} He notes that ‘the whole work of sanctification is the work of the Spirit which receives by far the greatest attention in the New Testament. It takes precedence over witnessing, evangelism, giving, and every other form of Christian service’.\textsuperscript{28} At the same time, the AG holds the baptism in the Spirit as the second major crisis experience. Wesley’s commitment to ‘perfect love’ in ‘sanctification’ does not receive full treatment; however, Horton’s works do reflect a commitment to the fruit of the Spirit as expressions of the sanctified life. The Foursquare Declaration of Faith\textsuperscript{29} does not relate sanctification to ‘The New Birth’ (justification), although it does speak about the reception of the Spirit of Christ. Sanctification is expressed in ‘Daily Christian Life’, in the language of ‘daily sanctification’, with attention to the gifts and fruit of the Spirit.

Before we look at three leading statements on Paul’s understanding of the Spirit in sanctification, a brief excursus is in order to express the Greek terms related to ‘holiness’ as they bear upon the work of the Spirit in sanctification.

### 3. Considerations on the ‘Holiness’ Word-Family

There are several terms in the Pauline corpus that belong to the ‘holiness’ word-family:

3.a. ἅγιος (hagios)—‘holy’: an adjective, used in the cultic sense, ‘dedicated to God, holy, sacred, reserved for God and His service’, which also shades over into the meaning of ‘holy = pure, perfect, worthy of God’. The adjective also is used with respect to persons, such as prophets or ‘saints’, the Holy Spirit, angels, Christ, God, or the Church.\textsuperscript{30} It is difficult to find references where the adjective is used to the endeavors or aspirations of Christians.


\textsuperscript{27} Parallel statements are made by Harold D. Hunter, *Spirit-Baptism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), p. 257.

\textsuperscript{28} Horton, *Holy Spirit*, p. 258.

\textsuperscript{29} www.foursquare.org

3.b. ἁγιάζω (hagiadzo)—‘make holy, consecrate, sanctify, purify, i.e. include in the inner circle of what is holy, in both religious and moral uses of the word’.31
The verb is never used by Paul to refer to human endeavor; the Trinitarian-fellowship is always the subject of the verb. He sanctified, sanctifies and will sanctify the people of God.

3.c ἁγιασμός (hagiasmōs)—‘holiness, consecration, sanctification; the use in a moral sense for a process’.32 Greek nouns, ‘expressing action are formed with –μος’.33

3.d. ἁγιωσύνη (hagiōsunee)—‘holiness’ as a quality or state,34 formed as a qualitative abstract with the addition of –σύνη.35

Other terms express the ἅγιος word family: derivatives such as ὅγνός, ‘pure or holy’ and the καθαρίζω word family, ‘I cleanse’, which express intentional behavior from the communities.

Since Paul is a ‘Hebrew of Hebrews’ (Phil. 3.5), it is only natural that his understanding of the ‘holiness’ word-family finds its anchor in OT thought. The Hebrew root q-d-sh implies ‘to cut’, ‘to separate’ or ‘to divide’. Thus, the word-family expresses a cut or line by which the ‘holy’ is separated from what is common and thus exclusively devoted to God as expressed by the prophet Ezekiel:

Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. Ezek. 22.26

Through a divine choice, God separates people, places, things and times—separating them all from their ‘common’ state and purpose and devotes them to a ‘sacred’ purpose.

4. Leading Statements of Paul’s Understanding of Holiness

The various Pauline texts dealing with the word-family (verb, adjective, two nouns) surely must be positioned within the broad theological background of
the OT. We suggest the following affirmations concerning Paul’s use of the word-family:

4.a. Sanctification is the Position of Believers Before God, Created by God, which Forms the Basis of their Initial Call (God’s Provision)

In 2 Thess. 2.13, Paul affirms the interconnection of sanctification with respect to past fact, present experience, and future realization—all in light of the role of the Holy Spirit. After stating the grim tragedy of unbelievers’ judgment (2.11-12), he pronounces the contrasting confidence of the Thessalonians. They are chosen, ‘beloved by the Lord’ (ἡγαπημένοι ὑπὸ κυρίου), called, first fruits for salvation, with a sanctification by means of the Spirit, and will participate in their joyous future (2.14). For Paul, salvation combines past, present, and future; correspondingly, the Spirit’s sanctifying role is important in the three temporal phases. Here, it is clear that sanctification is the Spirit’s present role in believers that will be consummated at the Parousia, when Christ will be glorified in his ‘holy ones’ (1:10). Fee notes that ‘it is of more than passing interest that he should describe their conversion in terms of ‘sanctification’ or ‘holiness’ … Thus, ‘sanctification’ in Paul, as 1 Cor. 1.30 and 6.11 also make plain, is not a second work of grace’. In Romans 6, Paul also argues that ‘holiness/sanctification’ is bound up within the Christians’ salvation experience and cannot be separated from this experience.

Sanctification is far more than personal growth in Christian behavior. For example, in 1 Cor. 1.2, Paul uses the substantival ‘saints’ (ἁγιοί) and the perfect passive participle ‘having been sanctified’ (ἡγιασμένοι) in reference to the Corinthian believers. These are the same believers who have been filled with the Spirit, but are sadly characterized by schism, party-spirit, law-suits, charismatic confusion, sexual immorality, and other personal and social disorders. The terms ἁγιοί (‘saints’) and ἡγιασμένοι (‘having been sanctified’) can have no reference to spiritual growth among the Corinthian Christians since the moral fiber of their personal and communal life is almost non-existent. Only by God’s call are they regarded as ‘saints’ and ‘sanctified’, i.e. ‘set apart unto God’. The community at Corinth can be regarded as ‘the Church’;

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57 The pattern is also reflected in Leviticus: ‘set apart’ precedes demand.
perhaps they should be called, ‘a fellowship of sinners called saints’. Later, Paul calls the Corinthian believers to fully realize their bodies are called a ‘holy temple’ (1 Cor. 6.19).

In the Pauline corpus, God’s provision (indicative) clearly affirms the prior activity of God in sanctifying the people of God. The Roman Christians are ‘called’: ‘called of Jesus Christ (κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ), and Paul writes to the ones called saints (κλητοὶ ἁγιοίς) in Rom. 1.6-7. Paul also refers to the people of God as a ‘holy temple’:

1 Cor. 3.17 If anyone destroys God’s temple,
   God will destroy that person.

1 Cor. 6.11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.\(^{38}\)

The Corinthians’ experience includes washing, sanctification, and justification through the name of Jesus Christ as well as the Spirit. This experience should lead them to avoid their former lifestyle, noted before by the expression, ‘and such were some of you’, pointing to the vice list of 6.9-11. Fee notes that ‘the use of the same imagery to refer to the Corinthians’ conversion (1 Cor. 6.11) is intended to emphasize that conversion includes the sanctifying work of the Spirit’.\(^{40}\)

The language of these texts builds upon the OT understanding of the people of God as a ‘holy people’, and ‘holy temple’, and expresses their corresponding responsibility to reflect in their personal and community life, the very nature of the holy God, who had called them into existence as individuals and a community (Exod. 19.5; Lev. 19.2).

Paul appropriates the OT understanding of the people of God as a ‘holy’ community, separated unto God by virtue of God’s initiating call (God’s

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\(^{38}\) Rom. 1:1,7; 8:27; 15:25, 26, 31; 16:2; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:1,2; 14:33; 16:1, 15.

\(^{39}\) The thought here parallels Paul’s expression in Rom. 8:29-30: ‘For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.’

provision). True, the people are ‘set apart from’ but even more, ‘set apart to’. The full emphasis on the cult, the worship of God, the offerings, the moral and ethical life, are all part and parcel of the calling, the life unto which the people of God are called. Procksch states that ‘In 1 Corinthians, this thought is individualized (6.19 τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐστιν, cf. 3:16). To the temple, there corresponds the sacrifice which is brought in Christ and which has the character of holiness’ (1 Cor. 5.7).

Correspondingly, in Rom. 15.16, Paul states that the Jewish Christians in Rome should accept the ‘common’ or ‘unclean’ Gentiles, since they have not been circumcised. These are the very people whom the Holy Spirit has sanctified; their offering is sanctified, which includes both Jewish and Gentile believers. The emphasis is clear, unambiguous and certain—believers are what they are in God’s grace by virtue of his call, his act and his dynamic presence in the Spirit’s sanctification (God’s provision).

In speaking about the nature of the new people of God, Paul appropriates the language of a ‘holy people’ (am q-d-sh) and applies the OT term to the people of God under the new covenant (Rom. 11.13-16; Eph. 2.12), who are empowered by the Holy Spirit. As the new people of God, they are brought ‘near’ by the blood of Christ through the agency of the Spirit. They are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the cornerstone. The new community is empowered by the ‘one Spirit’ (Eph. 4.4), thereby, a ‘holy temple in the Lord’ (Eph. 2.11-22), and summoned to be ‘like God in true righteousness and holiness’ (4:24).

4.b. Sanctification is a Process of Christian Growth in Moral Purity and Love

After affirming the divine provision, Paul generally follows with the language of an ongoing process, including both imperatives and exhortations. Thus, the language speaks about the human response involving choices of free-will moral agents. By virtue of their call and position as ‘saints’, Paul summons the people of God to conduct themselves in ethical purity. While ‘holiness’ is a matter of the new status of the people of God, it is also taken for granted that a purposeful ‘holiness’ will produce ethical results, changes in attitude, words and behavior; humans are accountable for their choices. By their response to the gift of sanctification, humans are exhorted to respond in way that is consistent with their original call. They are to be fully engaged in the process. In numerous texts, there is an inner link forged between God’s provision and the process.

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2 Thess. 2.13 ‘God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work (ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος) of the Spirit …’ (provision).

Rom. 12.1 ‘I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy (αἵρεσιν) and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship’ (process).

Rom. 15.16 ‘to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified (ἡγιασμένη) by the Holy Spirit’ (process).

1 Cor. 1.2 ‘To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified (ἡγιασμένοι) in Christ Jesus, called saints, together with all those in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours’ (God’s provision).

Col. 1.22 ‘he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy (ἀγιού) and blameless and irreproachable before him—’ (provision).

Col. 3.12 ‘As God’s chosen ones, holy (ἁγίοι) and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience’ (process).

Eph. 1.4 ‘just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy (ἅγιος) and blameless before him in love’ (provision).

Eph. 5.27 ‘so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy (ἁγία) and without blemish’ (process & consummation).

Appropriate ethical responses are regarded as sacrifices that parallel the cultic service of the OT (Rom. 12.1). Ethical personal conduct honors the divine agency of sanctification. That is to say, since God is the primary agent in sanctification, Christians are intimately involved in the divine purpose; they are summoned to ‘get with it’. They are not left on their own to slavishly follow a prescriptive set of ethical norms. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are directly involved as the primary agents of sanctification. Holiness implies an ongoing relationship with God, which is lived out as Christians are ‘led by the Holy Spirit’ (Rom. 8.14) into ethical behavior, and thereby promote the health of the community. The very power of ‘holiness’, which raised Jesus from the dead (credo in Rom. 1.4) is called the Spirit of holiness, who declared with power the resurrected Son of God, and is now the very power, which transforms attitudes and behavior (process).

As emphasized by Ayodeji Adewuya, Romans 8 is a key chapter in Pauline letters, which unites the indicative of sanctification and the imperatives related

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42 The perfect passive participle means that another has acted to place them in the ‘set apart’ position, ‘chosen, called’ (by God), quite apart from human endeavor.

43 The term ‘service’ (λειτουργία) belongs to the language of the OT cult.
to living out of one’s position. Numerous statements are made in Romans 8 about the ‘givens’ of Christian experience: no condemnation, benefits of reconciliation, freedom, participation in Christ’s redemptive death, mutual indwelling (vss. 9-11). Of note, is the use of the term Spirit that is used 21 times in Romans 8, primarily linked to the ethical life of Christians.

These ‘givens’ lead to the clear and logical result (therefore ἄρα of v. 12), the life in the Spirit, which involves imperatives and exhortations (process). These statements are contrasted with Paul’s previous statements about life in the flesh (Rom. 8.5-8), which leads to death. Life in the Spirit means life—not death, but this life engages the Christian to live in accordance with genuine life. Christians walk according to the Spirit (v. 4) are exhorted to set their minds on the things of the Spirit (v. 5) and are in the Spirit (v. 9). By the Spirit they have put to death the works of the body (v. 13) and are led by the Spirit (v. 14). Moreover, the Spirit bears witness that Christians are ‘adopted children’ (v. 16), to the extent that the Spirit also ‘groans’ (v. 26) for their future privilege at the time of the consummation. It is the Spirit who is at work with Christians, bringing about a life that is similar to Christ’s. The life in the Spirit in Romans 8 parallels other passages, which speak to the Christians behavior in the light of provision (fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5.22-26). All are aspects of the sanctifying power of the Spirit in personal and corporate human experience.

Christians are sanctified through their experience of being ‘loved’ by God and learn to express love in their relationships, empowered by the Holy Spirit. The writer suggests the following thought-flow outline of Romans 8: Because of your true position in Christ (vss. 1-8), live out who you are with confidence (vss. 12-17), filled with the certainty of an eschatological hope (vss. 18-30), assured of the eternal and effective love of Christ (vss. 31-39). Romans 8 looks to the consummation of believers, when God’s unfathomable love will be finally and fully expressed, when the ‘not-yet’ of the eschatological proviso of ‘already but not-yet’ will be removed. They have experienced the unfathomable love of Christ and have been empowered by the Spirit; these truths supply the incentive or empowerment for sanctification. In a similar manner, Paul prays that the Philippians’ ‘love may abound still more and more’ that they may be sincere and blameless (Phil. 1:9-11).

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45 All creation ‘groans’ (v. 22) and Christians ‘groan’ (v. 23) along with the Spirit’s ‘groan’ (v. 26).
Without a sense of divine love, there is no motive for sanctification. Sanctification appears as Christian love both inside and outside of their community. In 1 Thess. 3.11-13, Paul’s wish-prayer includes a petition for love for one another—that it may abound. He follows the petition that their love for one another may abound with a goal that is clear—that their hearts may be established without blemish at the Parousia. The experience of being loved is knit together with salvation, sanctification, and the Parousia in 2 Thess. 2.13-14. Although Wesley’s understanding of sanctification as a ‘perfect’ second work is open to question, nonetheless, he prioritized ‘perfect love’ that is essential in sanctification. Similarly, Col. 3.12 expresses the joyous certainty that the people of God are both holy and beloved (God’s provision), which should then lead to various expressions of their new ‘clothing’; their new apparel is to consist of the various forms of Christian love, e.g., compassion and kindness (process). The considerable detail of the new life of ‘holiness’ (Col. 3.5-17) reaches a grand finale in Paul’s summary statement, ‘Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him’ (Col. 3.17).

Although the word-family of holiness (‘sanctification’) terms appear frequently in Paul’s letters, referring to God’s call or provision, affirming what God’s people are—‘saints, sanctified, a holy temple, a holy people’, the same word-family frequently appears referring to sanctification as a process. The implication is clear; in treating sanctification or holiness as a process, we are not directed to a few but to a veritable host of exhortations, e.g., walk in love, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, glorify God in your bodies, fruit of the Spirit, forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven you, have no anxiety in anything, let the mind of Christ be in you, bear one another’s burdens, and the list goes on. Usually, the imperatives or exhortations are grounded in some expression of God’s transforming grace, his provision of redeeming love, his grace in setting apart (sanctifying) a people who are called and constituted a holy nation or people, and are to proclaim the mighty grace of God who has called a people out of darkness into his marvelous light (also in 1 Pet. 2.9).

46 It is important to note that the term, ‘perfect’ (τέλειος) is often best rendered as ‘mature’, ‘fully mature’, ‘fullygrown’, or ‘complete’. In this regard, many preachers and scholars often misunderstand Matt. 5.48, ‘Be ye perfect (τέλειος) as your Father in heaven is perfect (τέλειός), which in the context means ‘to be indiscriminate’ in terms of greeting, accepting, and loving others; Luke’s version in his Sermon on the Plain reads, ‘Be merciful (οἰκτίρμονες) as your heavenly father is merciful (οἰκτίρμον)’ Lk. 6.36—as it also expresses the need for indiscriminate love.
When Paul emphasizes the nature of the Church in Ephesians, he affirms the vital relationship between holiness and love. The exhortations are placed within the broad background that highlights the nature of the Church as a holy community without blemish, due to the sanctifying and cleansing work of the Trinitarian-fellowship. An entire paragraph (Eph. 5.21-33) is a remarkable paradigm of the provision of divine sanctifying grace that will surely energize the human response in terms of the imperatives or exhortations, such as mutual submission (process). ‘Saints’ are to express their ‘holiness’ through love for ‘all the holy one’s’ (Eph. 1.15), since they have already received the ‘down-payment of the Spirit’, and look forward to their full inheritance (1.13-14). In 1 Tim. 1:5, the goal of sound instruction is ‘love from a pure heart’. Further, Paul expresses the confidence that such love from a pure heart is possible. Why such a vital link between holiness and love? Denney notes:

That is a notable direction for those in search of holiness. A selfish, loveless heart can never succeed in this quest. A cold heart is not unblameable; it is either pharisaical or foul, or both. But love sanctifies. Often we only escape from our sins by escaping from ourselves; by a hearty, self-denying, self-forgetful interest in others. It is quite possible to think so much about holiness as to put holiness out of our reach; it does not come with concentrating thought upon ourselves at all; it is the child of love, which kindles a fire in the heart in which faults are burnt up . . . do not imagine that there is any other holiness than that which is thus created.

There is an ugly kind of faultlessness which is always raising its head anew in the Church; a holiness which knows nothing of love, but consists in a sort of spiritual isolation, in censoriousness, in holding up one’s head and shaking off the dust of one’s feet against brethren, in conceit, in condescension, in sanctimonious separateness from the freedom of common life, as though one were too good for the company which God has given him: all this is as common in the Church as it is plainly condemned in God’s sight. It is an abomination in God’s sight. ⁴⁷

The community of faith is the sphere wherein Christian holiness can be worked out in the give-and-take of human relationships. Genuine holiness is not to be found in a mystical type of holiness, which is solely concerned with a cloistered withdrawal of the human spirit into an inner relationship with the Holy Spirit. True holiness is found within the sphere of Christ’s body and is to be channeled through that body. Holiness is lived out in the context of the dual love-commandments: love for God and love of the neighbor, which naturally cohere as one commandment. Through a faith-union experience with Christ, one is incorporated into the Body of Christ; this is the sphere of the Spirit wherein holiness as love is expressed.

In convincing fashion, Adewuya argues that for Paul, sanctification is far more than Western individualistic holiness but is communal holiness. ‘Such communal holiness is to be conceived of in terms of a dynamic ongoing relationship with God—covenant relationship to be sure—lived out by grace, in faith and practice throughout every sphere of life … although the relationship with God is primary, the relationship with others is indispensable’. Adewuya makes his case for the parallel between 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1 and the Holiness code in the LXX of Leviticus 19, which is addressed to Israel as a corporate whole. Thus, holiness is always positioned in relational terms—with God and with the people of God, and their communal witness to a non-believing world. As such, Paul’s directives concerning holiness in 2 Cor. 6.14-7:1 confront the problem of Corinthian individualism and Western individualism in our day.

In 1 Thess. 3.11-5.23, there is a broad instruction (paraenesis), including several related statements on the holiness word-family. Love, for example, is viewed as the means by which genuine holiness will be attained, anticipating as well the eschaton, ‘at the Parousia of our Lord Jesus with all of his holy ones’ (i.e. angels, 1 Thess. 3.12-13). It is surprising that in such a brief letter, Paul employs both ‘holiness’ (ἁγιωσύνη) as a ‘state of being in Christ focused on the Parousia (3.13) and ἁγιασμός, an active process that focuses upon God’s will in the believer’s ongoing life now (4.3, 4, 7). The imperatives, which reflect a call to holiness, are a call to realize what is inherent in the call. Is not the call ‘to be holy’ already potentially realized because one has been graciously positioned in a holy state because of God’s very call? Sanctification occurs through the ongoing provision of the Spirit (1 Thess. 4.8). Thus, the initial call, ongoing process and ultimate goal are surrounded by the atmosphere of holiness, since saints are all grounded in the divine act that sets them apart in a holy state or condition and the Spirit that empowers them to realize their holiness. They are already set apart by God. God’s call to holiness enables them to realize what this call implies in a new life of obedience.

In 1 Thess. 4.1-8, Paul provides various particulars of the holiness-process in the present age, expressed through three infinitive clauses, all of which are concerned with sexual purity: to avoid sexual immorality, to control one’s own body, to not defraud a brother, i.e. by violating his marriage (4.3-6). Substantiation for sexual integrity is found in the affirmation, ‘For God did not call us to be impure, but ‘in’ holiness (4.7). The preposition ‘in’ (ἐν) expresses the place or ‘the sphere of holiness’, characterized by holy behavior.

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that is consistent with the call of the holy God who issues the call. The term ‘holiness’ (ἁγιασμός) is used three times in chapter 4 (4.3, 4, 7) to refer to life in the here and now; the expression ‘in holiness’ (ἐν ἁγιασμῷ) indicates the sphere in which ‘holiness’ (ἁγιασμός) is present. In addition, Paul also states that God provides the dynamic for living the ‘holy’ life, through the Holy Spirit, whom God continually gives to the believers (4.8). Paul does not refer to one single event, when the Holy Spirit was given; rather the Holy Spirit continues to be given to the believer as an aid in the sanctifying process; the Holy Spirit enables the human response of living consistently with the original call to be ‘set apart’. The Holy Spirit is intimately associated with the lives and conduct of the ‘saints’.

Paul's mention of ‘sanctification’ in Rom. 6.19 belongs to the broader context of Romans 6 in which Paul discusses the Christians ethical responsibility. Although Paul apologizes for using the slavery image to depict Christian slavery to Christ, he highlights one aspect of the slave's loyalty, time, and energy—now to be devoted to Christ. In a setting that depicts ‘life in the Spirit’, Paul argues for Christian sanctification:

Rom.6.19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.

6.22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life.

Through a contrast, Paul lays out two sorts of slavery, with two contrasting results:

- slaves of sin  ⇒  resulting in death
- slaves of obedience  ⇒  resulting in righteousness

Paul is categorical. There is no middle ground offered as a legitimate possibility. There is simply no instance in which a person is free from a master or owner. ‘The man who imagines he is free, because he acknowledges no god but his own ego, is deluded; for the service of one’s own ego is the very essence of the slavery of sin’. Paul wars on two fronts: a) the legalist with a corresponding bondage, b) the libertarian who promises a freedom that really spells bondage.

50 The present participle 'who continues to give' (τὸν θεόν τὸν δίδοντα τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον) points to the ongoing giving of the Spirit with an ever present supply.
51 Ethical sanctification is to be differentiated from the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Paul’s concern is not for the Spirit’s power for gifted service but for holy living.
Through a comparison in 6.19b (‘just as’ ... ‘so’—ὥσπερ ... οὕτως), Paul highlights the former self dedication of the Roman Christians to impurity and lawlessness so as to underscore the new self-dedication to which they are summoned. The same energy they expended in their former lifestyle is to be applied to the new master, which Adewuya notes as ‘progressive ethical renewal’. If Christians are fully committed to their new service as they were to the old master, they are to express that they are committed to well doing, righteousness and sanctification, which:

For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness ... resulting in further lawlessness

so now present your members as slaves to righteousness ... resulting in sanctification.

Paul reminds the Roman Christians of their former lifestyle and the clean break that they have made with their past. Freedom from the one sphere of power means the God-given ability to serve the new sphere of power. No one can serve both the new life of righteousness and the old life of sin. Thus, Paul’s purpose is that of encouraging his readers by appealing to God’s gracious call and their response to that call:

But thanks be to God that you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed (6.17).

and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness (6.18).

For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification (6.19).

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness (6.20).

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life (6.22).

In Paul’s thinking, holiness/sanctification is both a condition (God’s provision) and a process. As a condition, holiness belongs to the believer because God has already set one apart for himself. Holiness is the declarative work of the Trinitarian-fellowship. To be sure, ethical behavior must follow, but the new behavior is grounded in the primary call of God. While sanctification may include the primary experience of initiation into the Christian life, it also signifies ‘the end’ (τέλος) towards which the justified strive, eternal life (Rom. 6.22, 23). In many texts, Paul expresses a concern for moral purity, which he contrasts with lawlessness (vss. 19-23) and sexual immorality (1 Thess. 4.1-8).

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53 Adewuya, Transformed by Grace, p. 38.
In 2 Cor. 7.1, Paul uses the language of the OT cult to implore his readers to cleanse themselves:

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1).

Believers are said to be temples of the Holy Spirit and are consequently to be separated from every unclean thing or practice. As Paul argues in 2 Cor. 6.14-18, people must live out the implications of their true status. The Christian life is a means and process of 'perfecting holiness (ἐπιτελοῦντες ἁγιωσύνην) in the fear of the Lord' (2 Cor. 7.1). Thus, we are to continually bring holiness to fulfillment with an eye that is fixed upon God in reverence and wonder. In Rom. 6.2, 11, 14, 22 and 1 Thess. 4.1-8, holiness is clearly a process, which is worked out in the context of daily life, where there can be no false division between the sacred and the secular. 'If we wait for the descent of the vertical on the horizontal, it is most unlikely that it will ever occur. If we are willing to wait on God and to expect to find him in the doing of our daily duty, we may be fairly confident that sooner or later the dimensions of our ordinary experience will be enlarged to include awareness of that unutterable splendor'.

Thus, Paul contends that holiness is to be lived out in the context of the world and not through a life of 'perfection' found in a cloistered environment. The world in its sinfulness is still God’s world and as such, is the object of God’s love. The community of faith finds its strength in the worship and instruction of the sanctuary and discovers its mission in the world. The life of the community of faith is always lived out in the world, a truth, which Paul emphasizes as he faces sexual immorality in the Church:

not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world (1 Cor. 5.10).

Even though Paul uses the language of the holy cult, ‘Cleanse out the old leaven’ (v.13), he makes it clear that withdrawal from the world is no legitimate option for the Church. He is concerned with the positive witness of the Church as a people ‘set-apart’, and yet, fully engaged with the world with its sins and sinners. Through his experience in a Nazi prison, Bonhoeffer expressed his new life as he was fully engaged with the non-Christian world:

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During the last year or so I have come to appreciate the worldliness of Christianity as never before. The Christian man is not a *homo religiosus*, but a man, pure and simple, just as Jesus was man, compared with John the Baptist anyhow … it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to believe … with all its duties and problems, its successes and failures, its experiences and its helplessness. It is in such a life that we throw ourselves utterly into the arms of God and participate in His sufferings in the world and watch with Christ in Gethsemane.\(^\text{55}\)

Thus, holiness involves the personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who himself lived on earth in active engagement in the world. The evidence of God’s grace and love is a changed life that brings forth good works, specifically the fruit of the Spirit (Titus 2.11-14), to a world that always remains the object of God’s incredible love.

### 4.c. Sanctification will be Consummated at the Parousia

Holiness also has the future in view, in the light of the return of Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 3.13; 5.23). Marshall notes,

> Just as Paul can refer to believers as saints or holy ones, despite their lack of actual holiness in conduct, so those who have been sanctified or set apart as God’s people must increasingly show the appropriate characteristics in goodness and dedication to God’s service, and Paul prays that God will work in the lives of his readers to this end.\(^\text{56}\)

Paul positions sanctification against the broad background of the return of the Lord Jesus:

> And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness\(^\text{57}\) that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints (1 Thess. 3.13).

The preposition ‘before’ (ἐμπροσθεν) is used elsewhere in 1 Thessalonians\(^\text{58}\) and appears in a ‘reverential way … when one is speaking of an eminent person and especially of God’.\(^\text{59}\) Therefore, sanctification (through love) is expressed in view of the certainty of the *Parousia* of the Lord Jesus, when all persons, attitudes and behaviors will be transparent before him. The attitude of reverential fear is also expressed in 2 Cor. 7.1: ‘Since we have these promises, beloved, let

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\(^{57}\) ἁγιωσυνή—the state of being holy.

\(^{58}\) 1 Thess. 1.3; 2.19; 3.9.

\(^{59}\) BAGD, p. 256.
us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect
in the fear of God. As noted, the text borrows from the language of the OT cult; Paul urges his readers to cleanse themselves from impurity and to perfect holiness, in the fear of the Lord. Paul assumes that his readers are temples of God (2 Cor. 6.14-7:1); consequently they need to cleanse themselves from impurity by a conscious separation from the sphere of the unclean.

The wish-prayer of 1 Thess. 5.23 affirms the primary agency of God in the sanctification of the whole believer at the Parousia. Paul expresses the wish-prayer in chiastic form:

May the God of peace himself
A. sanctify (ἁγιάσαι)
B. you
C. entirely (ὅτολείς)
C’. sound and blameless (ὁλόκληρον)
B’. your spirit and soul and body
A’. may be kept (τηρηθείη)
at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul prays that the process of holistic sanctification will be completed at the Parousia. The sanctification has in view the entire human person. Paul is also confident that such complete sanctification is assured, ‘He will do it’ (5.24). God will ultimately do what only he can do—perfect a believer in sanctification.

The affirmation of complete sanctification at the Parousia is not intended to lay a heavy burden upon his readers as if the entire weight is placed upon human performance. The wish-prayer provides the assurance of God’s primary agency in sanctifying the believer, his keeping power of the believer, who is empowered by the Spirit. The future goal is spoken of in the language of confident expectation of a divine activity; the Trinitarian-fellowship is committed to this eschatological goal.

As an aid in the divine process, Christians are exhorted to cooperate with the process, which God has set in motion by virtue of his holy call, his nature, the ongoing gift of the Holy Spirit, the privileged new position of being

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60 The present participle, ‘perfecting’ (ἐπιτελούντες) communicates the ongoing process of sanctification (similar to the noun ἁγιάσµως the active process of holiness).
61 ‘The aorist active optative, ‘may He sanctify’ (ἁγιάσαι) stresses the truth that God is the Actor; the aorist passive optative ‘may be kept’ (τηρηθείη) stresses the certainty that believers (spirit, soul and body) are acted upon, ‘they are kept’.
62 ‘kept’ (by God).
63 The emphasis in the text is not upon a trichotomous view of the human person; rather the intent is the holistic sanctification of the believer at the Parousia.
‘saints’ and the eschatological goal of the Parousia. Thus, Christian behavior is expected to be consistent with all of these truths.

In the present age, there is a real and powerful struggle in that the believer lives in both ages: the present age and the age to come. The texts of Romans 6 and 1 Thessalonians 4 speak the language of struggle and a sanctifying process and thereby, reflect the tension of the ‘already but not yet’. Paul indicates that in the present age, believers struggle with appropriate behavior (process) to be consistent with their call (God’s provision). He raises the rhetorical question of the possibility of sinning all the more so as to experience more grace and then responds:

Rom. 6.2 By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?
Rom. 6.12 Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.

Other passages, which contain biographical material, reveal Paul’s awareness of his own divided self (Romans 7; Phil. 1:6; 2:12-18; 3:12-15). Paul is ever aware that he has not attained complete sanctification.

Phil. 3.12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

5. Implications

Sanctification is a clear statement of fact (divine provision), which embraces the past, present and future experience of Christian believers. At the same time, the call to holiness is a command and exhortation (process), which is to be a goal, designed to motivate Christian attitudes, conduct and word. For Paul, sanctification is an expression of God’s will for each Christian and each Christian community (1 Thess. 4:3); however, sanctification is not the totality of God’s will (‘God’s will’ not ‘the will of God’), but one aspect only of God’s will for his people. All too often, sanctification and the ‘holy life’ are characterized and preached as a legalistic burden, often couched in the language of ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’, and can be communicated as something that some Christians possess while others do not.

The various historical movements as they relate the Holy Spirit to sanctification often express theology in a Western partitive or compartmentalized manner in contrast to an aspectival approach. We argue that the Spirit does not sanctify people as mere compartmentalized ‘souls’ but as entire ‘wholes’, in a comprehensive manner. Often, movements arise in reaction to a
prevalent mood or teaching and over-emphasize certain ‘parts’ of the Spirit’s work in sanctification. Additions and subtractions are made and interpretation is followed by re-interpretation. Reactionary movements may go too far; bitterness often arises as a result of charges of ‘heresy’, for an addition or subtraction in the Spirit’s sanctification of people and faith-communities. At times, the Church’s interpreters preach certain texts in an entirely selective manner; in the case of Paul, certain movements look to certain Pauline texts to express but one element of Pauline teaching of the Spirit and sanctification, to the exclusion of Paul’s full-orbed approach. ‘Perfect love’ lies unrealized when warring factions do not fully listen to others, whereas Paul expresses the hope for love that is poured out into human hearts through the Holy Spirit that is given as a gift (Rom. 5.4).

Christians often measure themselves and others by fulfilling religious duties, both the ‘do’s and don’ts’. Some promote a monastic mysticism and inner spiritual experiences, separated from the Christian community and world. In certain ‘holiness’ traditions, the list of prohibitions is far-reaching and fosters a legalistic climate. Sanctification is no binding legalism but an activity of God himself who works on behalf of his people to further his good pleasure and ultimately, the genuine fulfillment of the human person in the glory of God. To affirm sanctification means that God is on the believer’s side (also the community); the call to sanctification means the empowerment for Christians to live in a victorious manner by breaking the power of sin. It also means genuine freedom and wholeness of life, with the confidence of the Parousia’s consummation.

His effectual grace extends to a people who are dead in sin but by an act of separation, God enlivens and causes genuine transformation. Whenever persons turn to Christ, irrespective of their moral condition, people give evidence of the separating power of God and his determined will to form a people for himself. Further, the Trinitarian-fellowship (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) is dynamically involved in the original call, the sanctifying process of the people of God and the certain future of the people of God at the Parousia.

As ‘saints’, the people of God are to appreciate the holy nature of the new community; in a corporate sense, the people of God constitute the new and holy temple. Consequently, behavior that destroys the life of the community is an affront to the inherent nature of the holy temple. The human response to the holy God includes the practical outworking of life that aligns itself with the nature of God. The key word for the sanctified life is consistency. There is to be a consistency between the divine provision (indicative) and the process (imperative or exhortation), which leads to the final consummation at the Parousia (indicative). The people of God are to live with consistency and integrity; their
lives are to correspond with the nature of their individual and corporate call. They are to live consistent with the triune God who has separated a people unto himself. By no means does this mean human performance and deadly legalism but a quality of life that reflects ‘otherness’. In particular, love is the embodiment of the life of holiness. There is no ‘otherness’ without love.

In living a life ‘set-apart’, the people of God are to be ever mindful of the lost and broken people around them. There can be no ‘holy club’, which does not have a compassionate perspective upon society’s broken people. A life ‘set-apart’ is also expressed through sexual integrity: faithfulness when married and discipline when one is not married. Genuine freedom is achieved when a person recognizes that one’s will has been turned over to a new master and lord. In no way does sanctification imply a reckless freedom when all restraints are gone, wherein people feel they have license to sin (Romans 6). Such a life can only result in bondages that are addictive and destructive. This is not the path of life in any sense.

The people of God are prone to take biblical concepts such as holiness and think of them in terms of religious performance and duty. People continually look for security, which they think can be measured by religious deeds. When holiness is divorced from a personal bond of love (divine and human), it is separated from the original call and inner dynamic of the Spirit of grace. Thus, God becomes only a ‘holy God’, who makes religious demands, which people must meticulously follow. A relationship with God becomes external and measurable by legalistic lists and expectations and the very gospel of grace-full relationships degenerates into a human system of performance, with its deadly results: fear, failure, guilt, and conversely, religious pride, hypocrisy and religious judgment. Invariably, people pronounce judgment upon others in amazingly superficial and unjust ways; they see only what is external.

Throughout the Bible, there is a clash between the moralistic idea of the ‘holy’ and the prophetic concept of the ‘holy’. Jesus Christ and his apostle Paul both oppose the mentality of the taboo and the moralism of casuistic law; they both resist the narrow moralism that concentrates upon the external and visible religious taboos of ‘holiness’; they both affirm the need for genuine repentance for genuine sin, and thus, they stress the need for people to experience the grace of God, along with the constant ‘giving’ of the Holy Spirit to the people of God as they live ‘sanctified’ lives.

The moralistic idea locates holiness in particular activities, in things, places and times and offers the illusion to people that they can ‘achieve’ God’s holiness by strict adherence to the external regulations. Religious judgment that is based upon human perceptions distorts the love relationship with God and
the love relationship with others, a truth well expressed by Wesley. The prophetic understanding of holiness points to the issue of the heart and its inner motivations and its own inner being. The prophetic outlook helps people to realize the human impossibility of achieving perfection by moral conduct; Christian people are unable to wipe out their human guilt by their own performance. Instead, holiness is given as a gift from God, not from people. He graciously grants the new condition to those who confess their inadequacy and failure. Ongoing dependence upon God is the only criterion for genuine holiness.

The people of God are also to be aware of the glorious future of the consummation when the tension of living in two ages will be fully eased. At the time of the Parousia of Jesus, sanctification will be complete when the human will, the human battleground, will be fully absorbed into the divine will; there will be no further need to ‘work at’ the consistency factor. Jeremiah had prophesied of a new covenant in which God would put his will directly into the human heart, bypassing the activities of speaking, hearing and obeying (Jer. 31.31-34). Von Rad says, ‘If God’s will ceases to confront and judge men from outside themselves, if God puts his will directly into their hearts, then, properly speaking, the rendering of obedience is completely done away with, for the problem of obedience only arises when man’s will is confronted by an alien will’. Correspondingly, at the time of the Parousia, the fundamental problem of consistency will be fully resolved, for there will be genuine integrity between what one is and what one does and says. Finally, the people of God are to be assured of the divine promise that he is faithful to perfect his work of sanctification, ‘He will do it’ (1 Thess. 5.24).

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64 ‘Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds’ (Rom. 14.2-5).